Hamas and Suicide Terrorism

Multi-causal and multi-level approaches

Rashmi Singh

ROUTLEDGE

LSE International Studies

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This book analyses the root causes of suicide terrorism at both the elite and rank-and-file levels of Hamas and also explains why this tactic has disappeared in the post-2006 period.

This volume adopts a multi-causal, multi-level approach to analyse the use of suicide bombings by Hamas and its individual operatives in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. It uses extensive fieldwork and on-the-ground interviews in order to delve beneath the surface and understand why and how suicide operations were adopted as a sustained mechanism of engagement within the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Three core factors fuelled Hamas's suicide bombing campaigns. First, Palestinian suicide operations are a complex combination of instrumental and expressive violence adopted by both organizations and individuals to achieve political and/or societal survival, retaliation and competition. In other words, suicide bombings not only serve distinct political and strategic goals for both Hamas and its operatives but they also serve to convey a symbolic message to various audiences, within Israel, the Palestinian territories and around the world. Second, suicide operations perform a crucial role in the formation and consolidation of Palestinian national identity and are also the latest manifestation of the historically entrenched cultural norm of militant heroic martyrdom. Finally, Hamas's use of political Islam also facilitates the articulation, justification and legitimization of suicide operations as a modern-day jihad against Israel through the means of modern interpretations and fatwas.

This approach not only facilitates a much needed, multifaceted, holistic understanding of suicide bombings in this particular region but also yields policy-relevant lessons to address extreme political violence in other parts of the world. This book will be of much interest to students of Hamas, terrorism, Middle East politics and security studies.

Rashmi Singh is a Lecturer at the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence at the University of St Andrews.

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For my parents

Contents

Foreword

Dr Rashmi Singh's carefully researched study of Hamas's use of suicide bombing attacks from 1993–2006 is an original and fascinating contribution to the history of terrorism in the Middle East and a perceptive analysis of the bitter rivalry between Fatah and Hamas. She makes a convincing case for what she describes as a ‘multi-level, multi-causal approach’ to the phenomenon of suicide attacks ‘as a mechanism of engagement on both the individual and organisational level’ stressing the role of Hamas as ‘having provided the crucial initial impetus for suicide operations’, legitimised by the language and symbol of political Islam.

However, as Dr Singh rightly emphasises, Hamas is far more than just a terrorist organisation. It has greatly strengthened its support in the Palestinian community by consistently delivering practical help in the form of food, medical care and education and other basic needs to the Palestinian street. A major reason for the spectacular success of Hamas in the 2006 elections for the Palestinian parliament, when it won 74 seats while Fatah only succeeded in gaining 45 was the widespread Palestinian disillusion with Fatah, increasingly viewed as elitist, corrupt and apparently incapable of delivering any discernible improvement in living conditions. This method of building political support through community welfare measures was of course reinforced by an intensive propaganda campaign aimed at making ‘militant heroic martyrdom’ a generally accepted ‘norm’ of Palestinian nationalism by the ideology of Islam.

In her brief but perceptive chapter on the political history of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, Rashmi Singh provides a critical assessment of the Oslo Accords and the peace efforts which began with the Declaration of Principles signed in September 1993. Like many other academic commentators on the Oslo peace process she points out its many inherent weaknesses and inconsistencies. However, she also fully recognises that Hamas's suicide bombing attacks ‘further hardened’ Israel's ‘already uncompromising stance’, thereby helping to destroy the Oslo process.

Dr Singh is such a capable writer and researcher on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that it is to be hoped that she will write a sequel on developments since 2006. Her readers will learn from this erudite and thoughtful work that, despite its use of suicide terrorism against the Israelis, its victory in the 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections and its seizure of control over Gaza in 2007, Hamas has so far failed to achieve its strategic goals. Yet it has had a significant strategic impact, and by its refusal to negotiate with Israel it remains just as serious an obstacle to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as Israel's obduracy over the issues of settlements and the future of Jerusalem.

Paul Wilkinson
September 2010

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Rashmi Singh
St Andrews, 2010

Abbreviations

BSO
: Black September Organization

DFLP
: Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine

IDF
: Israel Defence Forces

IRM
: Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)

DOP
: Declaration of Principles

HAMAS
: Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya or the IRM

LTTE
: Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

MB
: Muslim Brotherhood

PA
: Palestinian Authority

PFLP
: Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

PIJ
: Palestinian Islamic Jihad

PLA
: Palestine Liberation Army

PLO
: Palestine Liberation Organization

PNA
: Palestinian National Authority

PNC
: Palestine National Council

PPF
: Palestinian Police Force

PPP
: Palestinian People's Party (formerly Palestinian Communist Party)

QB
: The Qassam Brigades

UNC

United National Command (also known as UNLU)

UNLU

United National Leadership of the Uprising (also known as UNC)

WBG

West Bank and Gaza

1 Introductory remarks

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On 16 April 1993, 22-year-old Sahar Tamam Nablusi packed a white Mitsubishi van with cooking-gas canisters, placed a copy of the Qur'an on the passenger seat and purposely barrelled into two buses, killing himself and another Palestinian and wounding eight Israelis. The militant Palestinian Islamist group, Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack, which was the first suicide bombing in the decades-old landscape of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The attack was so unexpected and novel that even days later the *Jerusalem Post* continued to call it an ‘apparent suicide’. Of course today, 17 years later, there no longer exists such hesitation in identifying these increasingly common attacks as suicide bombings. Since then numerous books have been written on Hamas and/or the phenomenon of suicide attacks. Those focusing on Hamas often tend to either dedicate a chapter to its use of suicide attacks or, at the very least, mention it in passing. Studies looking at the phenomenon of suicide attacks in particular also often use Hamas as one of their many case studies. Yet very few researchers have written specifically about Hamas's use of suicide attacks from 1993 to 2006 at length and then only from a particular viewpoint (religious, social, strategic, etc.) and/or focusing upon only one level of analysis (individual, organizational, societal).[1] In short, for those asking, ‘why another book on Hamas?’ it must be underscored that there still remains the need to formulate an in-depth, multi-causal, multi-level understanding of how and why suicide attacks emerged and were used in the Palestinian scenario over a given period of time. As this book will specifically address suicide bombings in the Israeli–Palestinian context its conclusions may be restricted to this particular case. However, at the same time, the approach applied and analysis presented hopes to provide an evaluative framework that can be applied to the use of suicide attacks by other groups in other socio-political, cultural settings.

Of course, suicide as a mode of political protest is by no means a recent phenomenon nor has it been practised by one people or faith alone. Early Christian martyrs suffered gruesome tortures and deaths for their religious convictions and for these early Christians martyrdom was a form of religious persecution.[2] The early Persian Ismaili-Nazaris, more commonly known as the *hashishiyun* (assassins), were a Shi'ia sect based in north-western Iran in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. These skilled assassins targeted heavily guarded political and military leaders in missions where the likelihood of escape was often impossible and characteristically murdered their targets before sometimes killing themselves with the same dagger.[3] The *hashishiyun* were

so effective that they came to be feared and demonized by both Sunni leaders in the region and the heads of Christian Crusader states alike.

The first contact the modern Western world had with suicide attacks as a premeditated political-military phenomenon was during the Second World War when over 3,000 Japanese army and navy pilots died attempting to crash their planes into Allied ships and aircraft carriers.[4] The term 'Kamikaze' refers specifically to the *Shinpū* ('divine wind') Special Attack Corps formed in October 1944 whose pilots rammed their airplanes, gliders and manned torpedoes into Allied vessels. Though the efficacy of Kamikaze attacks may be debatable they nonetheless continued unabated till August 1945 when Japan surrendered. It is commonly accepted that these attacks damaged or sank at least 375 US naval vessels and killed over 12,000 American servicemen.[5] However, even more significant than the military efficacy of the Kamikaze is the fact that this was perhaps the first time that modern 'Western' nations fought a fully trained and equipped army that belonged to a radically different cultural tradition with starkly different conventions of war.[6]

After the Kamikaze missions the wave of suicide bombings conducted by Hizballah ('the party of God'), a Lebanese Shi'ite group, from early 1983 to mid-1985, signalled the re-emergence of suicide attacks in their most contemporary form. The first of these attacks were the truck bombings of the US Marine and French barracks in Beirut in October 1983, which killed 241 US soldiers and 58 French troops. After this initial attack Hizballah continued to target US, French and Israeli troops in Lebanon conducting a total of 36 suicide attacks in the 1980s and successfully evicting these forces from Lebanon.[7]

By 1990 the contemporary use of suicide attacks had spread further. In July 1990, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a Hindu-Marxist group, began targeting Sri Lankan political leaders in their fight for a Tamil homeland. The LTTE is reputed to have invented the concealed suicide bomb vests and is known for conducting suicide operations on land, sea and air. It is also the only organization that has successfully assassinated two heads of state in suicide missions, including the former Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi and the former Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa. In the Middle East, Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) began conducting suicide attacks against Israeli settlers, troops and citizens in 1993 and 1994 respectively. A number of experts believe that Hamas cadres were trained in the tactical use of suicide attacks in 1992 when a few hundred Hamas members were deported to southern Lebanon by the Israeli state as punitive action taken for the killing of five Israeli servicemen. Still others believe that while Hamas received no direct training, Hizbal-lah's successful deployment of this tactic against the American, French and Israeli troops from Lebanon in the early 1980s may have influenced it to adopt suicide missions in what has been termed the 'contagion effect of suicide bombing'.[8] Either way, it seems that the strategic use of suicide

missions slowly became entrenched in the Palestinian consciousness and hence in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, especially in the period between 2000 and 2006. However, while Hamas's use of suicide attacks has tapered off in the past four years, suicide bombings have increasingly been used in various other parts of the globe since the mid-1990s and can be traced today to regions as diverse as Kashmir, Turkey, the Persian Gulf, the United States, Spain, Great Britain, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq-indicating that a deeper understanding of this phenomenon is a definite necessity.

But what exactly *is* a suicide attack? A suicide attack[9] may be defined as 'a politically motivated violent attack perpetrated by a self-aware individual (or individuals) who actively and purposely causes his own death through blowing himself up along with his chosen target. The perpetrator's ensured death is a precondition for the success of his mission'.[10] Therefore, a suicide attack is seen as an operational method in which the operative is fully aware that the mission '*will not be executed* if he is not killed in the process'.[11] It is this precondition of death that differentiates a suicide attack from all other types of high-risk attacks where the possibility of death may exist but is not an operational requirement. The attack itself can be conducted by activating explosives either worn or carried by the operative as a portable explosive charge (for example in a backpack) or alternatively explosives may be planted in a vehicle that is driven by the operative(s). In cases where a vehicle is used the attack is either carried out by parking and detonating the vehicle in a densely populated area or by ramming it into a selected target (such as a bus or building). Robert Pape notes that a defining characteristic of modern suicide attacks is that for the first time multiple actors are simultaneously opting to use suicide missions as a mechanism of engagement and coercion across the globe where previously there had never been more than one suicide bombing campaign active in a given period of time.[12] In other words, suicide attacks have emerged as an *operational tactic* applied to achieve different political and military ends in vastly different conflicts and circumstances. As such, it is imperative that each conflict is studied individually in order to understand what prompts, enables and legitimizes the tactical resort to suicide attacks in each specific context.

Understanding suicide attacks as a tactic enables us, first and foremost, to move away from approaches that tend to project it as an 'Islamic' or 'Middle Eastern' phenomenon. The point of entry into this research then is, first and foremost, the rejection of the monolithic Islamist global threat so evident in much of the popular literature today in favour of an in-depth examination of a particular case study. Thus, *Hamas and Suicide Terrorism* adopts a multi-level, multi-causal approach to the phenomenon of suicide attacks specifically within the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and focuses particularly upon the use of suicide missions by both the elite and the rank-and-file of Hamas from 1993 to 2006. The discussion is firmly rooted in a historical perspective which not only allows it to identify *why* and *how* suicide bombings emerged in the occupied territories,

but also why they were adopted as a mechanism of engagement on both an *individual* and *organizational* level at such a specific point of time in this long-standing conflict. Studying the use of political violence in *la longue durée* also allows one to understand why these so-called 'martyrdom operations' came to be, for a time, a *socially sanctioned* method of armed resistance. This approach also enables us to reflect upon some potential reasons suicide attacks stopped so abruptly in 2006 and came to be almost fully replaced by mortar and artillery rocket attacks and increasingly sophisticated guerrilla warfare. Contextualizing the use of political violence in the Palestinian territories this book locates the emergence and spread of suicide attacks in a network of interrelated factors, namely:

1. The expressive and instrumental rationality of suicide missions, which explains *why* suicide violence *emerged* and was *used* a mechanism of engagement with the Israeli state;
2. The struggle for a national identity and the evolution of the culturally entrenched norm of militant heroic martyrdom, which explains *how* suicide violence *evolved* specifically within the Palestinian socio-political setting; and
3. The use of political Islam to frame violent resistance against the Israeli state as a modern day jihad, which explains *how* suicide violence was *justified, legitimized and enacted* specifically within the Palestinian milieu.

This combination of factors allows us to account for some of the key strategic imperatives behind Hamas's tactical use of suicide bombings while also highlighting the broad social and cultural incentives that enabled suicide violence to emerge as an acceptable mechanism of armed resistance to Israeli occupation. In short, three levels of analysis, i.e. the individual, the organization and the society from which they both emerge, are simultaneously considered and given equal weight in this work. Having said that, while the equal consideration of all three levels of analysis is imperative for fully understanding the emergence, durability and shifts in the use of suicide missions in the Palestinian territories, the organization, i.e. Hamas, is identified as having provided the crucial *initial* impetus for suicide operations in this particular socio-political, cultural context. It is, therefore, imperative to understand the nature of Hamas as an organization before analysing how it so successfully introduced suicide attacks as an acceptable, if not a preferred, mode of engaging with the Israeli state and people. This book is based on the premise that conceptualizing Hamas's use of suicide attacks provides not only a crucial insight into the pervasiveness of political violence in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict but also sheds light upon how Hamas has evolved and endured in Palestinian politics.

Hamas, an acronym for the Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya (the Islamic Resistance Movement) emerged with the first intifada, a popular uprising that erupted in the occupied

Palestinian territories in December 1987. It rapidly gained ground, carving an identity for itself as a militant Islamist group that has since come to be synonymous with Islamic fundamentalism and the use of violent tactics ranging from mine and artillery rocket attacks to, of course, its hallmark tactical use of suicide attacks on civilian populations. At the same time Hamas is, and always has been, more than just a 'terrorist organization'. From its very inception as a military wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, it has dedicated its energies and resources towards supporting the Palestinian community and responding to its immediate hardships and concerns. Hamas supports an extensive network of social welfare organizations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which provide, directly or indirectly, emergency cash assistance, food and medical care as well as educational and psychological services to hundreds of Palestinians.[13] By building upon and appropriating the networks established by the Muslim Brotherhood it has not only slowly and successfully overshadowed its parent organization but also ensured its sustainability within the Palestinian political milieu. Hamas is deeply invested in its charity work, which it considers, along with armed resistance, a central component of its Islamic-Palestinian identity and purpose. In a society where roughly two-thirds of the population lives below the poverty line, Hamas's social welfare activities are vital, not only for its own political sustainability in the territories but, in the absence of a functional state, also for the survival of the one in six Palestinians that it assists.

As such, Hamas must be seen, first and foremost, as a social movement which, as a direct consequence of being based in the occupied territories, is deeply rooted in Palestinian society and its everyday realities from the very beginning of its organizational existence in a way its arch political rival, Fatah, never was. As a result of this local base, Hamas has always possessed an intimate understanding of the Palestinian street, its anxieties and concerns. In the 22 years since its genesis it has cunningly used this knowledge to mould its strategies of resistance to echo these popular sentiments, needs and hopes, working not only to mitigate the immediate difficulties and concerns of Palestinian society but, in doing so, also simultaneously charting a unique course through a political landscape that had been dominated by the secular Fatah for over 40 years. At least some of its success can be credited to its large and varied support base. Thus while initially its main stronghold was comprised of the lower strata of Palestinian society Hamas has over time transcended social fragmentation and class divisions to acquire a heterogeneous support base. This has further strengthened its social moorings making its isolation from Palestinian society difficult, if not impossible. However, its success is also rooted in its ability to project an ideological coherence, political vitality and organizational unity which has enabled it to steadily garner influence, legitimacy and power amongst those living in the occupied territories – as was effectively demonstrated by its victory in the 2006 parliamentary elections.

Hamas has always endorsed both a military jihad against Israel and social welfare as equally

legitimate mechanisms for realizing its goals of establishing an independent Islamic Palestinian state. As such, it has both carved out a unique identity within the Palestinian political landscape and adapted to a new political reality without needing to alter or moderate its original ideological outlook. In rearticulating the political programme for Palestinian statehood in specifically Islamic terms Hamas has also effectively appropriated and overshadowed the secular national narrative and redefined not only the strategic goals of the national movement but also the means available to achieve them. As such, Hamas characterizes its acceptance of any Palestinian state limited to the territories of West Bank and Gaza as no more than a pragmatic step in its jihad against Israel which seeks, as its final goal, an Islamic Palestinian nation-state within the geographical boundaries of historic Palestine. By shrewdly interpreting any political agreement with Israel as a mere pause in its historic jihad, Hamas has managed to successfully acquire both political flexibility and manoeuvrability without ever compromising its ideological credibility and unique political identity. Such an articulation has not only enabled Hamas to participate in established political processes within the occupied territories but has also provided it with the ability to frame even its hostile takeover of the Gaza Strip in June 2007 within the parameters of its historic jihad, and therefore as a necessary step towards achieving the long-term strategic goal of the Palestinian nation-state.

Having said that, the role of political violence in Hamas's socio-political toolbox cannot be underestimated. Hamas has always been a revolutionary organization. As the military wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, from the very beginning Hamas represented a sharp break from the Brotherhood's logic of bringing about gradual social reform through education and preaching in favour of more violent strategies of engagement. Its campaign of violence not only targeted Israel but also its Palestinian rivals, primarily Fatah, and since its violent takeover of the Gaza Strip it has gained the reputation of crushing all opposition with a ruthlessness perhaps never before seen in the Palestinian political arena. In its arsenal of violent tactics Hamas has used mortar and artillery rocket attacks, mines, knifings and shootings but it is still perhaps best known for the deadly spate of suicide bombings it conducted against Israel from 1993 to approximately 2006. Hamas was not only the first Palestinian group to use suicide attacks against Israel but its campaign of terror was so successful in garnering Palestinian support that it effectively forced more moderate groups, like Fatah, that were rapidly losing political ground, into adopting suicide bombings as a tactic during the second intifada (2000–2005). However, despite the use of such murderous mechanisms to politically engage the Israeli state, Hamas's resort to violence, and specifically its use of suicide attacks must be placed in a broader trajectory of violence in the occupied territories. Of course, Hamas is not the first group to use violent tactics to enhance its appeal to the Palestinian population by adopting armed resistance to Israeli occupation – and it certainly will not be the last. Indeed violence was used to mobilize

Palestinian society and propel the national struggle from the very beginning of the resistance, as exemplified by the Great Revolt of 1936 and the guerrilla activity of the 1960s and 1970s. However, over the course of what has been nearly a century of Palestinian resistance, a marked change has occurred in the scale and intensity of the violence employed against the 'enemy'. Thus, the intensity of political violence has, despite fluctuations and periods of passivity, progressively and systematically escalated over time. Suicide attacks must therefore be contextualized as the latest, if the most brutal, manifestations of this escalating political violence. At the same time, it is telling that suicide attacks were confined to such a specific period in Palestinian politics, which makes it even more imperative to understand what propelled their use in the first place.

In discussing how and why suicide attacks came to be used by both Hamas and its cadres and supported by large sections of the Palestinian population from 1993–2006, *Hamas and Suicide Terrorism* discusses and draws on secondary sources and uses extensive fieldwork and on-the-ground interviews conducted in Israel and the Palestinian territories from 2004–2005. These interviews targeted members and/or supporters of specific political parties (Hamas, Fatah, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine), individual members of both the Knesset and the Palestinian National Council, journalists, political analysts, academics, students and also practitioners in the field of counter-terrorism. The interviews conducted were mostly of a semi-structured type with single respondents or a group of respondents. As semi-structured interviews they had a fairly open framework that encouraged respondents to participate in what were, in essence, focused conversations. This allowed respondents to talk at length, in their own terms, and with time to reflect. While some questions were predetermined most of them were formulated during the interview, especially as Palestinian respondents tended to be self-conscious, scared and often defensive, and even more so when confronted with the sensitive nature of the research topic. While the interviews were mostly elite-led a systematic effort was made to also combine them with informal discussions with various other key stakeholders to identify and formulate a nuanced understanding of the multiple issues related to the question under study. To this end, informal discussions were also undertaken with university students, student activists, Israeli military and police personnel and local civilian populations in both Israel and the Palestinian territories.

Chapters 2 and 3 provide the background necessary to understand the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and also clarify the conceptual parameters used to analyse suicide attacks in this book. Chapter 2 examines the three key conceptual parameters used to analyse suicide operations in this book, namely the strategic and symbolic logic of suicide missions, the evolution of Palestinian nationalism and the norm of militant heroic martyrdom and finally the role of political Islam in facilitating the appropriation of the national narrative where armed resistance is

framed as a jihad against the Israeli state and martyrdom operations as necessary to protect and defend the Palestinian nation. Chapter 3 provides further context by briefly outlining the political history of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and locates the evolution and role of two key political players in the Palestinian setting, i.e. Fatah and Hamas. In the case of Fatah, its development and history are closely linked first to the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and then the Palestinian Authority (PA). As such Chapter 3 attempts to make these relations clearer and briefly illustrates how Fatah's dominance over the PLO/PA had, for a considerable period of time, impacted the evolution of the Palestinian national movement. This chapter also outlines the emergence of Hamas in 1987 and traces its roots to the Muslim Brotherhood thereby illustrating the evolution of the Palestinian national discourse from a secular one (under the PLO) to a primarily religious one (under the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas).

Having established this broad context the next three chapters examine the key components that are seen to motivate suicide violence in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Chapter 4 traces the expressive and instrumental rationality of suicide missions on both the individual and organizational level. The chapter argues that both the organizational and individual resort to suicide violence may be conflated along three lines: survival, competition and retaliation. This chapter demonstrates the *dialectic* that exists between Hamas and its operatives asserting that it is this continuing dialectic that must be understood in order to appreciate the long-term existence and the simultaneously strategic and symbolic use of suicide violence within the Palestinian setting. Chapter 5 attempts to understand how suicide operations have emerged in the Palestinian setting. It begins by accounting for the ‘box’ of Palestinian social reality and in doing so locates the Palestinian struggle for national identity as a crucial element in the emergence of suicide violence. As such suicide bombings are seen as the final step in an escalating trajectory of violent struggle that is aimed specifically at establishing a Palestinian state. This chapter first illustrates how the norm of militant heroic martyrdom is a crucial component of Palestinian selfhood and national identity. This chapter then analyses how Hamas inserted itself into a pre-established Palestinian culture of militant heroic martyrdom that it successfully appropriated, reinterpreted and articulated as suicide missions. Chapter 6 outlines the ideological reasoning behind suicide violence and illustrates how political Islam is employed to facilitate the articulation, justification and legitimization of suicide violence as a modern-day jihad to Palestinian society. This chapter illustrates how political Islam plays a crucial role in the Palestinian territories in that it supplies the ideological language, symbols and codes that legitimize the use of suicide operations against Israel. This chapter traces this religious rhetoric in Hamas literature and in the statements made by its operatives, their families and its supporters. Finally, Chapter 7 highlights how the three concepts used in this work each explain a very specific facet of suicide violence: strategic, socio-cultural, or ideological. Hence, used

simultaneously they enable one to more comprehensively answer *both* why and how suicide violence emerged, escalated and became a mode of engagement in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict from 1993–2006. The coordinated application of all three concepts also allows multiple causes and levels to be factored into our analysis of suicide attacks. Chapter 7 concludes by questioning if these very concepts can be used to explain some of the reasons suicide bombings may have tapered off in the Palestinian territories in the post-2006 period as well as Hamas's continued use of political violence in Gaza.

2 Rationality, nationalism and political Islam

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> *… suppose they were an influence, a thing invulnerable, intangible, without front or back, drifting about like a gas? Armies were like plants, immobile as a whole, firm-rooted, nourished through long stems to the head. The Arabs might be a vapour.*
>
> T.E. Lawrence[1]

This chapter introduces the three key conceptual parameters that are applied to study and analyse suicide attacks in this book. The first section focuses upon the strategic and symbolic logic of suicide attacks. Much of the work produced in the field of suicide bombings tends to study the use of this tactic from a strategic or symbolic perspective. As such, this section serves to, first and foremost, contextualize this work as fourth generation literature on suicide bombings and highlight how both the organization and the individual, i.e. multiple levels of analysis, need to be simultaneously studied in order to fully understand the emergence and sustainability of suicide attacks in the Israeli–Palestinian setting. This section stresses that one level of analysis should never be privileged over the other due to the dialectic that exists between organizational and individual rationalities and motives. It also underscores that one cannot, and must not, disassociate individual motives from instrumental rationality and organizational motives from symbolic (i.e. expressive) rationality. In other words, this section frames suicide attacks as rational acts that simultaneously serve both strategic and symbolic purposes for not only the individual committing the act but for also the organization employing the tactic. Suicide attacks are therefore understood as the converging point of multiple rationalities and a complex amalgamation of expressive and instrumental violence where organizational and individual motivations in the Palestinian setting are identified as broadly conflated along three lines, i.e.: survival, retaliation and competition.

The second section of this chapter locates the evolution of Palestinian nationalism as a crucial element in comprehending the emergence of suicide operations in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and identifies certain reoccurring key themes in the construction of this Palestinian national identity. One of the themes identified is that of militant heroic martyrdom, i.e. where the heroic martyr is willing to sacrifice his life in a violent struggle waged to attain freedom for his homeland. This section traces how this specific theme has evolved over the course of the Palestinian national struggle to become an intrinsic and inalienable part of Palestinian national identity. This cultural construction of heroic martyrdom is also seen to fuel the steady escalation

of violent resistance that is increasingly and repeatedly framed as a necessary response to the Israeli state. As a result, not only has the Palestinian national struggle become progressively more militarized but the heroic martyr has also come to be deeply venerated by Palestinian society. Having understood this, this section locates Hamas's use of suicide bombings as the latest step in a progressively escalating trajectory of violence aimed at constructing a Palestinian identity and state. In other words, Hamas is identified as having appropriated, reinterpreted and articulated the culturally entrenched norm of militant heroic martyrdom as a suicide attack.

The final section outlines the role of political Islam in facilitating the appropriation of the Palestinian national narrative where armed resistance is framed as a jihad against the Israeli state and suicide attacks (or so-called martyrdom operations) are portrayed as a part of this jihad, necessary to protect and defend the Palestinian nation. In other words, this section identifies how political Islam has deeply determined the shape and character of the Palestinian confrontation with the Israeli state. To this end, it first provides a brief history of the evolution and development of political Islam in the Middle East and Palestinian territories before identifying how it has been used to frame the national struggle as a jihad waged against the Israeli state. In this context, the (re)emergence of the rhetoric of jihad or holy war that is used by organizations like Hamas to motivate Palestinians down the path of political violence is seen to be a key indicator of how political Islam has evolved in the territories. This section also identifies how political Islam has been used to facilitate the use of the typically Islamic rhetoric of jihad to justify the emergence and use of suicide attacks against Israeli targets from the early 1990s to late 2006.

The instrumental and expressive logic of suicide attacks: the need for fourth generation literature

A key insight into how and why suicide attacks emerged in the Israeli–Palestinian context can be provided by the multiple strategic functions fulfilled by suicide operations. A number of recent studies focus on these strategic aspects and tend to explain suicide bombings as a political and military strategy for organizations, i.e. they approach this phenomenon from above and assess it in terms of its kill-rates, its signalling potential, its tactical efficacy, its psychological impact on target populations, its functions in political competition and so on.[2] In identifying and exploring the strategic logic of suicide bombings for the organization, this recent scholarship represents a refreshing break from traditional, first generation theses that categorized suicide violence as irrational acts conducted by a handful of deranged fanatics. Nonetheless, much of this second generation scholarship tends to focus almost entirely upon the organization's role and in doing so loses sight of the individual bomber and the factors that drive individuals to self-sacrifice.

Undoubtedly explaining suicide bombings from below is a much more difficult task. The rationality of the individual bomber is more difficult to pin down as their motivations are much more diverse. Studies that focus upon individual motivations tend to rely on the psychology of individual bombers and identify processes of coercion, recruitment and indoctrination by organizations as crucial factors propelling the 'suicide industry'.[3] Hence, even when the focus is upon the individual, the organization is believed to play a much more important role in suicide bombing campaigns than individual motivations. Some recent works have tried to adopt a more balanced approach[4] by illustrating how the desire for revenge, commitment to a political group, deep individual belief in nationalism or religion, and/or the desire to achieve immortality and capture material goods for the family can all motivate an individual to become a suicide bomber.[5] Yet even these works tend to locate the key impetus of the bombing in organizational or group behaviour rather then with the bombers themselves. As such, these works, categorized here as late second generation literature for the sake of clarity, continue to subordinate individual motives to organizational goals. The individual's choice continues to be seen as a burst of emotion and the logic behind individual self-sacrifice remains ignored and/or subordinated to the strategic logic of the organization. In ignoring/subordinating individual rationality to group rationality, these works tacitly accept that individual motivations are either devoid of a rational logic altogether or this logic, if it exists, is not as significant and 'means-ends' driven as that of the organization. Hence, this literature, while marking a clean break with first and early second generation scholarship, still tends to focus purely upon the instrumental (i.e. strategic) aspects of suicide violence, inevitably ignoring its symbolic dimensions. Overall then, second generation literature believes that suicide violence cannot exist without organizational impetus and/or manipulation.

While this is true to a certain extent, such a hypothesis provides only a partial analysis. It cannot explain why, for instance, bombers in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict came to be increasingly unaffiliated or loosely affiliated[6] to specific political groups. Nor can it explain the overall increase in the number of volunteers in the Palestinian conflict or the proportionate drop in training and 'indoctrination' times or indeed why more and more individuals consistently and repeatedly volunteered[7] for suicide missions, as opposed to other forms of military engagement. In short, these works can neither explain the individual's drive for self-sacrifice nor what their martyrdom signifies for themselves and the society they come from.

The handful of what may be termed third generation studies that have attempted to understand the social meaning that martyrdom holds for the individual actors involved[8] tend to ignore the organization and focus more explicitly upon the bombers and their self-perception of their actions. These works try to decipher what meaning(s) individuals assign to their own martyrdom and in doing so contextualize the bomber and their individual reasoning in a given socio-

political, cultural milieu. Implicitly then, this literature suggests that the role of organizations in recruiting and indoctrinating suicide bombers may be overstated and questions if individual martyrs view their actions through the same prism as the organizations that they belong to. They question if individuals are motivated by the strategic effectiveness of martyrdom or if indeed there are other nationalist, emotive, religious motives behind their choice that necessitate that 'we go beyond instrumental rationality'.[9] At their core, these studies focus on the symbolic dimension of violence and believe that the individual's choice of martyrdom, driven as it is by non-instrumental motives, is different to the organization's motives. These studies purport to question and counter the emerging 'rationalist paradigm' for studying suicide bombings[10] and while marking a key break with earlier literature, still tend to conclude that rationalist approaches can only explain an organization's decisions to use suicide bombings and not individual motivations. In believing that one cannot conflate individual motives with organizational goals they advocate looking *'beyond rationality, into the realm of symbolic framings* [my emphasis], to understand and explain, at least in part, why individuals become martyrs'.[11] Thus, while third generation studies undeniably take a crucial step forward by highlighting the symbolic dimensions of suicide violence they also unfortunately dispossess both individual motivations and symbolic/expressive action of rationality. In doing so they also implicitly reject that symbolic/expressive action may simultaneously possess and/or serve an instrumental function for both the organization and the individual – just as instrumental action serves symbolic/expressive goals as well. This literature therefore creates a false dichotomy between expressive (i.e. symbolic) and instrumental violence by disregarding the rationality of symbolic action and nonmaterial incentives and goals.[12]

This work sees itself as fourth generation scholarship on suicide violence and assigns both organizational and individual rationality and motives equal importance in understanding the emergence and sustainability of suicide bombing campaigns in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.[13] This is because each level of analysis is seen to impact and propel the other. Hence, while Hamas can certainly identify, manipulate and/or encourage certain popular emotions, exploitation alone cannot explain the overall increase in volunteers and unaffiliated/loosely affiliated bombers. Most importantly, organizational recruitment and indoctrination cannot explain how suicide missions became, for a time, a consistent choice for a section of the Palestinian population with widespread, albeit fluctuating, popular support. Therefore, while the initial impetus for suicide attacks in the Palestinian arena may have come from the organization, certain shifts occurred over time that challenged the organization's monopoly over suicide violence. Consequently, unearthing the rationality behind individual motives is crucial for understanding why so many individuals willingly volunteered for and/or independently undertook suicide missions. In other words, unless the dialectic between organizational and individual rationality and motivations is

taken into account, no hypothesis can fully explain why suicide attacks emerged, escalated and became for a time a sustained form of engagement in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, thereby leaving any analysis of the phenomenon incomplete.

Second, this work moves away from established literature by refusing to disassociate individual motives from instrumental rationality and organizational motives from symbolic rationality. Instead it believes that suicide attacks are both acts of strategic expediency and practical reason as well as acts that are simultaneously symbolic, ritualistic and communicative. In other words, suicide attacks are a complex combination of expressive and instrumental violence. Unfortunately, violence often tends to be studied in utilitarian 'means-ends' terms, which not only ignores its cultural dimension but, by inadvertently disassociating the problem of causes from that of function,[14] also loses the wider context of violent action. In other words, a purely instrumental focus loses sight of what the practice of violence says or expresses.[15] Where easily identifiable goals are missing and the relationship between the means and the ends is murky or seemingly absent, violence also tends to get categorized as irrational and senseless. Instrumental violence thus tends to be viewed as a rational choice while expressive violence, i.e. violence that is ritual, symbolic and communicative, when considered at all, tends to be represented as an impulsive irrational act, the result of spontaneous emotion.[16] This tendency is more than evident in previous generations of literature on suicide violence. However, violence is never completely idiosyncratic and it always says something. It expresses a relationship with another party. It is never an isolated act – instead violence is linked, howsoever remotely, to a competitive relationship and is thus the rational product of a historical process that may extend far back in time. Therefore, violent acts are never random and victims are chosen for their links to the broader category that they represent.

Dominant cultural attitudes about violence also play a significant role in determining the resort to violence. For example, cultures that judge 'violence as a powerful and definitive response to "insult" and a good way of restoring "honour" '[17] tend to support individual decisions to use violence. Therefore, killing is not 'naturally deviant' because some forms of killing may be culturally or socially sanctioned.[18] The resort to force then makes perfect sense within the actor's own set of values, perspectives and beliefs and the expression of violence incorporates and conveys these cultural meanings, choices, values and beliefs. Violence is a product of socio-cultural and historical processes and 'informed by material constraints and incentives as well as by historical structures and by the cultural representation of these two sets of conditions'.[19] Thus, no act of violence can be fully understood without viewing it as part of a longer pattern of events[20] and taking into account both expressive and instrumental facets of the same. Moreover, given its social context, no simple distinction can be made between functional and symbolic practice, as 'instrumental action is always simultaneously semantic'.[21]

Third, this work accepts that there is a division between the organizations that deploy suicide bombers and the individuals who commit suicide attacks, and asserts that despite this distinction the choice of suicide violence is a rational one for both parties involved. For the organization and its leaders, i.e. for those who are willing to kill, suicide attacks are a rational choice because they are tactically economical, flexible and have a powerful impact both psychologically and strategically. For the individual, i.e. those who are willing to die, suicide attacks are a rational choice because they represent a powerful device to communicate the bomber's message to multiple audiences and achieve equally important material and non-material ends. No matter what the individual's motivation, the cost of sacrificing the mortal life is much less than the benefits they accrue in doing so. Hence a calculated instrumental and symbolic rationality exists and simultaneously operates at both organizational and individual levels. This work then counters the false dichotomy between expressive and instrumental violence by conceptualizing a suicide attack as a rational act of violence with clearly identifiable instrumental and expressive functions that operate in tandem.

The 'altruistic suicide' of individual bombers

So how does an individual arrive at a decision where the cost of sacrificing one's life is less than the benefits accrued? From 1993 to 2006, public opinion polls reflect a relatively high, if fluctuating, degree of Palestinian support for suicide operations against Israel, with peaks in public opinion matched by a corresponding rise in suicide attacks. Organizations like Hamas undoubtedly played a key role in supplying suicide bombers in direct response to shifting public opinion, however three points are worth noting: first, while organizations like Hamas undoubtedly provided the initial impetus for suicide bombings they did not need to necessarily brainwash all their recruits; second, by the al-Aqsa intifada of 2000, the sheer numbers of individuals willing to sacrifice themselves meant that organizations had to turn away volunteers; third, over time, volunteers for suicide missions became much more loosely affiliated with specific organizations, choosing instead to affiliate with any group willing to provide them with the infrastructure and logistics to conduct an operation.

Based on these key considerations it does not seem illogical to suggest that, to a large degree, this individual self-sacrifice was impelled by altruistic motives rather than organizational pressure, though incidents of the latter obviously also exist. The basic pre-requisite for altruistic suicide is a high level of social integration[22] with the result that the individual completely subsumes the self to the higher collective order.[23] Altruistic motives are of course heavily influenced by social values. In Palestinian society, individual self-sacrifice is highly respected and honoured for its selfless and altruistic nature. As such, self-sacrifice becomes a strong mechanism for the individual bomber to both bind with and represent the values of their

community. Through their martyrdom the suicide bomber not only reasserts their integration with the society but also solidifies these bonds and social values. At the same time, the bombers also delineate and assert personal space within this society and, in doing so, stand apart from the very community they seek to represent. Thus, a suicide mission, from the individual's perspective, becomes a key link between themselves and the society they seek to defend and represent. As ‘values are elaborated and egotistical interests are provisionally set aside, these periods [in our case, each suicide attack], evanescent though they may be, remain in the memory of the collectivity as periods of supreme integration’.[24] Altruistic suicide is, at its core, the result of the individual's sense of responsibility to the broader community and their irrevocable belief that they must defend and preserve the family, community and/or nation[25] and the cost of their personal death is less than the benefit accrued by their family/community/nation. Communicative relations between groups and individuals also create a scenario where individual conduct stimulates others to perform certain acts that, in turn, become a stimulus engendering a certain reaction, and so on in ‘ceaseless interaction’.[26] Symbols are in essence ‘acts that call out responses of the other while responding to the acts performed by the other’.[27] Symbolic actions, therefore, assume crucial importance as they represent the means of eliciting a response from an internal or external other. Suicide missions thus became the individual's response to Palestinian and Israeli actions and as symbolic acts they also stimulated a reaction in both Palestinian and Israeli communities. The key reaction engendered in the internal other, i.e. the Palestinians who had not volunteered for suicide missions, was to encourage them to adopt self-sacrifice as a means of protest and service to society. Thus, the highly integrated individual's sense of community responsibility effectively explains why so many Palestinians volunteered for suicide operations in a period when Palestinian society was under tremendous pressure, while both the increasing numbers of volunteers and unaffiliated suicide bombers suggests that such ‘altruistic self-sacrifice’ acquired, for a time at least, enough individual momentum to engender a chain of ‘ceaseless interaction’ within Palestinian society.

The organization's role in promoting suicide violence

Of course, the role of the organization must not be underestimated in initiating and promulgating suicide attacks. Not only did various organizations, including Hamas, provide the initial impetus for suicide bombings but they also continued to play a vital role in providing both recruits and volunteers with the infrastructure and logistics to conduct operations against Israel. The sharp decline in suicide operations post-2006 reflects key shifts in Hamas's strategic goals but also suggests that suicide bombings require active organizational support to operate in tandem with individual motivations. In short, a sustainable suicide bombing campaign requires a continuing dialectic between organizations and individuals. Of course, the strategic logic of suicide

bombings is clearly evident for organizations like Hamas, which uses them as a political and military tactic. At a purely tactical level, the suicide bomber is the epitome of the ‘smart bomb’ for the organization because the bomber can select the time and place of the attack in order to ensure that maximum damage is inflicted. In conditions of asymmetrical conflict, this is a key consideration for the organization opting to use this method of engagement. Tactically, the military mission is also made simpler for the organization which never needs to map an escape route and the fact that the bomber dies in a successful mission ensures that no information can be gleaned through capture and torture.[28] Human bombs are also an extremely cost-effective means of engagement for the organization. All that is required are some explosives, nails, a battery and switch with a short length of cable, a sturdy belt with large compartments to pack it all in and, of course, a volunteer to carry it all to the designated target. In the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the most expensive part of a suicide operation tends to be the taxi fare to the target city[29] but the psychological damage inflicted upon the target population is disproportionately high in comparison.[30] Suicide attacks also signal to the bomber's own constituency that the struggle is underway and the enemy is vulnerable. This can potentially motivate others to resort to similar tactics. Bombing campaigns also serve to effectively attract and capture the attention of the international media, thus seeming to represent a win-win scenario for the organization that opts to use them.

Other than the most obvious tactical advantages suicide operations also serve long-term strategic functions. A great deal of work has been done on the strategic logic of suicide attacks on the organizational level. Robert Pape, for instance, believes that suicide bombings are used as a part of campaigns specifically aimed at coercing modern liberal democracies into making significant territorial concessions.[31] Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela suggest that Hamas used suicide operations as a mechanism of negotiation, survival and competition in order to ensure its survival in the Palestinian political arena.[32] The ‘spoiler thesis’ sees suicide bombings as a mechanism used to derail attempts to improve relations between Israelis and Palestinians,[33] suggesting that violence is used to undermine and halt a negotiated settlement and should be expected whenever such a settlement becomes imminent. Others argue that suicide violence is often retaliatory and a response to external provocation.[34] Mia Bloom sees suicide bombings as a form of outbidding amongst factions that use it as a tool to accumulate political capital and prestige.[35] She suggests that in the Palestinian scenario ‘the support for militant Islamic movements appears to have captured previously “non-aligned constituents” demonstrating that martyrdom operations boost the organizational profile of the groups utilizing them’.[36]

However, while these multiple strategic motivations need to be factored into any analysis of Hamas's use of suicide operations, they will always provide partial explanations that must be balanced by taking into account the increasing individual momentum for suicide operations.

Suicide attacks are therefore best understood as not only the converging point of multiple rationalities but also as a complex amalgamation of expressive and instrumental violence. Based upon this logic a closer examination of organizational and individual motivations in the Palestinian setting suggests that they conflate along three broad lines:

1. Suicide attacks as survival. This refers to political durability and survival for Hamas as an organization but is much more visceral for the individual who is focused upon the survival of the family, community and/or nation.
2. Suicide attacks as retaliation. For Hamas this is retaliation against its key internal and external rivals, i.e. Fatah and Israel, while for the individual this retaliation tends to be directed at 'the occupation'.
3. Suicide attacks as competition. Again this is vis-à-vis Fatah for Hamas but tends to be for personal and societal honour amongst individuals.

In locating how organizational and individual rationalities and motivations broadly conflate, we can more holistically comprehend why suicide attacks emerged, escalated and became a sustained form of engagement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This will be discussed in further detail in Chapters 4.

Palestinian nationalism and national identity formation

A second concept that is crucial for developing the understanding of how and why suicide bombings emerged in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is that of nationalism. Nationalism and the attempt to establish a nation-state are the key reasons behind the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. As Juval Portugali observes: 'Zionism and Palestinianism were the very origins, the very generative forces which have brought into existence both Israeli and Palestinian societies as well as the conflicts between them'.[37] However, this work in trying to identify mainly the internal impetuses for the emergence of suicide violence focuses primarily on Palestinian nationalism, though Zionism and the Israeli state are also acknowledged as playing a formative role in the evolution of Palestinian identity.

But what precisely is nationalism? Nationalism provides individuals with the means for collective security, belonging and identity, and at its very core focuses on the 'distribution of land among nations'.[38] The definitional essence of nations and national identity is perhaps best encapsulated by Antony Smith who states that a nation is 'a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members'.[39] Such a definition places the elements of 'territory, place and environment (i.e. spatial entities) in relation to people and their

collective memories (i.e. temporal entities)'[40] as the fundamental components of nations and national identity. Thus, territorial and statehood claims are legitimized and justified by nations through a process of referring to their history on the land – which in essence tends to take the form of recounting the memory of a continuous and long-standing association with the land claimed. Of course, myths and legends are a part and parcel of such a narration and history is constantly remade and reinterpreted in the telling.[41] At the same time, the remaking and reinterpretation of history is rooted in the narrator's circumstances and experiences of historical processes and impacted by those the narrator deems as significant 'others'.[42] In other words, fundamentally embedded in the construction of history are relations of power.

Given that nationalism is tied to a specific geographical space, a 'homeland', which is imbued with meaning and subject to history creating and myths and romanticized in art and literature, it is in essence an 'ideology of boundedness'.[43] Nationalism is also a homogenization project in that it attempts to carve out a common identity[44] on the basis of shared experiences, memories, spaces and others. It applies norms of conformity to a given society and is, in that sense, about conforming to norms, about 'being like others and doing … what others do'.[45] Language, religion, tradition are all vehicles of facilitating homogenization and thereby creating the nation. Nations are thus socially and culturally constructed; in other words they are imagined through language, religion, norms and traditions. Hence, as the nation and nationalism emerge in the modern era as both construct and process[46] one must acknowledge the importance of *la longue durée* in studying the formation of both. It must also be emphasized that nationalism, as both a construct and process, is not some latent force that spontaneously and unpredictably manifests itself only under extraordinary circumstances and situations of pressure. Rather, it is an ongoing discourse that consistently shapes the consciousness of a nation and in doing so determines how that nation constitutes the meaning of the world.[47] National movements are, in turn, an extension of the politicized dynamic nation and can therefore be understood as the phenomenon of a nation mobilized. In other words, a national movement is a protest community that seeks statehood for the nation it represents.[48]

The Palestinian struggle for national identity is a crucial element in comprehending the emergence of suicide operation in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Indeed, Hamas's use of suicide bombings is the latest step in a progressively escalating trajectory of violence aimed at constructing a Palestinian identity and state. Suicide bombings must be contextualized as the most recent, albeit the most brutal, manifestation of the Palestinian concept of militant heroic martyrdom – a conception that is not only historically entrenched in the Palestinian consciousness but one that has consistently evolved over time to finally produce this phenomenon. Consequently, Hamas must be seen as no more than inserting itself into a pre-existing culture of militant heroic martyrdom that it has appropriated, reinterpreted and

articulated in the form of suicide operations.

Palestinian national identity has been seen by many as exceptional and unique given the conflict-ridden history of the region. One can identify two broad approaches to this phenomenon that, unsurprisingly, emerge from two diametrically opposite political poles.[49] The first approach, primarily Israeli in origin, tends to regard the Palestinian national consciousness as reactive and thus asserts the non-existence or illegitimacy of a separate Palestinian identity.[50] The second approach emphasizes the essentialism of the Palestinians and stresses their presence and linkages with the land since time immemorial.[51] This work combines both approaches and views Palestinian nationalism and identity as being consistently constructed and reconstructed at the point where both external and internal factors convene.[52] Additionally, it believes that any genuine understanding of the formation of Palestinian national identity must be based in a long-term study of how it has evolved over time because nationalism and national identity are not monolithic, but multifaceted and fluid concepts that are continuously negotiated, both internally and externally.[53] As such, because nationalism changes with historical processes it is misleading to speak of one Palestinian nationalism. Instead one needs to develop an understanding of how nationalism, as it exists in Palestine today, was arrived at.[54] To this end, one must trace the evolution and construction of Palestinian national identity as may be seen from the early twentieth century to the present. Recounting this history, separately from the political history of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and its key players (which is contextualized in the following chapter) allows one to locate certain reoccurring key themes in the construction of Palestinian national identity, which include oppression, emasculation, degradation, dispossession, humiliation, sacrifice, heroic martyrdom, suffering and also defeat. This evolution of this powerful narrative can be traced through twentieth century Palestinian prose, poetry, graffiti, slogans, murals, posters and leaflets and these themes can be located in the political rhetoric of various organizations, including Hamas, even today.

Locating the role of militant heroic martyrdom in the formation and evolution of Palestinian national identity

The modern ideology of nationalism emerged in Palestine in the early twentieth century. Pre-Mandatory Palestine was merely an occasional administrative or cultural concept and certainly did not constitute a politico-cultural boundary distinct from modern Syria.[55] Palestinian society under the Ottomans was composed mostly of peasants *(fellahin*) and a strong landowning class that was comprised of local clan leaders and city notables or *a'yan*. Over time the *a'yan,* as urban-based landlords, emerged as the dominant political, economic and cultural elites,[56] and in the post-Ottoman period viewed, in an independent Palestine, a chance to further their own ambitions. But while their policies subordinated national interest to personal aspirations they still

fermented the first notion of an autonomous Palestinian state.

The period during the First World War also saw the rise of Arab nationalism which was used by both the British and the French governments to manipulate the growing anti-Turkish sentiment in the region for their own ends. The division of the Middle East into British and French mandates[57] provided this early Arab nationalism the impetus to develop into an anti-imperialist nationalism. Interestingly, Arab nationalism only had marginal appeal in Palestine, and Palestinian nationalism, which began taking shape around 1910, was based more on local patriotism than on Arabism. By the early 1920s, this Palestinian nationalism was fast being consolidated and while all levels of society were mobilized and participative in the crystallization of Palestinian nationalism,[58] factional differences between the *a'yan* posed hurdles for a unified national movement as did differences between the landowners and peasants as well as differences between the Muslims and Christians.[59] Indeed the early twentieth century was represented by an indecisive, fragmented nationalism that oscillated between Arabism, Ottomanism and Palestinianism.[60] Even so, despite these hurdles, by the early to mid-1920s, a proto-national elite had emerged with not only a national programme but also the initiation of a Palestinian identity as distinct from other Arabs. The period immediately preceding the First World War also saw an immense increase in Jewish immigration and land purchase while the post-war period was characterized by increasing land alienation and urbanization for the Palestinian peasantry. What resulted was the gradual creation of the most stable 'other' in Palestinian politics, i.e. the Zionist entity. Indeed very early expressions of Palestinian nationalism already reflect themes of impotence and degradation vis-à-vis the imperial and Zionist presence in Palestine. The Palestinian literature from this period shows a high degree of self-loathing and criticism levelled at the general populace and its inability to resist British and Zionist powers, and a sense of futility and despair characterizes the narrative from this period.

The Great Revolt of 1936 marks a key shift in this narrative and the selfimage of the Palestinian nation. Sheikh 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam, who called for the peasant rebellion of 1936, brought together dispossessed peasants and the *shabab*[61] to give rise to the first Islamic-nationalistic militancy in Palestine.[62] More crucially, in the period before the revolt, traditional portrayals of Palestinian impotence and degradation were increasingly accompanied by celebrations of Palestinian violence against British and Jewish populations. Violence was used not only to raise Palestinian morale but also to enhance self-esteem by glorifying the heroism of the slain, as those who resisted inevitably were. At the same time the narrative continued to renounce the cowardice and moral degeneracy of the Palestinian people as a whole while also calling upon them to participate in the resistance for the homeland. Thus, militant heroic martyrdom and sacrifice came to be increasingly lauded and consistently juxtaposed against shameful cowardice and moral degeneracy. This narrative was further strengthened by the

revolutionary fervour of those who participated in the revolt in this period and who emphasized the necessity of courage and self-sacrifice. Qassam himself is remembered in Palestinian history as one of the first *mujahids'*[63]' and is reputed to have ordered his men to die as martyrs. It would be no exaggeration to state that the revolutionaries of 1936, the Qassamites as they came to be known, initiated the militarization of the Palestinian notion of martyrdom. Socioeconomic adversity also led to the mingling of nationalist grievances with Islamic symbolism to construct a powerful nationalist discourse. 'Religious discourse did not stand in opposition to nationalism; rather religiousness augmented nationalist sentiments in an effective combination of the use of symbols connected to the land, peasantry and national idiom'.[64] The Revolt of 1936 marked the invention of a 'folk nationalism' and a popular culture emerged which romanticized the peasants and emphasized Palestinian links to land. Many of the ideas that Qassam instrumentalized and vocalized in specifically Islamic terms, including those of self-sacrifice, martyrdom and struggle have been used consistently in the brand of nationalism advocated by not only Hamas, which claims him as its predecessor, but also the so-called secular Fatah.

The next phase of Palestinian nationalism only emerged with the massacres of 1948 essentially because the heavy-handed British response to the revolt had effectively culled the Palestinian leadership. The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 resulted in the first Arab-Israeli war and the resulting dispersal *(shatat)* and large-scale displacement of the Palestinian population. The *nakba*, i.e. the catastrophe, as the 1948–1949 war and expulsion of the Palestinians is referred to in Arabic, was characterized by violence, fear and the resultant increase in refugee flows.[65] The *nakba* built upon 'folk nationalism' of the late 1930s with its emphasis upon Palestinian links to land and engendered a Palestinian identity of a dispossessed and oppressed people – an identity that was based in emasculation, degradation and humiliation – themes that overtook those of martyrdom and self-sacrifice that were so prominent in the 1930s. These themes of impotence, loss, shame, sadness and overwhelming shock dominated the vocalization of Palestinian identity in the post-1948 period. Yet it must also be said that despite the immense social, political and economic fracturing engendered by the *nakba*, the 1948 experience of defeat and dispossession also served to unite the Palestinians as social and political marginality in host Arab states combined with the shared trauma of displacement to generate a common Palestinian identity like never before.

The period immediately after the first Arab-Israeli war, like the period following the 1936 revolt, was again marked by a lacuna in Palestinian leadership and an immense fragmentation of all social strata.[66] This period is also characterized by the active use of Arab nationalism to rescue the Palestinian cause. By the 1950s, however, a new generation of Palestinian activists had emerged accompanied by a resurgence of violent tactics. These new activists emerged in the form of small groups often based out of refugee camps, and became known as the *fedayeen*.[67]

Certainly the narrative constructed as a result of the 1948 *nakba*, emphasizing the experiences of humiliation and misery, helped create the context in the refugee camps for the emergence of this *fedayeen* ideology and enabled the Palestinians to construct a paradigm for interpreting violence against Israel. This paradigm helped frame all violence as a necessary and heroic contribution to the national struggle. Consequently, violence and militarized heroic martyrdom once again became the means to redress the loss of land and prestige and to regain agency and power. Of the newly emerging radical political activist groups, Fatah was the first to articulate Palestinian nationalism in territorial terms and was as such crucial to the construction of the idea of a Palestinian identity that was state-based. As guerrilla activities increased in the period leading up to the 1967 war, armed struggle successfully infused the humiliated and broken Palestinian identity with renewed dignity, pride and vigour and the themes of self-sacrifice and struggle once again became central components of Palestinian national identity.

By the mid-1960s then, Palestinian national identity was constructed upon a *fedayeen* ideology and incorporated symbols of the *nakba* – i.e. *shatat*, defeat, expulsion, dispossession, suffering, as well as of sacrifice and militant heroic martyrdom. The 1967 defeat[68] of the Arab alliance against the Israelis in the Six Day War not only served to consolidate this disaster and resistance-based Palestinian identity but also led to the emergence of a belief that Arab nations were impotent in their ability to effectively assist the Palestinians in their quest for statehood. The national ideology now became founded upon the belief that Palestine would be liberated by Palestinian action. At the same time, despite this humiliating defeat ongoing guerrilla activity continued to bolster the image of the Palestinians as a military, revolutionary people willing and able to fight and die for their lost homeland. Thus, armed struggle once again became the prime source of political legitimacy and national identity. Moreover, the centrality of self-sacrifice in the literature from this period seems to vouch for the fact that militant heroic martyrdom was firmly entrenched in the Palestinian cultural consciousness as a constitutive, regulatory, evaluative and practical norm by at least the 1960s.[69] As such, armed struggle did no more than further steer the course of evolution for what was already a well-established norm in Palestinian society.

A number of political events in the 1970s once again consolidated the Palestinian feelings of vulnerability, hopelessness and the belief that they were alone in their quest for a state. However, the 1970s also saw the rise of strong waves of Palestinian nationalism in West Bank and Gaza. This was the direct result of the increasing Israeli policy of suppression as well as the drive to build new settlements in the Occupied Territories combined with a policy to ‘de-develop’ the Palestinian economy and to tie it with the Israeli economy in a structural relationship of dependency.[70] The feeling of dispossession and frustration continued to build within the Palestinian community. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 which killed thousands of

Palestinian civilians in combination with Fatah's shift from pure guerrilla warfare to a combination of military and diplomatic tactics, leading eventually to a use of diplomacy to the exclusion of other means, generated increasing popular discontentment with the impotency of Palestinian leadership in the face of escalating hardship and oppression.[71]

The outbreak of the first intifada (literally meaning ‘rising up and shaking off’ in Arabic) in 1987 marked the re-emergence of Palestinian violent opposition and was the logical culmination of 20 years of frustration with Israeli occupation, over a century of upheaval and disruption and the evolution of Palestinian nationalism. The intifada was characterized by the policy of limited violent confrontation, which involved stone throwing or the use of Molotov cocktails, mass demonstrations, civil disobedience and confrontations with the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF), and the heavy-handed Israeli response to the intifada only served to strengthen the Palestinian resolve to fight the occupation. The theme of the heroic martyr willing to die for his homeland re-emerged strongly in this period. This cultural construction of heroic martyrdom enabled the Palestinians to capture the higher moral ground and fuelled the dominant rhetoric surrounding Israeli occupation, which in turn resulted in a ‘justifiable’ escalation of violent resistance. By 1993 the Palestinian national struggle was significantly more militarized as was evident by the appearance of the conflict's first suicide attacks that, unsurprisingly, were framed as acts of militant heroic martyrdom. How these key themes of Palestinian selfhood, evolved over nearly a century, have fed into the use of suicide operations against Israel for both the organization and individuals is more fully discussed in Chapters 5.

Political Islam and the ‘jihad' against Israel

A third and final concept necessary to understand the emergence of suicide bombings in our particular case is the rise of political Islam in Palestinian society. Political Islam has wrought such significant changes in Palestinian politics over the past two decades that today it constitutes a formidable challenge to the secular Palestinian national movement. Most importantly, the influence of political Islam in Palestine has deeply altered the shape and character of violent confrontation with the Israeli state, especially over the past 20 years. A key manifestation of this shift has been the (re)emergence of the rhetoric of jihad or holy war that is used by organizations like Hamas to motivate Palestinians down the path of political violence. Another indicator of this shift has been the use of this Islamic rhetoric to justify the emergence and use of suicide attacks against Israeli targets in the early 1990s.

Often referred to as Islamism or Fundamentalism, political Islam refers to movements and ideologies that draw upon Islamic terms, symbols and events in order to articulate a distinctly modern, political agenda.[72] Typically the project of political Islam supplies a comprehensive

critique of the existing order, challenges it and strives to change it. As such, it is a political instrumentalization of Islam in that it provides a political response to contemporary challenges by attempting to create a future based on reappropriated, reinvented concepts rooted in Islamic traditions. At the same time, political Islam is an essentially modern phenomenon in that it addresses contemporary political, social, economic and cultural realities and challenges faced by Muslim societies. Political Islam does not exist in a vacuum and is, in many ways, a response to secular ideologies in the Middle East that 'flourished under the banner of anti-colonialism, economic and social justice, nationalism and development independent of the West'.[73] Modern political Islam therefore co-exists with, and responds to, secular ideologies in the Middle East and operates at the intersections with major twentieth century ideologies such as Marxism, Fascism, Nationalism and Capitalism. Consequently, it shares with these secular movements both grievances and goals while also contesting the same set of symbols and memories. At its core then political Islam is a political activist project dressed in the garb of religious rhetoric. Its primary concern is power in the world order and its activism rests upon the belief that an Islamic society is a just one.

Political Islam has been employed both from above, to legitimize a certain regime, or from below, to provide a basis for opposition to the status quo. It generally preaches a return to the Qur'an, the Sunna and shari'a while rejecting the commentaries that have been a part of the tradition, demanding instead the right to *ijtihad* or individual interpretation. Because of its unmitigated belief that an Islamized society is a just one the Islamization project is central to political Islam, as is the belief that this Islamization can only be achieved through concentrated social and political action. Therefore, for the followers of political Islam it is every Muslim's duty to revolt against a corrupt state and leader and work towards the application of shari'a law.[74] The more radical Islamists see this application of shari'a as a project based in a full reformation of the society if the Islamization mission is to be more than mere insincere lip service.

In recent times, political Islam has acquired a central role in the analysis of Middle Eastern politics and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is not excluded from this focus.[75] Various scholars believe that the resurgence of political Islam in the Middle East is the result of a complex combination of reasons including: the overall deterioration of socio-economic conditions in the region, the collapse of prevailing political systems, a rejection of foreign influences and the concurrent assertion of a specific cultural identity. Moreover, while Islamic resurgence is not a new phenomenon and Islamic history has traditionally seen the emergence and decline of various revivalist movements, the contemporary resurgence, various writers assure us, is fundamentally different as it has been profoundly impacted by the region's colonial experience which introduced into the Middle East, alongside capitalist exploitation and numerous artificially created states, a host of Western ideologies. This not only wrought far-reaching changes in the

region but the resulting modernization and industrialization raised literacy levels and sidelined traditional Islamic-based learning, thus creating conditions where Arab identity was strongly challenged by notions of Western social order. These factors, culminating with the humiliating Arab defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, marked the decline of secular pan-Arabism as well as general Arab alienation from political rulers and systems. In short, as Arab masses moved away from secular political ideologies and looked instead towards Islam to provide them with a sense of identity, they effectively facilitated the re-emergence of political Islam in the post-1967 period.

However, Beverley Milton-Edwards highlights that in the Palestinian context almost the opposite holds true and resurgence theory does not really fully encompass either contemporary Palestinian reality or historical experience. Indeed, Palestine in the post-1967 period saw not the resurgence of political Islam but a vigorous consolidation of a secular nationalism that eclipsed political Islam in the territories. As such, the rise of political Islam in the Palestinian territories is wedded to a very peculiar set of political circumstances, and groups like Hamas cannot be seen as the 'reincarnation of the Khomeini-style rhetoric of the early 1980s, nor (…) the Wahhabi fundamentalists of Arabia, nor do they mirror the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt'.[76] Instead, the political Islam of the groups located in the West Bank and Gaza has been uniquely shaped by the British colonial experience, Zionist immigration, the shock and displacement of the *nakba*, Jordanian and Egyptian rule from 1948–1967, the Israeli occupation in 1967, the Palestinian resistance of the 1970s and 1980s, and of course the 1987 intifada which heralded a radical transformation of Palestinian politics.[77] As such, it is the first intifada rather then the 1967 defeat that effectively marks the full-scale re-emergence of political Islam and sectarian politics in the Palestinian territories.

Political Islam in Palestine

At the same time it must be emphasized that political Islam is by no means a novel phenomenon in Palestine. As noted previously, its earliest manifestations can be traced to the political activism of Qassam and his ardent supporters (the Qassamites) in the 1930s. Qassam was not only the first radical Islamic leader in Palestinian politics but he also successfully mobilized working-class and peasant Palestinians as part of his Islamic revival that sought to liberate Palestine from foreign occupation. Qassam declared a jihad upon the occupiers the holy land of Palestine, and his activist message of jihad and martyrdom was successfully disseminated by the Qassamites even after his death. Of course, the Qassamites were never logistically strong enough 'to transform their revolt into a total jihad'.[78] Their revolt was also ruthlessly crushed by the British with the result that by 1948 most of the Qassamites had either been imprisoned or had fled Palestine bringing this first phase of political Islam to an effective close. However, it must

be noted that even by this early period it was already clear that in Palestine the 'Islamic political trend would always interact with the dynamics of nationalism'.[79]

Despite the failure of the Qassamites, political Islam continued to have a presence in Palestine through the Society of the Muslim Brotherhood (i.e. the Ikhwan al-Muslimun, the parent organization of Hamas) that was established by the schoolteacher, Hasan al-Banna, in Egypt in 1928. Al-Banna's movement, committed to a reformist approach, was well aware of the growing crisis in Palestine. Palestine, as Islam's third holiest site, was not only viewed as an issue of utmost importance by the Brotherhood but the movement also firmly believed that the crisis of occupation was the result of the Palestinians abandoning their faith. As such, the Brotherhood was committed to a process of Islamic revival that they considered necessary if Palestine was to be saved from both British and Zionists forces. The Brothers believed that this revival would be followed by a jihad that would effectively establish an Islamic state in Palestine and resurrect the caliphate. To this end, the Egyptian Brotherhood began establishing branches in Palestine by 1945 and even waged a limited jihad against the Zionists in the 1948 war that established the state of Israel. However, as these *mujahidin* were mostly comprised of Egyptian volunteers the campaign lacked both internal organization and impetus that left the Brotherhood in Palestine rudderless and weak in the face of Israel's first victory over the Arabs. The ensuing Arabization of the conflict also significantly diluted the influence of political Islam that had been so effectively harnessed by figures like Qassam.

The period following the 1948 war also created unique conditions for political Islam in the West Bank and Gaza. First, the political message of Islam suffered a severe blow with the establishment of the Israeli nation-state. The Palestinian Ikhwan was also divided as a result of the 1948 war. In the Jordanian-controlled West Bank, the Brotherhood became associated with the Jordanian faction and flourished even as it came to be increasingly alienated from Palestinian concerns in favour of Jordanian interests. However, in Egyptian-controlled Gaza, the Brotherhood faced severe persecution at the hands of President Gamal Abdul Nasser whose pan-Arab nationalism was deeply hostile towards political Islam. As such the weak and divided forces of Islam in Palestine, despite repeated promises of a jihad, were unable to mount any sort of effective internal challenge to the Zionist forces. By the late 1960s the forces of political Islam had undergone a dramatic transformation in both the West Bank and Gaza. In the West Bank, the Brotherhood had become a moderate Islamic force focused on bringing slow societal reform while in Gaza the ideology of political Islam and the Brotherhood had been systematically decimated by both Nasser's crackdown as well as the general societal shift towards more secular nationalist politics. In these circumstances, the 1967 Arab defeat heralded a revival of secular nationalism led by Fatah and the PLO and their strategy of armed resistance to Zionist occupation, which in turn further eroded the forces of political Islam in what were now the

occupied territories under Israel.

It was a combination of both external and internal developments that impacted the re-emergence of political Islam in the late 1970s and early 1980s in the Palestinian territories. Internally, Israeli funding directed towards the promotion of Islam, especially in the Gaza Strip, assisted the consolidation of Islam as a political force against the secular nationalists. Hence, the decade before the 1987 intifada gave the Islamic movement in Palestine more than enough opportunity to establish itself organizationally within the Palestinian political arena. By the early 1980s, the Muslim Brotherhood, institutionalized as the Islamic Centre (al-Mujamma' al-islami) in Gaza under the astute leadership of Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, began to emerge as a formidable political force, one that was strong enough to rival the secular nationalist movement. The Mujamma' also made significant inroads into Palestinian society because of its social and welfare activities combined with its quiet message of reform through teaching, education and preaching. By 1982 the secular nationalists were also factionalized and in retreat following the PLO's crushing defeat in Lebanon at the hands of the Israeli army. In the West Bank, on the other hand, the Muslim Brotherhood attracted a new generation of supporters who had grown up under Israeli occupation and the Islamic resurgence here developed through its own momentum rather than in concert with the movement in Gaza.[80] Now the notion of an Islamic movement committed to a jihad against the forces of occupation once again emerged strongly within the Palestinian political arena and was given its first modern militant face by the activities of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) – a radical faction that split from the more moderate Muslim Brotherhood.

Externally, the 1979 Iranian revolution with its message of activist Islam also represented a key influence. While initially the Mujamma' declared its support for the revolutionary ideas promoted by Khomeini it later retracted this support as Iran began berating Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states – a major source of funding for the organization – for straying from the path of true Islam. The PIJ on the other hand, wholeheartedly adopted Khomeini's revolutionary Islamic model that made jihad against the Zionist occupation of Palestine obligatory for all true Muslims. Indeed, the PIJ as an activist movement committed to a revolutionary political programme, politicized the conflict in a manner not seen since Qassam in the 1930s. In doing so, the PIJ not only 'challenged nationalist sentiments about Palestine' but also 'appropriated them and used them to support its call for liberation'.[81] Portraying itself as the vanguard of Islam, dedicated to wrestling the holy land of Palestine through a jihad waged on infidel occupiers, the PIJ captured the political imagination of the frustrated and disenchanted Palestinian masses and launched its military campaign against the Israeli occupation in the Gaza Strip in late 1986. This appropriation of explicitly nationalist goals by the Islamic movement represented the full-blown re-emergence of political Islam in the Palestinian territories, harnessed once again, as it

traditionally always had been, to nationalist aspirations. This revolutionary activism of the PIJ also forced the Muslim Brotherhood to come to terms with a new and changed political reality. As a result, the Mujamma' abandoned its approach of quiet reform and established Hamas as its military arm in order to participate in the intifada that spontaneously erupted in early 1987 and in doing so, unknowingly, altered the face of political Islam and politics in the Palestinian territories forever. Hamas rapidly overshadowed its parent organization and successfully established itself as the dominant Islamic, anti-occupation force in the Palestinian territories over the course of the first and second intifada.

Political Islam and the jihad against the Israeli state

It is interesting to note that despite the numerous calls for jihad against the Zionist occupiers, what this jihad entails and how it should be conducted remains both unclear and open to interpretation. This is perhaps because despite being a notion central to Islam, the concept of jihad is frustratingly elusive due to its polyvalent nature. It is made even more complex by being layered over with interpretations of political Islam. In the Palestinian context, the key question is how groups like Hamas use a complex nationalist conception of jihad to motivate and encourage Palestinians down a path of political violence. Jihad, for both the Shi'ia and Sunni Muslims, is a struggle in the path of God and a religious duty incumbent upon all Muslims to defend land, life, the faith and the freedom to spread the faith.[82] Both sects believe in the distinction between the greater jihad of personal spiritual struggle, and the lesser jihad of battle and strife. Yet despite these broad similarities even a cursory glance at the historical use and development of jihad illustrates that there is no single doctrine of jihad that has existed consistently, always and everywhere, or that has been universally accepted. This is primarily because there has been no unanimity of opinion amongst various schools of thought on interpretations of the Qur'an and Sunna. Hence the Shi'ia and Sunni disagree, for example, with regard to who possesses the proper authority to sanction a jihad.[83] Even so, jihad can be located within the broader Islamic theory of statecraft and its struggle for a just and equal social order. In Islamic legal theory then, jihad is a temporary design devised to achieve the ideal Islamic public order.[84]

Traditionally, Islam divides the world into dar al-islam and dar al-harb. The former is the realm of Islam, as exemplified by a political entity that acknowledges the supremacy of Islamic values. The latter is the realm of war and is exemplified by human ignorance and heedlessness. The realm of Islam is theoretically a territory of peace and justice while the realm of war is a territory characterized by internal strife and disorder. In order to fully secure the peace of the world, all people need to be a part of an Islamic state. Therefore, traditionally there has always existed the imperative for all Muslims to extend the boundaries of *dar al-islam* with the aim of establishing peace with justice within a secure political order.[85] Jihad is therefore the struggle to

expand the boundaries of the realm of Islam and, for especially the Sunni jurists, occurs at the intersection of *dar al-islam* and *dar al-harb*.[86] Of course, a major divergence can be located in the modern radical Islamist's use of religious expression and their medieval connotations. Thus, the medieval dichotomy between *dar al-islam* and *dar al-harb* was predicated on the jurist's understanding of the moral and military superiority of the Islamic civilization. Yet this dichotomy in the works of twentieth century writers like al-Banna and Khomeini, and consequently in the thinking of those they inspire, reflects an understanding based on a radically different historical reality: that of European colonialism and unfavourable American policies in the Middle East. These thinkers, unlike their medieval counterparts, tend to depict the *dar al-islam* and *dar al-harb* dichotomy as a struggle between Islam and the West. Similarly, whereas the medieval jurists were preoccupied by concerns of who possessed the right authority to declare a jihad, for the contemporary radical Islamist, jihad is the duty incumbent upon all true believers who must use whatever means are necessary, including violence, to overthrow unpopular, corrupt regimes to establish a just Islamic order.

Yet jihad is not necessarily a 'holy war' (i.e. a religious war) or indeed even a violent struggle, as the struggle to expand the boundaries of *dar al-islam* can take place in many ways. Ibn Rushd, a medieval writer of the twelfth century, implicitly separates the grounds for jihad from the grounds for war. He identifies jihad as the perpetual condition that exists between *dar al-islam* and *dar al-harb*, and as such a consistent moral obligation *(fard kifaya*) for all those capable of assuming it. Actual warfare, *qital* or *harb*, was only the final step in the ladder of escalation.[87] Yet what is crucial here is that, for the Sunni jurists, force represents an accepted and useful means of extending the territory of Islam. Thus the use of force, while never a first resort, is certainly a valid option.[88]

A vital difference between the Sunni and the Shi'ia rests in their views on who possesses the right authority to declare a jihad. The Sunnis believe that authority rests with the caliph who with the support of the *ulama*, i.e. the religious scholars, wields the necessary political and religious right to declare a jihad. The Shi'ias, on the other hand, believe that the religious and political authority to declare a jihad was unjustly wrestled away from the Imams who were the true successors to Prophet Muhammad and as such only a defensive jihad is permissible.[89] This conceptual difference has translated into the evolution of two different typologies of jihad – one defensive and the other offensive.

The idea of a defensive jihad is based upon a defence of religion, or more precisely, the defence of a political entity identified with Islamic values, while an offensive jihad views religion as a legitimate cause for extending *dar al-islam* by means of war. Modern Sunni thought has evolved striking parallels with the Shi'ite position and, as opposed to the classical Sunni perspective 'modernists'[90] tend to believe that according to the Qur'an a violent jihad may only

be invoked to defend Islamic territory or values. However, the more radical political Islamists, still believe in a more assertive, militant and violent interpretation and expression of jihad. Given their position as movements that tend to challenge the status quo and seek to overthrow established regimes, such an interpretation is perhaps not unexpected.[91]

Hamas, as a modern Sunni Muslim organization, effectively combines both typologies of jihad in its ideology and rhetoric, thereby effectively demonstrating the flexibility and adaptability of political Islam. Thus, on the one hand, it constructs an elaborate narrative to bolster its right to defend (i.e. via a defensive jihad) the Islamic territory of Palestine from Zionist aggression and occupation; while, on the other, it frames its long-term goal as the national liberation of all of historic Palestine through aggressive armed struggle (i.e. an offensive jihad) with Israel and firmly opposes any peace settlement which would compromise any part of a territory that is considered to be an Islamic *waqf* (endowment).[92] Hence jihad, facilitated by political Islam, has also become for contemporary Islamists like Hamas ‘an instrument for the realization of political and social justice in their own societies, a powerful tool for internal reform and one that is required by the Qur'an's command that Muslims “enjoin the right and forbid the

55 5 93

wrong. [93]

Given this background, one may see how political Islam is central to this analysis because, first, it enables an organization like Hamas to harness classical Islamic symbols and conceptions to modern secular ideologies – in this case, Palestinian nationalism. Second, it enables Hamas to weave an intricate narrative of jihad that meshes the ideals of an offensive jihad, waged against all those in the path of establishing a free, Islamic Palestinian state, with those of a defensive one. Hamas, therefore, justifies suicide violence as a defensive jihad necessary to confront a disproportionately powerful Israeli state. Hence, political Islam is used specifically as a tool to legitimize an escalation in violent confrontation with Israel as part of the Palestinian struggle for statehood. Such legitimization not only propelled the use of suicide violence in the territories from 1993 to 2006 but also successfully consolidated Hamas's unique position in the Palestinian political arena vis-à-vis more established players, like Fatah and the PLO.

Once again it must be emphasized that political Islam has never replaced the ideology of nationalism in the Palestinian territories, and the struggle for national identity has, as yet, never been superseded by the quest for an Islamic identity. Instead Hamas has both acquired and maintained legitimacy by deliberately and systematically harnessing political Islam to Palestinian nationalist aspirations and objectives. In this manner, political Islam, shaped by intersection with modern secular ideas and ideologies, has adapted to address contemporary international realities and co-opted the Palestinian nationalist agenda. It is political Islam that facilitates the convergence of the Palestinian nationalist project (which would obviously establish a state in the

Westphalian sense) with the classical Islamic agenda of establishing *dar al-islam* (i.e. the abode of peace which transcends all state and national boundaries). Political Islam also enables Hamas to reinterpret the parameters of an aggressive jihad and incorporate the use of suicide violence against Israel as a part of this violent jihad. This deliberate use of religious rhetoric to frame and justify violence against the Israeli state facilitates a distinctly modern political agenda as Hamas's political ambitions are specifically state-oriented and the political Islam is systematically used to garner legitimacy for the movement. This theme will be further developed in Chapters 6.

3 A brief political history of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict

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The intifada is more than a war. War lasts for days or months, but with us it is a way of life.
Bana Bassam al-Sayih [1]

Tracing the roots of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict

Any genuine attempt to understand the rise of Hamas and suicide violence in the Palestinian territories necessitates a comprehensive grasp of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the roots of which may be traced back to the late nineteenth century and the desire of the European Jewry to establish a Jewish state. Zionism, as the movement to establish a Jewish state in Palestine came to be known, had emerged as a Europe-wide political movement by 1897 under the leadership of Theodor Herzl; and most importantly, Herzl's influential 1896 pamphlet *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State) had already called for a Jewish home in Palestine.[2] While Palestine had been under the Ottomans since 1517, by 1897 there were approximately 400,000 Palestinian Arabs and 50,000 Palestinian Jews who lived side by side in this area.[3] The latter were mostly Orthodox Jews who survived largely on the charitable offerings of the European Jewry and lived in Palestine to study and pray, hoping eventually to die and be buried in the holy land. However, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Jews from Europe began arriving in Palestine in successive waves of immigration that were known as *aliyot* (singular: *aliyah* which means 'to ascend').[4] These new immigrants set up agricultural settlements on purchased land with the aim of establishing a Jewish homeland. Hence land was purchased in a highly systematic manner with the aim of establishing a contiguous chain of Jewish villages.[5] The Jewish National Fund (The Karen Kayemeth) was formed in 1901 with the express purpose of buying land for Jewish settlers and thereby redeeming 'the land of Palestine as the inalienable possession of the Jewish people'.[6] The Fund purchased large tracts of land in Palestine from absentee landlords who had emerged as a result of the late nineteenth century Ottoman implementation of a land registration system which had enabled wealthy absentees to gain legal titles to land previously owned by Arab farmers and their families under customary law. Under this system the family farmers continued to till and live on the land as tenants, mistakenly thinking that they preserved their customary rights to the land, though legally this was no longer the case.[7] Instead, as land was bought by the Fund, these Palestinian Arabs were evicted to make space for Jewish settlers.

Unsurprisingly over time there was a progressive build-up of Arab opposition to such land purchase and consequently to Jewish immigration and Zionism.[8] By the time the First World War broke out in 1914 the Arabs were involved in a concentrated effort to protest against and prohibit land sales to the Zionists, raise funds to purchase lands that could otherwise be sold to the Zionists and boycott goods produced by Jewish settlers. By this time dispossessed Arab farmers had also begun raiding the settlements built on their former lands.[9]

Palestinian fears and hostility were further compounded by the formal commitment made by the British foreign secretary, Arthur Balfour, in November 1917 to the establishment of a 'Jewish national home in Palestine'.[10] By 1918 Britain had crushed Ottoman armies and controlled all of Palestine – thus marking the end of four centuries of Ottoman rule in the region. In April 1920 the British Mandate over Palestine was endorsed by the Allied powers and in 1922 formal ratification was obtained from the League of Nations.[11] More significantly, in 1921 Britain divided its Middle Eastern holdings (comprising modern-day West Bank, Gaza, Israel and Jordan) into two. The area east of the Jordan River became the Emirate of Transjordan while that west of the river the Mandate of Palestine. Ironically, while this was the first time in modern history that Palestine emerged as a unified political entity, Palestinian Arabs were now governed by a power that was clearly sympathetic with the establishment of a Jewish state in that same territory.[12] Consequently Arab opposition towards both Jewish settlers and the British steadily intensified over the next two decades. The most obvious expression of this opposition was in 1920–1921 and 1929, when violent anti-Jewish riots occurred in Palestine. Violence further escalated after the mid-1930s, in response to more land purchases and Jewish settlements associated with the waves of Jewish immigration which had intensified dramatically as a direct result of Adolf Hitler's rise to power in 1933. Arab hostility was further compounded by the 'emergence of a clear trend within the Zionist movement calling for the voluntary or compulsory "transfer" of the Arab population to make way for the Jewish state'.[13]

Palestinian opposition to the British Mandate and Zionist settlements steadily escalated and the first real challenge emerged in late 1935 under the leadership of Sheikh 'Izz-al-Din al-Qassam, who created clandestine military cells amongst the *fellahin* (Palestinian peasants) and rural migrants. While Qassam was killed in his very first encounter with the British in late 1935, his death did not prevent the outbreak of a full-scale uprising in April 1936 that eventually encompassed all of Palestine. The Great Revolt of 1936–1939 began in urban centres and spread rapidly into rural areas.[14] It was finally crushed by the British with the assistance of Jewish militias, through a counter-insurgency campaign in 1939. While the collapse of the Great Revolt was overshadowed by developments in Europe as Hitler invaded Poland in September 1939, it induced the British to issue the 1939 White Paper, i.e. a statement of policy, in an effort to maintain order in an increasingly turbulent Palestine. The White Paper limited future Jewish

immigration and land purchases and effectively marked an end of the alignment of British and Zionist interests in Palestine.[15]

During the Second World War the British army in Palestine was faced with the dual task of guarding against an invasion by German or Vichy French forces while also suppressing the militant Zionist underground. Illegal Jewish immigration to Palestine also rose dramatically after 1945 as a direct result of the Holocaust, further aggravating Palestinian hostility. Most crucially, Britain's attempts to contain this influx provoked a violent campaign against British targets in Palestine by the militant Zionist organizations, Irgun Zvai Leumi and Lehi (Stern).[16] Faced with an increasingly untenable position in Palestine the British requested the United Nations (UN) to intervene. The UN passed Resolution 181 in November 1947 that formally ended the British Mandate and voted to partition Palestine into two states, one Arab and the other Jewish. The Zionist leadership while publicly accepting this partition plan hoped to expand the borders allotted to the Jewish state.[17] On the other hand both the Palestinian Arabs and the surrounding Arab states rejected the planned partition arguing that the proposed Jewish state was no more than a settler colony that was the direct result of Britain permitting Zionist settlement in Palestine.[18]

Fighting between the Palestinian Arabs and Jewish settlers began just days after the UN partition plan was adopted. Yet while Arab military forces were numerically larger than their Zionist counterparts they were poorly organized, armed and trained. Consequently, by April 1948 Zionist forces controlled most of the territory that had been allotted to the Jewish state under the UN plan and approximately 200,000–300,000 Palestinians had already fled these areas.[19] Britain formally evacuated Palestine on 15 May 1948 and Zionist leaders immediately proclaimed the independent state of Israel. The governments of neighbouring Arab states that had remained largely uninvolved in the conflict thus far limiting ‘their contribution to the formation of a small irregular force under the command of the League of Arab States’[20] now intervened militarily. Thus Egyptian, Jordanian, Iraqi, Syrian, and Lebanese contingents, as well as a small force from Saudi Arabia, began moving into Palestine shortly after the Zionist proclamation of Israel. However, Arab military movements lacked coordination and the participating governments were deeply suspicious of each other's territorial ambitions in Palestine. As a result, Arab forces were repelled in most sectors and by the end of October 1948 Israel had successfully expanded its territory to include 78 per cent of Mandate Palestine, as well as West Jerusalem, thereby forcing a further 500,000 Palestinians to flee to what came to be known as the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (WBG), or to cross the border into neighbouring Lebanon, Syria and Jordan.[21] The war ended with Israel and the Arab states signing armistice agreements, and Palestine was divided into three parts. The state of Israel occupied about 78 per cent of the total territory. Jordan occupied the West Bank while Egypt took control of the Gaza

Strip. Amongst the Palestinians, the outcome of the first Arab-Israeli War is dubbed *al-nakba*, i.e. 'the catastrophe'. In a nutshell this 'catastrophe' ensured that the Palestinian Arab state of the UN partition plan was never established thus setting the stage for what has since become a protracted Israeli–Palestinian conflict in the region.

The period following the 1947–1948 war was characterized by a huge influx of Jewish refugees, mostly survivors of the European Holocaust, to the newly established state of Israel. Israel not only continued its policy of forced deportation of Arab populations to territories beyond its borders but also introduced legislation that enabled Jewish settlers to legally acquire abandoned Arab property.[22] Within Israel only a small minority of Palestinians now remained and the large majority were dispersed over the neighbouring countries and WBG. Consequently, the Palestinian interaction with Israel in the post-1948 period was enacted through the wider Arab environment as opposed to direct confrontation with the military or political apparatus of the Israeli state. The Middle East in turn, in the aftermath of the Second World War was characterized by the 'formation or consolidation of independent national states, the emergence of a distinct Arab state system, and the replacement of colonial domination with US-Soviet rivalry'.[23] Unsurprisingly Israel was regarded with hostility by Arab states that saw it as a legacy of Western imperialism and the 'region remained imperilled by the prospect of another war'.[24] Tensions were further escalated by the Israeli policy of attacking villages across the 1949 armistice lines to prevent refugees from returning from Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt.[25] Meanwhile uncoordinated groups of Palestinian guerrillas also began military raids into Israeli territory sparking reprisals from Israel. This cycle of guerrilla raids and Israeli reprisals continued into the 1960s. Regional relations between Israel and its Arab neighbours were not improved by Israel joining Britain and France in the 1956 attack on Egypt, ostensibly to reverse Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal which had thus far been under French and British control. In this process Israel temporarily captured Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula but was forced to retreat back to the 1948 armistice lines as a result of UN pressure.[26]

Disputes in the demilitarized zone between Israel and Syria, while endemic since the 1949 armistice, had escalated dramatically since February 1966 as a result of the new Syrian regime encouraging Palestinian guerrilla activity along its border.[27] In spring 1967 the Soviet Union wrongly informed Syria that Israel was amassing forces near the Syrian border in preparation for an attack. Egypt responding to Syria's plea for assistance mobilized its troops on 14 May and over the next few days entered the Sinai Peninsular bordering Israel and blockaded the Israeli port of Eilat. As the crisis continued, Israel responded by launching pre-emptive strikes against Syria and Egypt on 5 June 1967. Jordan, which had shelled targets in Israel in response to the pre-emptive strike on Egypt, was also attacked. The war, which lasted a mere six days, humiliated and discredited the Arab regimes and established Israel as the region's dominant

military power. As a result of the war Israel captured the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the Golan Heights from Syria and the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) from Jordan.[28]

The peace process in the Middle East after the 1967 war came to be centred around the UN Security Council Resolution 242 which, amongst other things, required Israel to withdraw from territories occupied during the six days of military engagement, a just settlement of the Palestinian refugee problem and the right of all states in the region to exist in peace within recognized political boundaries.[29] While both Jordan and Egypt made clear their willingness to comply with Resolution 242 if the West Bank and Sinai Peninsula were returned to them, Israel ignored the overture, refusing to withdraw from all the territories captured in 1967. Instead Israel stated that significant revisions of the 1949 armistice lines would provide it with the 'secure boundaries' necessary for maintaining peace in the region.[30] Syria refused to sign the resolution and reverted to encouraging Palestinian raids across its borders into Israel.[31] The Palestinians in turn rejected the resolution, as it required a unilateral Palestinian recognition of Israel without a reciprocal Israeli recognition of Palestinian national identity and rights. Consequently tensions continued until late 1970 when Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, in the hope of breaking the diplomatic deadlock, agreed to sign a peace agreement with Israel whereby Egypt would recognize Israel's independence and right to exist in return for the Sinai Peninsula. Israel once again rejected Sadat's terms and refused to withdraw to its pre-1967 lines. Frustrated, Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack on Israeli forces in the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights in October 1973, on the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur.[32] Peace was brokered by the USA that secured partial Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai and Golan Heights by 1975 but avoided the more difficult negotiations relating to the West Bank and Gaza.

In 1978 Sadat, the Israeli Prime Minster Menachem Begin and President Jimmy Carter worked out two agreements at Camp David: the first of these formed the basis for an Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty which was signed in 1979, while the second agreement was a more general framework for establishing sustainable peace in the Middle East and addressed the Palestinian crisis. This second agreement 'proposed to grant autonomy to the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and to install a local administration for a five-year interim period, after which the final status of the territories would be negotiated'.[33] However, only the first of these two agreements reached fruition as the second was rejected by both Palestinians and Arab states, as being unable to guarantee either an independent Palestinian state or a full Israeli withdrawal from the areas captured in 1967. Israel, in direct violation of the commitments made at Camp David, also further sabotaged the agreement by continuing to build new settlements in the occupied territories.

The Palestinian crisis was further compounded by the June 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon,

masterminded by the defence minister Ariel Sharon, with the express purpose of destroying the Palestine Liberation Organization (henceforth the PLO) which was headquartered in Lebanon; 'scattering the Palestinian refugees whose camps were to the north and east of Israel; and establishing a regime of the Christian Phalangists who were loyal to Israel'.[34] The gruesome massacre of Palestinian civilians in the camps of Sabra and Shatila between 16–19 September is believed to have occurred with the full knowledge of the Israeli officials, some of whom openly stated that they wished to see Lebanon 'purged' of Palestinians.[35]

The massacres in Lebanon along with the expansion of settlements in the territories, the failure to grant autonomy to the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza as proposed during Camp David and the consistent Israeli refusal to address the issue of Palestinian refugees all combined to ferment another Palestinian uprising. The first intifada (literally meaning 'rising up and shaking off' in Arabic) erupted in December 1987 in Gaza and rapidly spread to encompass the West Bank. The logical culmination of 20 years of frustration with Israeli occupation and over a century of upheaval and disruption, it was a spontaneous, grassroots movement that had mass social participation and drew upon the organizations and institutions that had emerged under conditions of occupation. Often compared to the 1936–1939 revolt the intifada cut across political and social affiliations and relied on the policies of limited violent confrontation, which involved stone throwing or the use of Molotov cocktails, and multiple forms of civil disobedience including mass demonstrations, general strikes, political graffiti, the boycott of Israeli goods and the refusal to pay taxes. Intifada activism coalesced under the leadership of the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU),[36] which worked underground to coordinate the movement.[37] The UNLU was a coalition of the four PLO parties active in the territories, i.e. Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and the Palestinian Communist Party (later known as the Palestinian People's Party, PPP).[38] Other parties that were active during the intifada, though not as a part of the UNLU, were Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). The Israeli response to the intifada resulted in the arrest and detention of some 10,000 Palestinians without charges, and the killing of over 1,000 Palestinians, including 200 under the age of 16, between 1987 and 1991.[39]

While the intifada did not end Israeli occupation it served to bring the Palestinian issue back into the public eye and demonstrated that the status quo was no longer tenable. The intifada also moved the leadership of the Palestinian national movement into the territories for the first time thereby forcing a moribund PLO in Tunis into action. The intifada has been credited with reviving the PLO and its armed struggle, both of which were at their lowest point and in decline by 1987.[40] Responding to the pressure exerted by activists in the territories who expected the PLO to adopt a clear political programme for achieving independence, the Palestine National

Council (PNC), the Palestinian government-in-exile, recognized Israel in November-December 1988 and also declared an independent state of Palestine in the West Bank and Gaza.[41]

In 1991, after the Gulf War, President George Bush made serious efforts to stabilize the Middle East by promoting a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir was unwilling to negotiate directly with the PLO. By October 1991, the US managed to open multilateral negotiations in Madrid between the Israelis and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. The Palestinian delegation, which comprised residents from the occupied territories, was subject to Israeli approval, and residents of East Jerusalem were barred on the pretext that all of Jerusalem was a part of Israel. Moreover, while the PLO was formally excluded from both the Madrid Conference as well as from subsequent negotiations in Washington, DC, its leaders were in regular and close consultation with the Palestinian delegation.[42] Negotiations dragged on with little progress till Yitzhak Rabin assumed office in June 1992 and he promised a speedy conclusion of the ongoing negotiations. The Israeli and Palestinian fatigue with the ongoing intifada combined with deteriorating economic conditions and the rapid rise of militant Islamist groups like Hamas in the territories pushed Rabin to break with convention and enter into direct negotiations with the PLO through a secret channel provided by the Norwegians in early 1993. These secret negotiations, known as the Oslo Accords produced the Declaration of Principles (DOP) that was signed in Washington in September 1993.[43]

The Oslo DOP established a negotiating process that was supposed to take place over a five-year interim period during which Israel was to withdraw first from Gaza and Jericho and then from other unspecified areas of the West Bank. The PLO on its part made its principal commitments by recognizing the state of Israel and promising to cooperate in dismantling the ‘terrorist’ network in the occupied territories. Israel's principal commitments, unlike those of the PLO, were to be made in the final status talks. ‘The May 1994 Cairo Agreement limited the extent of the initial Israel withdrawal to about 65 per cent of the Gaza Strip, defined the extent of the Jericho area, established the Palestinian Authority (PA) as the governing body in the evacuated territories and inaugurated the interim period’,[44] which was meant to expire on 4 May 1999. The Taba Agreement (Oslo II), signed in September 1995, divided the West Bank into three areas. Israel withdrew completely from Area A that covered the main cities of the West Bank, i.e. Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarem, Qalqilya, Ramallah, Bethlehem and by January 1997 also from 80 per cent of Hebron. This comprised a total of 3 per cent of the West Bank. The Palestinian Authority was responsible for specific municipal functions in Area B, comprising about 23 per cent of the territory, while joint Israeli–Palestinian patrols maintained internal security. Israel retained full control over Area C, which covered about 74 per cent of the West Bank, including all settlements and the Jewish neighbourhoods in and around East Jerusalem.

Key issues like the status of Jerusalem, the right of Palestinian refugees to return and their compensation, key elements of Oslo I, were again not discussed.[45] In October 1998 the Wye Accords outlined an Israeli withdrawal from an additional 13.1 per cent of the West Bank, but Israel unilaterally suspended implementation of these terms after withdrawing only from an additional 2 per cent of the territory. In addition, between 1992 and 1996 Jewish settlement blocs in the West Bank and East Jerusalem expanded by about 37 per cent[46] and were connected, to each other and to Israeli cities, through an expansive network of bypass roads that outlawed Palestinian settlement 55 yards on either side. By 2000 nearly 250 miles of bypass roads had been built on confiscated land again rendering hundreds of Palestinians homeless and adding to Palestinian disillusionment with the peace process.[47] Furthermore, Israel's reluctance to relinquish control over territory combined with steadily declining economic conditions in WBG and frustration with the peace process empowered Palestinian opponents of Oslo, especially parties like Hamas whose suicide bombing campaigns further hardened an already uncompromising Israeli stance.

Final status talks which had been initially scheduled for mid-1996 only commenced in mid-2000. By then Israeli withdrawal had left about 40 per cent of the West Bank and 65 per cent of Gaza under the direct or partial control of the PA. However, in July 2000 Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak presented his ‘red lines’ at Camp David II: ‘Israel would not return to its pre-1967 borders; East Jerusalem with its 175,000 Jewish settlers would remain under Israeli sovereignty; Israel would annex settlement blocs in the West Bank containing some 80 per cent of the 180,000 Jewish settlers; and Israel would accept no legal or moral responsibility for the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem’.[48] Unsurprisingly, Arafat citing the conditions of Resolution 242 and the understanding implicit in the Oslo DOP demanded that Israel withdraw from the vast majority of the West Bank and Gaza, including East Jerusalem, and recognize an independent Palestinian state in those areas. Thus, despite the fact that Barak offered more territory to the Palestinians than any of his predecessors, Camp David II failed as Arafat rejected the terms offered with the full support of his constituents.

The Palestinian frustration with what was essentially a failed and unfair peace process, and the daily humiliation that characterized Palestinian experience in the occupied territories converged to ignite the Al-Aqsa intifada shortly after the failure of Camp David II. In September 2000, Ariel Sharon, accompanied by about 1,000 armed guards, visited the Temple Mount. Coming soon after the negotiations over Jerusalem's holy places and in light of Sharon's history as the ‘murderer of Sabra and Shatila’ as well as his clear views regarding the annexation of East Jerusalem, the visit sparked off protests that resulted in the killing of six unarmed Palestinian protesters. This triggered the riots that mark the beginning of the bloody Al-Aqsa intifada.[49] During the first intifada the space of clash and conflict was the Palestinian street,

neighbourhoods and homes. The second intifada however was characterized by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) withdrawing to the borders of cities and towns and being thus concentrated around checkpoints and borders with only occasional forays into cities. The Al-Aqsa intifada was also marked by greater violence and harsher retaliatory measures from the IDF. The first four months of the Al-Aqsa intifada for example had more Palestinians hurt and killed violently than in several years of the first intifada – a trend that was no doubt further accentuated by the increasing militarization of the second intifada. This militarization was directly linked to the proliferation of the Palestinian security forces in the Oslo period that had created approximately 40,000 armed and trained Palestinians in the occupied territories.[50] Consequently, protests often turned into violent clashes between armed and trained young men and the IDF at checkpoints and city borders. The Al-Aqsa intifada was also marked by an escalation of suicide attacks and Israeli-targeted assassinations and military operations. As such from the point Camp David II failed and the Al-Aqsa intifada started in 2000, both the PA and Arafat steadily lost ground in the occupied territories leaving a vacuum in the leadership of the Palestinian national movement and generating the conditions which enabled Hamas to project itself as a legitimate alternative to the PA. By successfully projecting itself as capable of upholding the social, political and military mantle of the Palestinian national struggle Hamas finally achieved electoral victory in January 2006 and, against the backdrop of rising tensions with Fatah, took control of the Gaza Strip in June 2007.[51]

The rise and fall of Fatah and the PLO

Any analysis of Hamas and its rise to power in the occupied territories would be incomplete without a consideration of the key political players with whom it interacts. Israel is the most significant external political challenge while the Fatah-led PLO (and then the Palestinian Authority, henceforth the PA) represents the most powerful internal challenge. Fatah, the reverse acronym of Harakat al-Qawmiyyin al-'Arab (the Palestinian National Liberation Movement),[52] was formally created on 10 October 1959 and its goal upon inception was the liberation of Palestine though armed struggle. In many ways Fatah has been crucial to the articulation of the Palestinian struggle for independence – in part due to its long existence but also because of its role in defining the direction of the resistance. Hamas, in its turn, has inherited a national struggle shaped by Fatah and has consistently sought to claim it as its own by giving it a new, more obviously Islamic, hue. Hence because of Fatah's crucial role it is imperative to fully understand both its emergence and evolution within the Israeli–Palestinian landscape of conflict.

Fatah emerged in a regional political climate that was dominated by the philosophy of pan-Arabism and where the Palestinian issue was subordinated to a transnational ideological pursuit.

The Palestinian problem was generally seen as a symptom of the greater Arab predicament and as an extension of the struggle against the West, and its representative Israel, in the Middle East. The Palestinian issue was thus no more than a powerful mechanism of garnering domestic and regional legitimacy and mobilizing support for various Arab regimes in the region.[53] Fatah's unique 'Palestine first' ideology challenged this subordination and articulated the necessity of a distinct Palestinian identity which its leaders believed was deliberately suppressed by both Israel and Arab states.[54] It therefore adopted a very measured stance vis-à-vis the PLO that was founded primarily under the influence of Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser in May 1964 as the primary representative of the Palestinian people, and was an effort to control the Palestinian resistance movement in accordance with his own regional power ambitions.[55] Thus, on the one hand, while Fatah was deeply suspicious of the PLO, on the other it welcomed the creation of an entity that specifically addressed the Palestinian crisis. Yet despite its suspicions Fatah always maintained an overtly accommodating position towards the PLO knowing that the latter enjoyed an Arab legitimacy that it still lacked (a policy that was later adopted by Hamas vis-à-vis Fatah and the PLO/PA). At the same time the creation of the PLO represented a challenge for Fatah that came under increasing pressured to justify its existence. As a direct result Fatah was forced to initiate its armed struggle sooner than planned, thereby effectively ending its years as an underground movement.[56]

Fatah launched its armed struggle on 1 January 1965, in the name of its military wing *al-'Asifa* (the Storm) provoking strong reactions from both the PLO and Egypt. The PLO denied any links with *al-'Asifa* while Nasser regarded the start of military action 'as inopportune and threatening a general loss of control over events'. Moreover, while the diplomatic recognition and military capability that the PLO received from Arab states provided it with an enhanced status among Palestinians, its inability to match Fatah in armed activity steadily eroded this political credibility and strengthened Fatah's position. Fatah, in turn, faced considerable difficultly in both mounting military operations against Israel and surviving as an organization as the Jordanian, Lebanese and Egyptian governments began arresting and detaining its operatives. But as Fatah's violent struggle was by no means formulated to merely confront Israel but also to garner popular support and ensure group survival it increasingly turned towards Syria for aid and support – a dependence that allowed it to sharply increase its military activity inside Israeli territory. Thus, Fatah conducted 37 attacks across the Lebanese and Jordanian borders in the first six months of 1967 alone, thereby consolidating its position as a leading group in the struggle for a free Palestine. Most importantly, its ideology and modus operandi also found increasing resonance with Palestinians and by 1967 a clear consensus had emerged amongst all Palestinian groups that the time was ripe for guerrilla activity against Israel. As a result, various Palestinian groups actively participated in the Six Day War that erupted in mid-1967.[57]

The Arab military defeats in the Six Day War reconfirmed for Fatah the inability of Arab regimes to achieve Palestinian independence through military means. Moreover, Nasser's acceptance of the ceasefire with Israel also illustrated that the Palestinian issue would always be subordinated to the individual interests of Arab states in the region. At the same time, Fatah recognized, in this 1967 defeat, a rare opportunity to both break away from the control exerted by Arab governments and consolidate popular support for active resistance. In late June 1967, Fatah claimed that it had transferred its leadership to the occupied territories.[58] The Fatah Central Committee also approved building secure launching bases for military operations in the occupied territories, believing that these would enable armed struggle to be successfully waged from within the West Bank. To this end, Yasser Arafat established clandestine headquarters in Nablus by mid-August 1967 and 28 August marked the ‘second launch’ of Fatah's armed struggle. The Israelis responded with an intensive campaign that destroyed Fatah's resistance in the territories, forcing Arafat to leave the West Bank permanently in December of the same year. Nonetheless, Fatah's actions established it as one of the few organizations resisting Israeli occupation *in* the territories.[59]

Fatah's military activity also won it support from various Arab regimes which, in the aftermath of the 1967 War, were either too weak to deny the guerrillas the use of their territory or actively encouraged a low-intensity conflict with Israel. Fatah's reputation was fully sealed with the Battle of Karamah. Karamah, a refugee town located in Jordan close to the border, was the location of guerrilla bases that were used to launch operations into the West Bank. In March 1968 Fatah fighters clashed with the Israeli army that had initiated a punitive raid targeting the guerrilla bases located in the town.[60] Despite suffering heavy losses in what was a militarily imbalanced clash, the incident generated unprecedented support for Fatah from various sources – including from Egyptian President Nasser. Fatah took immediate advantage of this support by initiating a process that culminated in its takeover of the PLO as marked by Arafat's election as PLO chairman in February 1969.

A wave of volunteers enlisted with Fatah within days after Karamah enabling both an expansion of its guerrilla units and an escalation of its military activity against Israel.[61] Guerrilla attacks were carried out simultaneously from the Jordanian, Lebanese and Syrian fronts. At the same time there was a distinct shift in Fatah's political philosophy whose bases in the occupied territories had been dismantled by Israeli action. The organization now believed that it was necessary to ‘acquire a secure base on the East Bank’ and the slogan now became ‘there is no difference between the Inside and Outside’.[62] However, the Jordanian government, wary of an organized, consolidated Palestinian power in the country, were already trying to curb Palestinian activities, which by now also included international terror attacks and hijackings by groups like the PFLP. The crackdown by the Jordanian army on Fatah and other guerrilla groups in 1968 had

already pushed the resistance organizations towards setting up civilian militias in Palestinian refugee camps thereby setting the stage for the evolution of the Palestinian ‘state within a state’ inside Jordan.[63] Now the guerrillas responded to Jordanian pressure by direct confrontation with the Hashemite monarchy. The battle that ensued in 1970, often referred to as Black September, resulted in Fatah's defeat and forced the PLO to flee to Lebanon.[64]

Fatah was also increasingly concerned about challenges posed by other guerrilla groups to its position in the PLO. Of the various groups, perhaps the most troubling was the PFLP which enjoyed great prestige due to the successes of its international terror operations and hijackings. To counter the influence of the PFLP and enhance its own status, Fatah established the Black September Organization (BSO) that conducted various operations, including the high-profile assassinations of the Jordanian Prime Minister in November 1971 and of seven Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympic Games in September 1972.[65] Within Lebanon, Fatah established headquarters in Beirut and amassed troops in southern Lebanon. As it became more entrenched in Lebanon it slowly shifted focus from international operations to conducting attacks against Israel. At the same time, the combination of ‘Palestinian guerrilla sanctuaries in the south, massive social and economic dislocation caused by Israeli counter-insurgency campaigns, and the emergence of the PLO's state-within-a-state brought tensions between Lebanon's … dominant Maronite Christian community and the Muslims majority to crisis points in 1973’.[66] Alliances between the Palestinian resistance organizations and the Lebanese Muslim opposition made this situation even more explosive, while the October 1973 war further exacerbated the situation.[67]

As Lebanon spiralled towards civil war in early 1975, the process was marked by ever-escalating violent encounters between the Lebanese oppositional forces and their Palestinian supporters and Lebanon's traditional Maronite leadership. Fatah initially maintained a neutral position refusing to interfere in the internal affairs of its host state, but other Palestinian groups, like the PFLP, participated in the fighting from the very beginning. However, by late 1975 Christian forces had escalated attacks against Muslim population centres and were focusing specifically on the Palestinian neighbourhoods of Beirut thereby forcing Fatah into the fray. Syrian intervention in the war served to push the PLO into southern Lebanon where it consolidated its military and civil networks and intensified attacks across the border in Israel.[68] The Israelis responded with two intensive retaliatory operations into Lebanon in 1978 and 1982 which eventually forced the PLO leadership to move to Tunis, with other members fleeing to Algeria, Yemen and Iraq. Fatah's headquarters remained in Tunis until 1994 and the expulsion impacted its operational capabilities as it was not only unable to conduct effective attacks from such a distance, it also exerted less control and influence over the populations in the West Bank and Gaza.[69] Thus, from 1982 to 1987 when the intifada erupted in the occupied territories, both

Fatah and the PLO were at their lowest ebb. This situation changed considerably once the Oslo peace process commenced and the Fatah-led PLO was institutionalized as the Palestinian Authority with Arafat still at its helm. However, as the peace process faltered and both Arafat and the PA were dogged by accusations of corruption, patrimonialism and inefficiency, conditions were created for the rise of a powerful political challenge in the territories. The Islamic forces, especially Hamas, had been slowly consolidating their position in WBG vis-à-vis the more 'secular' nationalist PLO/PA and they now moved swiftly to fill the vacuum that was being left by the PA.

Enter Hamas

Hamas entered the political scene in Palestine with the outbreak of the first intifada in December 1987. It was markedly different from the very onset due to its strong revisionist stance regarding Palestinian national goals and the means available to achieve the same, as well as its stance on social and moral rules. Indeed, its very existence as an Islamic organization that rejected secular nationalism posed a challenge to first the PLO, and then later on to the PA that was established in the Gaza Strip, as both had always adopted a relatively secular nationalistic position on Palestinian statehood. Open political competition with other more established political players was thus inevitable and began most obviously with Hamas's rejection of the United National Command (UNC) which led the intifada on behalf of the PLO, in favour of charting its own course on strikes, demonstrations, and other activities of the resistance.[70] Thus, while on the one hand, Hamas's existence and attitudes defied the PLO's status as the sole representative of the Palestinian people and the exclusive political force in the territories, on the other hand its clearly defined Islamic identity simultaneously allowed it to both appropriate the Palestinian national narrative, dominated thus far by the PLO, and give it a specifically Islamic context.[71] However, even the ability of the Hamas to emerge when it did in January 1988 is rooted in the changes in the broader Palestinian socio-political context. The origins of Hamas are first and foremost rooted in the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood movement, and most specifically, in its main institutional embodiment since the late 1970s, i.e. the Islamic Centre *(al-Mujamma' al-Islami)* in the Gaza Strip. The Mujamma' was formally legalized by the Israeli Military Administration in 1978 and became 'the base for the development, administration, and control of religious and educational Islamic institutions in the Gaza Strip, under Sheikh Ahmad Yassin's supervision'.[72] Hamas was, in turn, formed directly as a result of the decision by its parent organization (the Muslim Brotherhood) to become more actively involved in the resistance upon the spontaneous outburst of the intifada in 1987. A number of other factors also played a role, including the growing Palestinian despair with both the PLO and the prospects of an achievable peace with

Israel.

The PLO as illustrated in the previous section, had traditionally been the standard bearer of Palestinian military resistance, especially after the Arab-Israeli war of 1967 and had been known for its uncompromising political goals. The PLO National Charter of 1968 clearly defined these goals as the liberation of all of historic Palestine by armed struggle and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. The PLO also demanded the repatriation of Palestinian refugees and asserted that the Palestinian people, with an inalienable link to the land within Mandatory borders, existed.[73] However, consistent military and political debacles had hounded the PLO, and the relocation of the vast majority of the PLO to Tunis in 1982 had served to trigger a serious crisis of hope for the Palestinians. The PLO's fragmentation and political weakness, combined with what was effectively the nullification of the Palestinian military option caused by the Lebanese debacle, was seen by many as a major hurdle in the removal of Israeli occupation from Palestinian lands. It was in these circumstances that the national discourse began to change, especially in the 1980s, prompted by what had thus far been marginal Islamic groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood.

Palestine had traditionally been an issue of core concern for the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (*Ikhwan al-Muslimun)* and the society's first branch was established in Jerusalem in October 1945.[74] By 1947 there were about 25 Brotherhood branches in the West Bank and Gaza and they were all directly supervised from Cairo. The Egyptian Brotherhood actively participated in the war of 1948 and allegedly sent at least three battalions of volunteers to fight in Palestine. After the war, the Muslim Brothers in the West Bank integrated with the Muslim Brothers in Jordan to become the Jordanian Ikhwan. Unlike other Jordanian political factions, and despite tensions and frequent disputes, the Jordanian Muslim Brothers managed to maintain harmonious relations with the Jordanian regime and the king. In Egyptian-administrated Gaza, while the Muslim Brothers managed to maintain their Palestinian character their fortunes were also closely tied to the centre in Egypt. As a result, they suffered brutal persecution under Nasser's regime. Because of such differences in political space, the orientation of the two Ikhwan movements in the territories was radically different in the pre-1967 period. In Gaza the Muslim Brothers tended to place a greater emphasis on the Palestinian cause and focused on resisting refugee settlements and the internationalization of the Gaza Strip through the establishment of small paramilitary wings. However, in the West Bank, the Ikhwan was increasingly subordinated to the leadership in Amman that eschewed armed struggle and placed the Palestinian nationalist programme on the back burner. The Muslim Brotherhood in the West Bank instead pursued an anti-imperialist, pro-shari'a agenda, distancing themselves from the national movement. The Arab defeat in the 1948 war had significantly diluted the influence of Islam, and the Brotherhood in the West Bank, under directives from Amman, was concentrated upon promoting the revival of Islam through

the Islamic notion of *tabligh wa da'wa* (education and preaching).

By the beginning of 1967 a severe lack of unity, exacerbated by the divergent political experiences of the Brotherhood, permeated the organization in the West Bank and Gaza. Despite the fact that in the post-1967 period, the Brotherhood's branches in the West Bank and Gaza were under the same political administration, the two branches retained distinct identities that were predicated entirely upon their respective historical experiences under Jordan and Egypt. This translated into the Ikhwan's inability to think or behave as a unified Palestinian-Islamic movement within a specifically Palestinian political arena. While initially after the war, it had seemed that the Islamic movement might have a role to play against Israeli occupation it soon became obvious that its leaders were unable to neither articulate, or indeed sustain, a comprehensive Islamic response to the occupation, its authorities or its policies, including the settlement of Palestinian land. This lack of unity was further exacerbated by the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood faced a significantly altered political landscape, both in the West Bank and Gaza, in the first decade after the Six Day War of 1967.[75] In the West Bank, not only was Israeli occupation now a sustained reality but the war also successfully disrupted links with the East Bank (Jordan) and isolated the Ikhwan from any directives from its Jordanian leadership. In addition, the Brotherhood's support of, and strong identification with, the Hashemite regime, which had often followed policies that had been directed against the Palestinians, was now proving to be a gross liability. Secular nationalism was also gathering momentum within the territories as a powerful rallying force and the PLO, founded in 1964, was fast establishing itself as the strongest representative of the Palestinian national movement.

The Brotherhood recognized the strength of the Palestinian national movement and realized that it would need to reconsider its public image and political agenda in response to the realities of occupation and the rise of the secularized radical Palestinian national movement. It therefore concluded that the time was not right to actively promote its specifically Islamic political agenda. Thus in the West Bank, alien occupation, the immediate effect of war, the loss of identity and the threat of annexation all combined to almost paralyze the Brotherhood. At the same time in Gaza, the Muslim Brotherhood had almost been destroyed as a result of the policy of sustained persecution adopted by Nasser, and little regret was expressed over the Arab defeat. Despite the respite from persecution after the war, the decimated Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza was unable to compete against the rising support for the Palestinian national liberation movement. Yet this near political obscurity also translated into a long-term advantage in that Israel did not see the Muslim Brotherhood as a political or military threat and thus left it well alone. In turn, the Ikhwan also took a conscious decision at this time not to engage with the national movement or resist the forces of occupation in Gaza. Hence, with the exception of some Brotherhood members fighting in the ranks of Fatah, and irrespective of Hamas's claims today, there is scant evidence that the

Ikhwan supported, either logistically or ideologically, the struggle against Israel in the first decade of occupation.

However, while the Islamic movement was floundering, the late 1960s-early 1970s in Gaza saw the rise of a fierce guerrilla movement under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA). These *fedayeen* fighters, as they were known, were modern revolutionaries who as secularists or socialists fought for national liberation rather than religious salvation.[76] The Israeli crackdown ensured that this *fedayeen* movement was brutally crushed. The debilitated and targeted national movement was unable to fulfil the comprehensive role assigned to it by the local population and, as a result, a political vacuum emerged in the Gaza Strip. While the national movement was able to keep its legitimacy intact, consistent Israeli pressure frustrated the efforts made by nationalist parties to establish institutions in this period. At the same time Israel, following a classical divide-and-rule policy, funded the Islamic movement in order to counter the nationalists. As a result, while the Brotherhood was unable to fill the existent political vacuum and redirect the legitimacy that the national movement enjoyed, there was still a deliberate shift discernible in its policies as it once again resumed activities in the public realm and gradually became increasingly vocal over the coming decade.

The decade before the outbreak of the first intifada saw the rise of religious revivalism in the territories and the Islamic movement successfully consolidated itself in the Palestinian political arena. In this period both internal and external determinants impacted the development of political Islam. The Muslim Brotherhood, under the leadership of the charismatic Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, embarked on a period of rapid expansion in Gaza. The movement's inroads were made easier by the increasingly depressed socio-economic conditions in the refugee camps that covered the Gaza Strip and of course Israel's policy of noninterference. The Brotherhood established the Islamic Centre, *al-Mujamma' al-Islami,* as a voluntary organization in 1973 and it was formally legalized in 1978.[77] The Mujamma' was a critical step in institutionalizing the Ikhwan in Gaza and under Sheikh Yassin it became the base for the development, administration, and control of religious and educational Islamic institutions, and thereby the spearhead for the message of revivalist Islam in the Gaza Strip. The core challenge for the Mujamma' was to redirect the population away from secularized nationalism as a means of liberation from Israeli occupation. It did so by denouncing the nationalists as traitors to the Muslim faith and accusing them of leading the populace away from the path of Islam. In doing so, the Mujamma' and the Brotherhood projected the nationalists as directly responsible for the Palestinian failure to achieve independence. Education and health care institutions in Gaza, as symbols of the de facto state and leadership, also became a contested arena between the Islamic movement and the nationalists, and the Mujamma' slowly consolidated its control over both in the Gaza Strip. Furthermore, as the Mujamma' developed a civil society power base it became increasingly

violent in asserting itself vis-à-vis the nationalists in Gaza. By the early 1980s the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) emerged as an organization distinct from the Brotherhood as a result of its emphasis upon armed resistance rather than Islamization through preaching and education. By 1987 the Islamic impact was palpable in the politics of the Gaza Strip and the re-Islamization of Gazan society ensured that the Mujamma' could rival a national movement that was increasingly corrupt, factionalized and weak.

The West Bank, as always, took a different route and here the revival of political Islam gained momentum independently from the developments in Gaza. In a deeply secularized environment the Muslim Brotherhood in the West Bank attracted a new generation of supporters, many of whom had grown up under occupation, and who believed that the Islamic message could succeed where the secularists had failed. Thus, while the Islamic movement could not force the PLO into retreat in the West Bank and gain the ground it did in Gaza, it still managed to project itself as a political alternative to the nationalist secular rhetoric. Once again it achieved this objective by combining its social activities with challenging the national movement in their own institutions, most notably in the universities. The spread of its Islamic message was helped in particular by the Iranian revolution of 1979, the 1982 PLO debacle in Lebanon and, of course, the massacres of Sabra and Shatila. These developments significantly bolstered the message of political Islam in the territories. In particular the defeat of the national movement in Lebanon aided the Islamic movement's bid for political power by severely weakening and fragmenting its opposition. Thus, it was this volatile mix of internal and external determinants that resulted in the emergence of political Islam as a dynamic national force in the territories by the eve of the first intifada. The sustained pressure of occupation and the threat of annexation triggered the spontaneous rioting in 1987 that began the intifada and the Ikhwan once again perceptively recognized that its message of quiet reform through *tabligh wa da'wa* jarred with this new Palestinian reality. In response it created Hamas, as a nationalist military force with an Islamic hue, to participate in the uprising. Hence, militant political Islam acquired the institutionalized nationalist face of Hamas and finally entered the Palestinian political arena in full force as a sustainable dynamic reality.

The 1987–1993 uprising provided the immediate context in which Hamas, founded as the combatant arm of the Muslim Brotherhood, emerged as a significant political force in the territories. Hamas was initially established as the result of the decision made by the 'general guidance bureau' *(maktab al-irshad al-'am)*, the Muslim Brotherhood's supreme leadership based out of Egypt, as an ostensibly separate organization to participate in the intifada and to protect the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood from any potential fallout if either this initiative failed or if the intifada came to an early, or unsuccessful, end.[78] However, as an organization that was indigenous to the West Bank and Gaza, not only was Hamas able to project itself as capable of addressing Palestinian expectations and grievances more authentically and appropriately, but its

‘local’ base also enabled it to operate without having to constantly reconcile its actions and interest with those of host Arab states or diasporas communities.[79] Moreover, at a time when the PLO was weak and appeared willing to abandon its original aim of armed struggle for the liberation of Palestine in exchange for a political compromise, Hamas projected itself as the logical alternative by clinging to established national aims and values and declaring its intentions to fight relentlessly for the liberation of the national homeland within its Mandatory borders.[80] This emphasis upon armed political action combined with its location of the nationalist narrative in Islamic rhetoric enabled Hamas to slowly break into the centre stage of the Palestinian political community as a movement with its own distinct identity.

While the genesis of Hamas was a response to the spontaneous rioting in Gaza, over time and retrospectively, the group also created a pre-intifada history for itself. This not only rebuffed the claims that it had been dragged unwillingly into the intifada but also gave it an edge over Fatah and PLO as it traced its roots to a pre-PLO Palestinian history. It did so by claiming alliance to the ideology of the 1930s revolutionary Sheikh ‘Izz al-Din al-Qassam and to the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood since its advent into Palestine. This retrospective creating of the Hamas ‘myth’ is not only symptomatic of Hamas's attempts to survive and create a distinct identity in a cut-throat revolutionary political arena, but also of its growing competition with the PLO and its dominant faction, Fatah. It also explains how Hamas managed to overshadow and co-opt the Muslim Brotherhood movement. Indeed, the Muslim Brotherhood had created Hamas to merely reflect a shift from politics to armed struggle within the parent organization. Hamas was thus meant to complement the existing structure and not to replace the social activities traditionally associated with the Mujamma’.[81] Nonetheless, Hamas with its alternative political message and ideology grew rapidly as the uprising gained momentum. This revisionist stance combined with its military activity and appropriation of established social welfare activities enabled it to successfully overshadow its parent organization.

Hamas's indigenous leadership base also placed it in a position of being able to engage with issues most relevant for its constituency. Indeed, its grassroots base enabled it to empathize with and address the daily needs of the Palestinians as well as concurrently address their long-term political aspirations. However, Hamas from its point of genesis was forced to manoeuvre politically between much more established political players, most significantly the PLO on the one hand, and Israel and the international community on the other. As such, initially Hamas had to consistently balance its own agenda and goals with the political reality of survival in an internal arena that was dominated by the PLO with Yasser Arafat's Fatah as its dominant faction *(fasa'il)* and an external arena where impetus is determined by the prerogatives of the Israeli state. Therefore, any analysis of the relationship between Hamas and PLO must be constructed on the understanding that this is in reality an analysis also of the relationship between Hamas and

Fatah. In fact, there has never been a significant difference in Hamas policy towards the PLO/PA and Fatah or vice versa.

Hamas's structural organization deserves a mention primarily because it is representative of how the group, as a relatively new organization in the Palestinian political landscape, has had the advantage of learning from the mistakes made by earlier organizations – a factor that no doubt has contributed to its military and political success. The Israeli crackdown on Fatah in the early 1970s for example was successful primarily because of its weak organizational structure. Fatah's early efforts were often poorly planned and security was so lax that the arrest of a single operative by the Israelis could lead them to many others. Moreover, Fatah's military cells lacked the organizational roots that Hamas's possess.[82] In sharp contrast, Hamas has consistently separated its political, social and military units and, while the boundaries between these units may be blurred and unclear, communication between these segments tends to be conducted through reliable channels only.[83] Shaul Mishal and Maoz Rosenthal use four basic criteria to identify the typology of 'terrorist' organizations which include: 'the communication structure within the organization; the level of specialization and division of labour; the chain of command and control; and, the organization's time definitions regarding the implementation of planned actions'.[84] They believe that these four elements are also impacted by the conditions in which an organization operates, i.e. availability of local contracts, resources and so on, and as external conditions vary so does the design of the organization.

Based on these criteria, Mishal and Rosenthal identify Hamas as a combination of a network-chain type and network-hub type of organization. A network-chain organization is characterized as one that lacks a strict command and control structure but 'retains a specific sequence of communication'.[85] Hamas may be categorized as a network-chain type organization primarily because its political, social and military units are sharply compartmentalized. Most importantly, its military ranks tend to recruit on the basis of personal connections and information is transferred by 'reliable agents through predetermined channels of communication'. At the same time, Hamas has also gone through a phase in which it was clearly a network-hub type of organization. The network-hub type of organization is characterized as one which 'lacks a strict chain of command and control throughout the organization, yet one player is responsible for the monitoring and directing the organization's activities'[86] – as such this player operates as the 'hub' in the organization's structure. Until his arrest in 1989, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin represented the hub for Hamas as he controlled both the socio-political as well as military units, consistently maintaining clear lines between the two and coordinating the activities conducted by both segments. However, it seems that after his arrest Hamas made a conscious shift towards a fully compartmentalized, network-chain organization with perhaps only a few top-level leaders holding information about how the various units are connected.[87]

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the reasons behind the protracted nature of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and also outlined the emergence and evolution of the two key internal players in the Palestinian political arena – Fatah and Hamas. Given this background, one may note how Hamas has closely mimicked Fatah in its rise to power and has used similar tactics (for example, non-confrontation and violence) to ensure group survival and consolidation within the Palestinian political arena (this is discussed in depth in Chapters 4). This chapter has illustrated how armed struggle has played a key role for all parties in establishing credibility and acquiring legitimacy in the eyes of the Palestinian constituency, and how Hamas, like Fatah before it, has successfully used violence to establish itself firmly as a sustainable political challenge to both Fatah and the PA. It has, like early Fatah vis-à-vis the PLO, also avoided open confrontation with all potential political rivals until it was strong enough to project itself as a legitimate alternative and retaliate without compromising its survival in the Palestinian political landscape. Moreover, Hamas has demonstrated an incredible capacity to avoid the blunders made by Fatah as seen most obviously in the compartmentalized organizational structure it has adopted. As a direct corollary, it has also consistently recognized the importance of conducting the national struggle from primarily *within* the occupied territories while also maintaining an external base. Hamas has also reflected a nuanced awareness and understanding of Palestinian history and sentiments and has been successfully able to replace a secular-nationalist narrative with an Islamist-nationalist one (discussed in depth in Chapters 5 and 6). This has not only enabled it to consolidate its unique identity within Palestinian politics but has also simultaneously served to weaken its political opposition. Thus learning from mistakes made by earlier groups and demonstrating a cunning understanding of the Palestinian street, Hamas has managed to manoeuvre within the Palestinian political setting with a dexterity Fatah never evinced.

Hamas may thus be categorized as yet another organization that is using violence to achieve the dual goals of a Palestinian nation-state while also simultaneously ensuring its own survival and consolidation within the Palestinian political landscape. This understanding places Hamas and its use of suicidal violence in context, suggesting that both, the group and its use of suicide bombings, may be a phase in the political transitions occurring within the Palestinian territories due to the evolving nature of the national struggle. Even so, it is imperative to analyse why and how suicidal violence emerged in the territories and became for a considerable stretch of time the preferred means of engagement with the Israeli state. Chapter 4 begins this endeavour by attempting to address *why* suicidal violence was used to resist the Israeli state.

4 Rationality and the convergence of expressive and instrumental violence

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> *Praise to God who made me the one of the sons of Hamas, the movement of unstinting sacrifice, who made me one of its unique people, one of the sons of the Izzedeen al-Qassam Militias*
>
> *Martyr Muhammad Hazza al-Ghoul*[1]

As established in Chapters 2, suicide bombings in the Israeli–Palestinian context can be understood as a strategic choice that serve multiple purposes for both the organization and the individual. Both organizational and individual aspects need to be considered when analysing this phenomenon as each impacts and propels the other. Furthermore, as established previously, suicide attacks simultaneously encompass both expressive and instrumental facets of violence, though they may tend to appear more overtly instrumental for the organization and more overtly expressive for the individual. This chapter essentially illustrates this understanding by demonstrating how both the organizational and individual resort to suicide violence is rooted in three broadly conflating concerns, i.e. *survival*, *competition* and *retaliation*.

The argument extended here is based on recognizing the equal importance of both levels of analysis, i.e. recognizing that while strong organizational support is necessary for suicide bombings to exist as a protracted political phenomenon, individual motivations play an equally important role in promulgating these missions. Having once identified the organization as the point of *initial* impetus for suicide campaigns, this analysis then considers the increasingly independent role of individual bombers. This dual focus places the spotlight firmly on Palestinian developments and dynamics and enables one to trace how both external impetus, as represented by Israeli policy, and internal dynamics, as reflected by intergroup and inter-level interactions, enabled suicide missions to endure within the Israeli–Palestinian conflict from 1993–2006. To this end, this chapter first traces the use of violence by Hamas over the past 19 years, from mid-1987 to 2006 and then locates suicide bombings as being part of a broader strategy of violent confrontation geared to accomplish the three central goals of survival, competition and retaliation. Having illustrated the organizational motivations and rationality behind suicide attacks, this chapter then locates these same three themes in the logic of the individuals who carry out these suicide missions. This chapter concludes by demonstrating that the *dialectic* between Hamas and its operatives conflates along these three key themes of *survival*, *competition* and *retaliation* and is crucial in understanding the long-term existence and

use of suicide violence in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. In doing so, this chapter demonstrates how suicide missions incorporate instrumental and expressive aspects for both Hamas and its operatives.

Hamas and the instrumental logic of suicide bombings

Hamas's resort to violence and suicide attacks must be understood as being rooted, first and foremost, in its need to *survive* in a political landscape that was overwhelmingly dominated by two key players – Israel and the PLO/PA, with Fatah representing its main faction.[2] Hamas has had to consistently balance its own agenda and goals with the political reality of survival in an arena impacted by these two external and internal players. All Palestinian groups, including Hamas, are under intense pressure to 'perform' within the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Performance is closely tied into group legitimacy within Palestinian political space as well as support from the Palestinian 'constituency'. As such, various strategies of violent confrontation have been consistently used by all groups to garner public support and gain a political advantage over rival organizations. Until about 2000, Hamas was still not a fully established, stable organization in the Palestinian political arena. As such, its use of suicide bombings prior to 2000 was intermittent and implemented in conjunction with other armed attacks specifically to raise its profile and assert a unique group identity. Unable to pose a direct political challenge to the PA in this period, Hamas used suicide attacks instead to indirectly undermine its legitimacy and hamper the Oslo peace process.[3]

The 1993–2000 period also saw Hamas steadily attempt to normalize suicide violence as a legitimate means of *retaliating* against the policies of the Israeli state. Hence, Hamas's suicide operations were a retaliatory response to Israeli policies that simultaneously sought to incite a harsher Israeli response thereby engendering an escalating tit-for-tat cycle of violence. This escalation enabled Hamas to both successfully justify suicide violence as a *defensive* policy against Israeli punitive action and portray itself as an able military successor to the now passive PA and Fatah.

After 2000, Hamas made a conscious shift from being a predominantly social and military resistance party to one that was increasingly willing and able to challenge Fatah in the conventional political arena. However, Hamas continued to maintain its distinctive identity by following a dual policy of military and political activity with an equally strong foundation of social activism. That Fatah also began using suicide operatives in 2002 indicates not only the successful normalization of suicide violence in the Palestinian scenario but also the intense pressure that the PA and Fatah faced vis-à-vis an increasingly popular Hamas.

Thus 2002 also marks the beginning of a period in which suicide bombings demonstrated

competition between more *equal* political factions that now vied for power with the full support of the rank and file.[4]

In this complex balancing act Hamas's position vis-à-vis the PLO/PA/Fatah and Israel has consistently been that of *survival, competition* or *retaliation* – or varying combinations of all three. The strategies at the disposal of Hamas to achieve any of these perceived central goal(s) have been those of *negotiated co-existence, controlled violence and finally, as we have seen after 2006, full political integration*.[5] These strategies have either been used alone or in combination with each other to ensure survival and enable competition and retaliation. Suicide bombings must therefore be contextualized as a part of the policy of controlled violence that has facilitated Hamas's strategy of negotiated co-existence. Violence has also enabled Hamas to both compete with Fatah and simultaneously maintain its unique position in the Palestinian political landscape even *after* its full political integration in 2006 – an aspect that will be addressed in greater detail in Chapters 7.

Violence in the pre-suicide bombing phase: Hamas from 1987–1993

With the outbreak of the first intifada in December 1987, Hamas was seen to adopt policies that would ensure its survival. As a new organization, it not only had to contend with the power of more established groups but also had to identify a public stand distinctly its own to ensure that it was not absorbed into the PLO or overshadowed by the UNC. Thus, the strategies used in this period were primarily those of controlled violence and negotiated co-existence, the former to raise its visibility and the latter to try and avoid even hints of open political confrontation.

Despite its attempts to avoid open confrontation, the very fact that Hamas needed to define its own position vis-à-vis the PLO and UNC, inadvertently forced intra-group competition and thereby demanded a delicate balancing act on Hamas's part. Hamas achieved this balance by eschewing open competition in favour of stressing the Islamic opposition to any peace process that would leave any part of Palestine in the hands of the Israelis. This stance was taken and consolidated in light of the increasing willingness of the PLO and UNC to opt for a peaceful solution through diplomatic negotiations. Hamas also made no calls for mass demonstrations in the early months of the intifada for fears of confrontation with the Israeli security forces that would have been disastrous for its survival as a nascent organization.

Yet despite its attempts to avoid direct confrontation, Hamas was a violent organization from the very offset.[6] Violence not only propelled the intifada and secured political prestige; it also provided the Palestinians with an important outlet for the political frustrations and ideological fervour that had developed over the long years of occupation. Hamas consciously used violence to assure the Palestinian public that it was an able inheritor of the PLO's mantle as leader of the

armed struggle against Israel and to simultaneously accumulate political prestige. By 1989 Hamas was notorious for conducting operations using its 'strike groups' (*al-sawa ' id al-ramiya* or the 'shooting arms' of the movement). These groups were not only responsible for the daily intifada activities, such as throwing stones, blocking roads and writing slogans on the walls, they were also responsible for the enforcement of intifada directives on the population and taking punitive action against alleged collaborators. Hamas had also been directing attacks upon the Israelis starting in August 1988, although at this point these attacks, which took the form of shootings, knife attacks and kidnappings were directed at the military and other symbols of the occupation – no bombings had appeared on the scene as yet.

The arrest of Sheikh Yassin, Hamas's spiritual leader, and about 250 activists in WBG in May 1989, created a vacuum at the top level of the leadership and represented a serious blow to Hamas. This removal of direction can be seen in the near absence of violent activities conducted by Hamas in the period immediately after these arrests. Indeed Hamas was so shaken that its next violent attack did not occur till December 1990, when a Hamas operative claimed responsibility for a knife attack in Petah Tikva.[7] This attack shortly followed the 8 October Temple Mount incident in Jerusalem where 17 Palestinians had been shot dead by Israeli security forces. Hamas had at that point demanded a jihad against Israel and had widened its targets to include civilians and settlers, in both Israel and the territories.[8] This shift, based in purely strategic considerations, boosted its operational success rate and Petah Tikva became the first of a spate of Hamas retaliatory attacks between December 1990 and February 1991, which incited a sharp Israeli crackdown in response which translated into severe security and economic controls in the territories.[9]

Yassin's arrest combined with internal pressures and Israeli counter-measures also triggered significant shifts in Hamas's organization and leadership[10] and conscious efforts were made to rehabilitate the movement by recruiting younger activist members. This shift in membership might explain how the internal reorganization, which resulted in the concomitant increase in military activity, combined with the Israeli crackdown between December 1990 and 1991, contributed to the formation of the Battalions of 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam (*kata'ib 'izz al-din al-qassam),* as the formal military wing of the Hamas in 1991. The Qassam Brigades became steadily active over the next year, primarily using knife attacks and shootings.[11] Violence and terror thus preceded and accompanied the official Oslo negotiations between the PA and Israel from 1991 to 1993, and was used to both retaliate against the Israeli state and to undercut ongoing negotiations.

A database analysis shows that while Hamas violence remained almost nonexistent before the Madrid Conference in October 1991 there was a sharp upswing in especially *externally* directed violence before the June 1992 Israeli general elections which brought back the labour party

(Avoda) and brightened prospects of peace. It seems that prior to the Madrid Conference, Hamas's changing internal structure combined with the Israeli crackdown had forced the group to curtail violent activity towards Israel. In this period Hamas predominantly opted for an overall policy of negotiated co-existence with the intention of avoiding open confrontation within the Palestinian political arena while it rebuilt its ranks and reconsolidated its position. However, by October 1991 a stronger, reconsolidated Hamas joined forces with other groups, including the Islamic Jihad, PFLP and DFLP in a statement opposing the PLO's decision to send a Palestinian delegation to the Madrid Conference. Over the next few months, inter-group competition escalated and clashes broke out between a younger, more militant Hamas and Fatah. Despite two reconciliation agreements, violent altercations occurred sporadically in the territories for the next eight months.[12] Thus it would appear that in the lead up to and immediately after the 1991 Madrid Conference, Hamas's escalating competition with Fatah forced it to focus on endogenous circumstances resulting in relatively low levels of violent activity directed *towards Israel*.

This changed drastically in the lead up to the June 1992 elections, and the months immediately after, with an unprecedented rise in Hamas attacks with a total of 13 attacks conducted between May and December 1992. This shift seems to have been a strategic response aimed at derailing the peace process with Israel for the specific purpose of group survival. The successful Madrid Conference had effectively signalled the end of the intifada and had thus removed Hamas's *raison d'être*. As Israeli-PLO negotiations also left it out in the cold, the only way Hamas could survive both as an organization and in the political consciousness of the Palestinian population was to disrupt peace efforts. Its 'spoiler' role[13] in both the lead up to the June 1992 Israeli elections and the September 1993 Declaration of Peace (DOP) involved escalating violence. In the first instance, Hamas hoped that the violence would bring a hard-line Likud into power with the knowledge that Likud, unlike Avoda, would be less likely to negotiate with the PLO. When that failed, and the June 1992 elections brought back the labour party under Yitzhak Rabin, Hamas hoped to discredit the peace process instead. Hamas hoped that its resort to the violent activity would serve the dual purpose of hampering the peace process while also keeping it in the limelight. This trajectory of events seems to suggest that the use of violence was already an established mechanism of ensuring survival for Hamas *before* the introduction of suicide bombings.

Suicide campaigns begin and gain momentum_ Hamas from 1993–2000

The first suicide attack in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict occurred in April 1993 and was claimed by Hamas. Interestingly, other violent (non-suicidal) attacks continued in 1993,[14] suggesting that this first suicide bombing was Hamas's attempt to deliberately escalate violent confrontation with

the Israeli state. The next series of Hamas attacks seem to have been conducted in direct response to the September 1993 signing of the Oslo I Peace Accords. Hamas's rejection of the peace process was based in its struggle for survival given that the DOP formally ended the uprising, which had given it the opportunity to develop into an authentic political alternative to the PLO. Moreover, the PLO's agreement to desist from and prevent hostile actions against Israel, a commitment that was to be implemented by the PA, threatened Hamas's political manoeuvrability, and its very existence, by removing a crucial prestige and support amassing tool from its political kit. At the same time, the Oslo process had widespread public support in both WBG and the population threatened to turn against any group that derailed this fragile peace process or sparked internecine conflict. Hamas thus recognized that it had to operate carefully because it could not afford to lose its, as yet small percentage of, public support.

It resolved this dilemma by escalating external attacks against the Israeli soldiers and civilians in the period immediately after Oslo I, but confining them to conventional knife attacks and shootings. Hamas justified these attacks as necessary actions against the occupation. While the lack of suicide attacks ensured that it did not attract too much attention, and thereby public hostility, conventional attacks enabled it to continue to project itself as the standard bearer for Palestinian rights under conditions of continuing occupation. Moreover, while tensions between Hamas and Fatah factions also continued, Hamas could not afford to settle for abandoning military activity against Israel and for peaceful co-existence with the PLO, as that would put it at risk of losing its distinctiveness as the leading movement for the liberation of Palestine and the establishment of an Islamic Palestinian state. By refraining from so-called spectacular terrorism and maintaining its position on conventional attacks, Hamas managed to retain the unique identity it had developed in the uprising. It thus adopted a policy of negotiated co-existence with the PLO/Fatah, successfully avoiding direct confrontation in the internal arena, and simultaneously exercised a policy of controlled violence against the Israelis. It was thus not only able to assure its survival as a distinct movement in WBG, but also use the space it had created vis-à-vis the PLO to conduct a propaganda war against it. It did so by consistently depicting the DOP as illegitimate and inconsistent with UN Resolution 242, and the PLO as compromising upon core Palestinian demands.

In the midst of this political manoeuvring, there was the additional pressure of deteriorating economic conditions in the Gaza Strip, a direct result of the full curfew implemented by Rabin in June 1993 that was still in place in January 1994. Anti-Israeli sentiments were also running high as a result of widespread violence and settler provocation in both WBG.[15] Poll results during this period show increasing impatience and frustration among Palestinians with the ‘no-change’ situation on the ground. Hamas, took advantage of this increasing public frustration and continued to advocate armed struggle against Israel, a position that was facilitated by the

massacre at the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron by the settler Baruch Goldstein in February 1994 in which 29 Palestinians were killed. The timing of the attack in the midst of Israeli-PLO negotiations on the implementation of the Gaza–Jericho phase of the DOP gave Hamas a fresh chance to swear revenge and once again allowed it to enhance its popularity and consolidate its political identity by opting for retaliatory suicide attacks against Israel. Two Hamas bombings swiftly followed in April[16] and Israel responded by reverting to a policy of closure for WBG, putting undue pressure on the Palestinian population and the newly formed PA, and indirectly weakening Arafat. Hamas further manipulated this situation by carrying out two more suicide bombings later that year. It seems that at least the second attack, which followed the November 1994 targeted assassination of a PIJ leader, was an attempt by Hamas to further weaken Arafat's position vis-à-vis both an angry Palestinian population[17] and the Israelis who had no faith in the PA to control a violent Hamas[18] without clashing head-on with the PA. The relatively weak PA was in turn unable to take decisive action against Hamas, as it was also unwilling to directly clash with Hamas at this stage. By the end of 1994, Hamas was able to use strategically timed suicide operations to maintain a negotiated co-existence with Fatah/PA on the one hand, and to garner popular support by appearing to retaliate against what were widely perceived as unjust Israeli policies of closure, collective punishment and targeted assassinations on the other.

Hamas's increasing consolidation and ability to challenge the PA is what seems to have triggered the PA–Hamas dialogue of summer and fall 1995, which was conducted with the express purpose of settling differences between both groups. Hamas blatantly continued violent activity against Israel during this inter-group dialogue, including three more suicide bombings, hoping to force Arafat to officially recognize it as legitimate opposition, which would enable Hamas to continue its uninterrupted development under the PA.[19] These three suicide attacks also coincided with the final phase of Israeli-PA negotiations regarding Israel's withdrawal from all primary Palestinian towns in the West Bank. Once more these suicide attacks served to pressure the PA/Fatah and escalate competition and were also simultaneously timed to derail the peace process and trigger a harsh Israeli response, which would in turn justify a policy of violent retaliation, enabling Hamas to maintain visibility vis-à-vis the PA in this crucial period. At best the escalation of violence by Hamas could have rekindled an uprising, regenerating ideal conditions for it to further consolidate itself. At the very least, these attacks forced the PA to recognize Hamas as a force to reckon within a rapidly emerging proto-state thus giving it leverage in the talks being held. However, Hamas's attempts to derail the peace process failed and the PA-Israel talks continued and were concluded with the Taba Accords of September 1995.

Once the Taba Accords (Oslo II) were signed in September 1995, Hamas became very silent, suspending all violent activity against Israel potentially to avoid alienating the Palestinian public

by either slowing down the withdrawal of the Israeli military from Palestinian cities or provoking a response from them in the run up to the first-ever PA Council elections in January 1996. Data shows that Arafat not only won a landslide 88 per cent of the votes in the January elections, reflecting a tremendous resurgence of Palestinian hopes for peace, but also that the largest turnout of voters came from Gaza, Hamas's traditional stronghold.[20] This strengthened Arafat's stance vis-à-vis Hamas as this support from Gaza suggested that the PA could take harsh action against any force that might compromise this fragile peace without any loss of public support or legitimacy. This effectively fenced in Hamas that came under increasing pressure from both Israel and the PA. Fearing any crackdown that would threaten its survival, Hamas reverted to its traditionally cautious 'wait-and-watch' policy of silent cooperation. As a result, after the August 1995 suicide attack in Jerusalem, there was close to a six-month suspension of all violent activity conducted by Hamas.[21]

This fragile truce was shattered by Israel's continuing counter-terrorism measures against Hamas, which in addition to strategies of general closures, arrests, detentions and curfews, also continued to include the controversial policy of targeted assassinations. At a time when Hamas activists had been cornered and had agreed to stop military operations against Israel in return for the PA discontinuing action against the Brigades, had promised to facilitate the January 1996 PA elections and had also begun negotiating a mutual cessation of hostilities with Israel (via the PA), Israel liquidated 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam's Yahya 'Ayyash, popularly known as 'The Engineer', in January 1996. Hamas promised to retaliate and thus began the worst assault on Israel yet. From February to March 1996, Hamas conducted three suicide bombings in which over 40 Israelis were killed and more than 80 injured. At least one of these bombings was claimed by a group which called itself 'Squads of the New Disciples of Martyr Yahya 'Ayyash'[22] – a military cell of Hamas.

In response the Israeli authorities closed WBG, prevented movement between Palestinian villages and cities and also suspended peace negotiations. The PA, under heavy external pressure, also condemned Hamas attacks. In both WBG, the PA's Preventative Security Force, the bulk of which was comprised of former members of the local Fatah militia, effectively targeted and dismantled the Qassam squads, confiscated arms, raided, ransacked and/or shut down many Islamic social welfare organizations and universities, and arrested hundreds of Hamas activists who were imprisoned and often tortured.[23] For the PA, this was the ideal opportunity to effectively decimate its opposition with Israeli support under the camouflage of protecting Palestinian interests.

Opinion poll results in this period showed a decrease in support for Hamas reflecting the Palestinian support for the peace process and anger against Hamas for sabotaging the same and bringing further hardships upon the population. However, paradoxically, there was at the same

time a slight increase in the *overall support* for armed attacks against Israel, perhaps indicating that Hamas's reading of Palestinian resentment towards Israel's policies of liquidation and collective punishment was not misplaced. At the same time, there was also a drop in support for the PA and Fatah in this period reflecting a negative public reaction to the PA's policy towards Hamas.[24] Thus polls once again indicate Palestinian despair with the peace process and the political situation as a whole and confer Hamas with a degree of political legitimacy and public acceptance, albeit not outright support vis-à-vis the PA.

The Likud victory in May 1996 brought Benjamin Netanyahu into power and the effective suspension of the Oslo Accords. Confronted with increasing public unrest, the PA was forced to re-open dialogue with the Islamic bloc and ease the repressive measures that had been taken towards Hamas. This once again engendered co-existence with Hamas allowing it the space necessary to regroup and develop further. The first nine months of the Likud government were marked by very little violent activity and no suicide attacks, probably due to Hamas's fragile state and Netanyahu's stated willingness to use force to crush any reversion to violence by the Palestinians.[25] Hamas also had to concede that their policy of 'ceaseless confrontation' had been rejected by the Palestinian public, and despite the public's opposition to the measures adopted by the PA against them their support base had dropped from 18 per cent to 8 per cent in the wake of the 1996 suicide bombing campaign.[26] Hamas also noted, 'Netanyahu's uncompromising stance was discrediting Oslo and the PA among the Palestinians more effectively than they could, thus rendering a new campaign of suicide bombings superfluous'.[27]

The March 1997 Tel Aviv suicide bombing of a coffee shop ended this ceasefire. This attack seems to represent Hamas taking advantage of the growing public despair at the economic decline in WBG and the frustration with the continuing situation of occupation. This attack was swiftly followed by two more bombings in July and September. However, Hamas's attempts to avoid being associated with the 1997 suicide operations characterize these three attacks as different from any others carried out before or indeed after 1997. The attacks appear to be an attempt to probe Palestinian sentiments towards the renewal of suicide attacks while attempts at disassociation may have been rooted in Hamas's fear of extreme repression by the Israeli authorities or, in tactical reasons concerning Hamas-PA cooperation, or in its fear of further alienating the Palestinian population.

In July 1998, a van filled with fuel and nails failed to explode in Jerusalem. The badly burnt Palestinian driver was rushed to the hospital where it was revealed that he was a Hamas activist who had undertaken the attempted suicide bombing *on his own*. Both the PA and Hamas took this opportunity to blame the incident on the Israeli-induced stalemate of the peace process.[28] Once again, this attack came in the midst of the diplomatic activity that preceded the October 1998 Wye Agreement between Netanyahu and Arafat. The agreement set a detailed timetable for

the withdrawal of Israeli forces from an additional 13 per cent of the West Bank contingent on the Palestinian compliance with weapons collection, arrest of suspects and other security provisions. However, Netanyahu once again refused to implement the redeployments as promised. A public opinion poll conducted in WBG in early October 1998 showed that while the level of support for the peace process remained at a high 66 per cent there was concurrently a rise in the levels of support for armed attacks against Israel. Support for violent attacks rose sharply from 44 per cent in early August 1998 to 51 per cent in October.[29] This might explain why from July to October, when the agreement was signed, Hamas carried out a total of ten violent attacks, including one suicide bombing. However, polls conducted a month after the Wye Agreement showed only 41 per cent supported violence against Israelis in general – a significant 10 per cent drop from the 51 per cent recorded a month before. Support for Hamas also dropped to 11 per cent in this poll from the 12 per cent of a month before.[30] Once again this seems to suggest that Palestinian support for suicide operations/armed attacks and groups that conduct them is higher when prospects for a political settlement seem dim. However, the moment any substantial measure is taken for peace, in this case the Wye Agreement, the support drops. Hamas, in turn, has demonstrated time and time again that it can accurately gauge popular sentiments. This understanding combined with the PA crackdown, Yassin's house arrest and the return of the Avoda party led by Ehud Barak in the July 1999 Israeli elections, ensured another long period of relative inactivity for Hamas. From October 1998 to December 2000 there were no suicide operations and only four other low-casuality violent attacks. An opinion poll conducted in June 1999 showed that public support for armed attacks remained at a relatively high 45 per cent with 49 per cent opposition. This support was highest in refugee camps (49 per cent) and amongst the young and educated (52 per cent), suggesting that despite the high levels of support for the peace process, support for armed attacks continued because of the failure in implementing the Wye Agreement.[31]

Suicide bombings in the Al-Aqsa intifada: Hamas from 2000–2006

Palestinian despair with the peace process was strengthened by Barak's choice to adopt a ‘Damascus first’ policy in the period immediately after July 1999 which effectively sidelined the Palestinian issue and weakened Arafat's position, which was already under attack on account of the rising corruption within the PA and deteriorating economic conditions in WBG. The failure of the Camp David talks in July 2000 was the final blow to this mounting sense of despair and frustration in WBG. The Palestinians understood that Oslo had failed, felt victimized by the peace process and once again believed that the UN Security Council Resolution 242 was the only peace that could be achieved.[32] Support for Fatah collapsed rapidly and continued to do so over the next few years.

Concurrently the collapse of Camp David bolstered Hamas, whose popularity rose to an unprecedented 19 per cent in the six weeks that followed.[33] It was in this atmosphere that Sharon visited the Temple Mount in September 2000 accompanied by about 1,000 Israeli policemen. This triggered Palestinian riots and Israeli armed reprisals in which four Palestinians were killed and at least 66 wounded. And so began the Al-Aqsa intifada. Hamas took almost immediate advantage of the re-emergence of revolutionary conditions and swiftly reverted to an unmitigated policy of controlled violence. On 30 October 2000, almost two years after the last Hamas suicide operation, a bomber walked into the Sbarro pizzeria in the centre of Jerusalem[34] conducting a bombing that sparked off what was to be the most gruesome two years of conflict between the Israeli state and the Palestinians. Another bombing followed in January 2001. The situation was further aggravated by the unsuccessful Taba Summit of late January 2001, which despite its handicaps and failure was the closest consensus between both sides to date.

The escalating violence aided Sharon's electoral victory in February 2001. Elected on specifically a security platform, the Sharon government came to be characterized by its heavy-handed, disproportionate response towards the Palestinian uprising. Israel now targeted and deliberately dismantled the PA's political, security and institutional infrastructure that had been established under the Oslo Accords, inevitably facilitating Hamas's political hold on WBG. In addition, the PA and Fatah now focused their attention away from Hamas and towards participating in the intifada. Hamas, thus unfettered, was able to revert fully to its policy of ‘resistance by all means’, and from January 2001 to May 2001, it conducted six more suicide bombings in Israel. Israeli sources assert that this period was also characterized by the beginning of an unprecedented cooperation between secular and Islamic Palestinian factions with activists from ‘cocktail cells’, mostly comprising of Fatah Tanzim,[35] Hamas and/or the PIJ, conducting joint operations inside Israel.[36]

Despite being urged back to the negotiating table,[37] violence from both sides continued to escalate. Arafat perhaps believed that a minimally acceptable peace deal with Sharon was impossible and that the continued violence would eventually topple the Sharon government as the Israeli public saw him unable to live up to his promise of providing security. This, at least partially, explains his initial reluctance to curb the suicide missions conducted by Hamas and other groups. Hamas had, in the meanwhile, grown so powerful within the Palestinian political arena that even Arafat's loyalists were calling for the group to be included in the governing body of the PA. Moreover, public opinion also strongly favoured Hamas and its strategy of suicide operations, preventing Arafat from moving decisively against it. At the same time, Arafat and the PA were under mounting international and Israeli pressure to stop the suicide attacks on Israeli citizens by arresting, detaining and disrupting Hamas infrastructure and leadership. Arafat, afraid of losing more public support, reacted with crackdowns which arrested Hamas members and

political leaders only to release them shortly after. While internally expedient this was a gross miscalculation on Arafat's part because it allowed Hamas to progressively strengthen its position vis-à-vis the PA and Fatah, and continue using violence as a mechanism of amassing public support. Hamas thus managed to create a scenario where its suicide operations placed Fatah/PA under tremendous pressure from the Israeli state and effectively weakened it. This successfully created a situation in which Hamas realized, perhaps for the first time, that it could fully replace an increasingly fragile PA.[38]

By the second year of the Al-Aqsa intifada, Hamas was a fully established player in national resistance able to directly challenge the PA and engage with Israel. This was most clearly manifested when Sheikh Yassin was put under house arrest in December 2001 and 180 Hamas activists were arrested. Hundreds of Hamas supporters came out in protest and clashed with the Palestinian police in Gaza. Hamas instructed its followers not to support or obey Arafat's PA, and these instructions were upheld without a breach. In turn, Israel complained that those detained by the PA were lower-level activists and the planners and dispatchers of suicide bombings were still at large suggesting that the PA feared the fallout of arresting Hamas's higher cadres.[39] The rising political cost of curbing violence combined with the Israeli attack on the PA's infrastructure and an increasingly powerful Hamas effectively degraded Arafat's internal control and placed him in a precarious position. Indeed, his leadership status became increasingly dependent upon acknowledging the ever-growing Palestinian anger towards Israeli policies and ensuring the continued allegiance of armed groups like Hamas.[40] This in turn prevented any substantial action against Hamas that continued its unmitigated policy of suicide attacks against the Israeli civilian population in an escalating tit-for-tat strategy, conducting a total of 11 suicide attacks between June 2001 and 27th March 2002.

On 28 March 2002, Israel launched Operation Defensive Shield, the stated goal of which was to dismantle the ‘terrorist infrastructure’ that existed in PA controlled territories.[41] However, the tactics adopted involved reoccupying vast tracts of West Bank and Gaza and punitive measures that resulted in considerable civilian casualties. Israeli troops also began an assault on Arafat's compound in Ramallah cornering him there for about five weeks in the first instance. Arafat's siege gave him a fresh lease of life as the Palestinians rallied around their ‘living martyr’ who was refusing to surrender.[42] Hamas cunningly suspended all activities against the PA and Fatah and extended full support to the besieged Arafat, thereby denying the PA the expected monopoly over popular sentiments and instead diverting public attention in order to secure its own continued political visibility. The April 2002 massacre in Jenin[43] and the June 2002 Israeli reoccupation of all the areas of Zones A and B that had been formerly handed over to the Palestinians further hardened public opinion. This enabled Hamas to justify its ‘defensive strategy’ of suicide operations conducted within Israel as well as against military installations

and settlements within the occupied territories with ever-increasing public support.[44]

This hardening Palestinian stance also explains how secular groups began utilizing suicide operations for the first time in the history of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. These bombings reflected a change of guard within Fatah and also its escalating competition with Hamas in a steadily deteriorating political situation where public sentiments for retaliatory attacks against Israel remained high and various groups used suicide bombings as a mechanism to 'outbid' one another for political capital. By July 2002 alone, Fatah and its affiliated Martyrs of Al-Aqsa Brigades, had conducted 16 bombings, while PIJ had conducted four and Hamas seven. Israel retaliated by tightening the stranglehold on the territories, further cornering the Palestinian population.

In July 2002, Fatah Tanzim and Hamas, in attempting to address public suffering, reached an agreement to stop all suicide bombings inside Israel. As they were preparing to issue a formal statement to that effect, Israel bombed the Gaza apartment of Hamas military wing leader Sheikh Selah Shehada, killing him along with 16 other individuals, including 11 children. Hamas, forced to defend its cadres and maintain its image as an organization that possessed the ability to strike back, once more retaliated with more suicide attacks. Israel conducted 33 politically ordered liquidations in 2001 and 37 in 2002, killing at least 44 Palestinian bystanders including children. Each time Hamas swore to retaliate and what resulted was an escalating tit-for-tat policy that continued throughout 2002–2003.[45]

Sheikh Ahmad Yassin was assassinated in March 2004, followed swiftly by 'Abd al-Aziz Rantisi's in April – effectively destroying Hamas's top leadership within the territories. While the assassination of its top leadership within the territories weakened Hamas, paradoxically, and as a direct result of the wave of sympathy and rage that followed the assassinations, public opinion polls showed that for the first time, Hamas was the strongest and most popular movement in WBG. Hamas's rise and the PA's/Arafat's corresponding decline indicated for the first time that it could potentially fill any vacuum created by the destruction of the PA, perhaps replacing it altogether. Simultaneously, the destruction of Hamas core leadership in WBG also created for the first time an imbalance between the 'inside' and 'outside' leadership, with Khaled Mishal, the head of Hamas's political bureau, effectively heading the organization in the post-Yassin period from Damascus.

While there had been competition and disagreement between the two strands earlier as well, traditionally the internal leadership had tended to be stronger by the very fact of being on the ground and in touch with the Palestinian street. The external leadership, in turn, had always been more radical and heavily favoured the use of violence, while the internal leadership, perhaps as a result of being more attuned to the political situation, had always been more pragmatic and willing to negotiate and cooperate with other factions and Israel.[46] Thus Yassin's and Rantisi's

assassinations and the mass arrests which followed, weakened Hamas by decimating its local ranks. This was most evident in the overall decrease in number of suicide attacks conducted by Hamas as well as in its inability to retaliate immediately for the assassination of its top brass. However, Hamas being structurally based on local level cells meant that even if the local leadership or one or more cells were destroyed, its network-chain structure enabled some cells to continue functioning and communicating with the external leadership.[47] Consequently despite being weakened, Hamas remained intact and was able to use the surge in public support to remain visible and swiftly recover.

Arafat's death in November 2004 and the elections that followed once again relegated Hamas to the periphery of the spotlight that was focused upon Fatah. Hamas's policy of suicide attacks as a mechanism of forcing the Israelis to pressurize Fatah/PA had successfully weakened the PA but Hamas had also suffered in the process. Hamas chose not to participate in the January 2005 elections which brought Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) into power with a resurgence of hope on the Palestinian street for various reasons. First, it needed the time to regroup in the aftermath of the assassinations of Yassin and Rantisi. Second, Hamas in the absence of high-profile leaders pragmatically participated in the local government elections instead and thereby retained a significant level of its popular support. The local base this gave them ensured that they continued to remain influential as they wielded the ability to ask their constituents *not* to vote for Abu Mazen. Thus Hamas managed to find a way to influence the Palestinian political scene without directly participating in the PA.[48] Hamas also accepted a *tahdiya* (ceasefire) in March 2005, which lasted a little over a year and was conditional on Israel's suspension of military incursions and assassinations and the release of all Palestinian prisoners in jail. However, as Israeli military operations continued Hamas carried out one suicide attack and one kidnapping in violation of its self-declared *hudna* (unilateral ceasefire).[49]

Experts believe that Hamas offers *hudna* only in times when the movement is weak or under incredible pressure from the PA and/or Israel. However, the increasing propensity of the Hamas to opt for unilateral declarations of ceasefire suggests that other incentives are also at play. This work suggests that Hamas's 2005 *hudna* reflects not only its ability to accurately gauge the popular mood and shift its policies accordingly but also its conscious efforts to shift from a predominantly military movement into a political movement with a fully developed military arm.

This shift is most evident in Hamas's decision to participate in the 2006 parliamentary elections. Before 2006, Hamas, while participating in municipal and other local elections, had steadfastly refused to participate in any national elections, either for the Palestinian Council (PC) or the PA, because it considered both these structures illegitimate, linked as they were to the Oslo Accords. Its decision to integrate with this political structure thus not only legitimized the established political system, but also reflected Hamas's inability to continue armed resistance

with the same vigour as it did in the first years of the intifada. Its policy of full political integration was thus a concession based on the understanding that the population needed a cooling-off period and that its long-term political survival could no longer be ensured by its image as the military alternative to Fatah. Instead Hamas understood that it was necessary to now project itself as a political entity with the strength to replace Fatah, both militarily and politically.

Hamas continues to believe that military operations strengthen the Palestinian political and negotiation positions.[50] Sheikh Hasan Yusuf, Hamas's most prominent leader in the West Bank, stated for example that: 'for Hamas political activity is part of the whole package and *(sic)* the movement's political activities are not an indication of the cessation of its resistance enterprise, which is the cornerstone of Hamas.[51] Hamas's January 2006 election victory thus represents the culmination of this dual strategy of military and political resistance. What is clear then is that Hamas has and will continue to strategically use both violent and non-violent policies in combination and in a pragmatic manner in order to ensure its continuing survival in the Palestinian political arena. It is also obvious that Hamas will continue to use violence and suicide violence, if need be, as a mechanism of political competition and retaliation in the Israeli–Palestinian landscape of conflict.

Hamas operatives and the expressive logic of suicide bombings

The individual operatives' decision to opt for a suicide attack, as established previously, must be understood as rooted in altruistic motives and as an expression of their social responsibility. A significant number of Palestinian suicide bombers firmly believe that their deaths will contribute to the survival of their society while also allowing them to retaliate against the Israeli state. 'Martyrdom' (*shahadat/istish'had*)[52] therefore becomes the mechanism by which bombers assert their affiliation and integration with Palestinian society while simultaneously delineating personal space and standing out from the crowd. This belief certainly explains why the exponential rise in individuals willing to volunteer for these missions corresponds with the failure of the peace process and Israel's concurrently increasing use of the policy of collective punishment. The motivation and psychology of the bomber is therefore not too different from a soldier sent on a high-risk mission, though the crucial point of departure is that for the bomber, unlike the soldier, his/her mission's success is dependent upon the *surety* of his/her death.

Palestinian society's increasingly ritualistic portrayals of its suicide bombers as heroic martyrs have converted them into powerful role models and thus inevitably as examples to be followed. So strong is this societal support that people consistently speak of bombers with awe or, at the very least, with grudging respect. Even those who do not condone suicide bombings remain disinclined to talk negatively about these heroic 'sons and daughters of Palestine'.[53] Thus as self-

sacrifice is increasingly honoured, celebrated and idealized in Palestinian culture and society, martyrdom has become an avenue of amassing prestige and honour, both for the self and also for one's family. Martyrdom, as a mechanism of amassing honour and social prestige, seems to have also become steadily competitive over time – a case of 'if they can do it, why can't I?'[54] Using Mead's logic of 'ceaseless interaction' outlined in Chapters 2, suicide bombers seem to have successfully 'inspired' others to follow their path by providing the necessary first impetus for suicide violence to be replicated over and over again. This explains the increasing number of individuals willing to carry out attacks alone or in the name of any organization willing to provide them with the opportunity. Hence a concept that was initially introduced into the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and propelled by Hamas has evolved and developed a certain momentum of its own. Obviously, competitive self-sacrifice as a mechanism of amassing honour and social prestige would probably not be an option under 'normal' circumstances. Instead it seems that protracted conflict has provided the necessary conditions for enabling suicide attacks to become an acceptable means of protest, engagement and service to society pushing individuals to use their martyrdom, with or without organizational support, as a mechanism to simultaneously ensure societal survival on the one hand, and enable competition and retaliation on the other.

Suicide bombings as an expression of retaliation for individual bombers

Scott Atran describes how the genius of groups like Hamas lies in their ability to recruit and turn ordinary people into killing machines through training and processes of intense indoctrination often lasting 18 months or more.[55] This statement seems to be supported by the fact that in the 1990s Hamas seemed to spend a much longer time recruiting and preparing its bombers, which in turn might also explain why suicide attacks were still relatively rare in comparison to other forms of armed attacks between 1993 and 2000.[56] In this period, potential bombers were subjected to intense indoctrination and anti-Israeli propaganda. They also undertook religious training and went through a process of cleansing and spiritual purification.[57] The final steps before a mission generally involved the candidate leaving his home and family without a trace, and in this period of total segregation from society and his family, the bomber was once again exposed to intensive indoctrination and training which lasted for several days. It was in this period that the bomber became acquainted with the operational details of his mission, including how to detonate the explosive device, before finally preparing his last will and testament in the form of a letter, audiotape or video cassette.[58]

However, in the Al-Aqsa intifada, this was no longer an accurate representation of the phenomenon in the Palestinian scenario. Instead various sources suggested that because volunteers were increasingly more common, active recruitment, indoctrination and training

become progressively unnecessary. As a direct result, indoctrination seems to become increasingly rare and training time was minimal, potentially concentrating only upon familiarizing the candidate with the explosive devise and the mission's details.[59] Christopher Reuter in his interview of an individual who was potentially a Hamas activist was told how: ‘nowadays … it [the process behind suicide operations] all happens much faster. The more hopeless the situation becomes, and the larger the numbers of people who have gone before, the more quickly the next lot are ready’.[60] Nichole Argo's data also seems to verify this change. Argo who conducted interviews with 15 pre-empted suicide bombers in Israeli prisons in 2002, mentions how eight of the 15 had volunteered for their missions. Most importantly, she points out that five of the 15 began executing their missions *within ten days* of committing to the operations and 90 per cent of them began *within the month.*[61] Another identifiable shift is the increase in the number of family members who are aware and supportive of a bomber's decision to participate in a suicide mission. A key example of this awareness and support is the videotape of a Hamas operative's last will which shows him holding hands with his mother who is shown blessing him and wishing him success before he leaves for the attack.[62] Candidates also increasingly go to active members of their families to volunteer for operations. Two of the bombers that Argo interviewed also explained how they had had no prior involvement with the organization they had conducted the operation for and were instead recruited specifically for their mission by family members. Hence a process that was originally initiated by Hamas in 1993 seems to have developed a momentum of its own by 2000.

Palestinian psychiatrist, Dr Eyad Sarraj, believes that the motives behind suicide bombing tend to be rooted in personal trauma – such as injury to a father or brother or the death of a friend or distant relative. He states that:

> in every case of suicide bombing there is a personal tragedy or trauma [involved] … the people doing the suicide bombings today are the children of the first intifada and they have witnessed or suffered personal trauma in one form or another.[63]

Argo adds that a bomber's personal connections to persons killed or hurt might sometimes be distant, if they existing at all, and for some bombers watching ‘the death of children from other villages or towns was … crucial to their mobilization’.[64] Given the unfortunate realities of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, a significant percentage of the Palestinian population is either directly related to, or knows someone who has been arrested hurt or killed by Israeli forces, and *all* Palestinians are familiar with the images of Israeli occupation and military action. This trauma combined with the pressure generated by the rapid Israeli military deployment post-Oslo, its shoot-to-kill policy, the constant curfews, targeted assassinations and the ever-increasing number of settlements all seem to have further deepened the Palestinian community's sense of

victimization and exposure. Consequently, a significant number of those who were willing to participate in suicide missions, either as volunteers or recruits, were motivated by their desire to *retaliate* against an asymmetrically stronger enemy. As such, Hamas's instrumental goals were directly benefited by channelizing and responding to Palestinian society's heightened sensibility of retaliation and revenge.

Closely meshed with, and underlying, the overarching theme of *retaliation* is the conscious attempt to *equalize* the pain and suffering on both sides of the conflict by establishing a 'balance of terror' or a 'balance of suffering'. Suicide bombers believed that by inflicting terror on the Israeli state, their mission contributed towards establishing a more level playing field instead of the unequal one that exists, while simultaneously proving the undefeated/undefeatable nature of the Palestinian cause. Bombers also recognized the instrumental value of their actions. All these themes are clearly evident in statements made by individual bombers, for example: 'I want the Jews to feel how we feel. If I wasn't *convinced that it would benefit us, I wouldn't do it* [my emphasis].'[65]

> I know the *bombing will hurt Israel and prove to them we are still ready to fight… someone told me the operation would be a benefit to the [refugee] camp, to create pressure on the Israelis in order they retreat from the territory* [my emphasis] … The most important thing was that we should make an operation in the heart of Israel after the [military] penetration in order to prove that we were not influenced by the military attack.[66]

When Argo specifically asked a bomber what motivated him to become an *istish'had* (martyr) he answered:

> It was after the *istish'had* of a friend, and of the *shaheed* … [also a martyr, but a non-combatant, killed in this case by the Israeli forces] of a baby, Iman Hagu. These two cases made me think *human life is threatened every moment without good cause. Just because I'm Palestinian, the missiles are falling everywhere without distinction* [my emphasis] between those who are soldiers, civilians, kids, adults.[67]

This sense of outrage against Israeli policies and presence and concurrently the necessity for retaliation also comes across in last wills. For example, Mahmoud Ahmad Marmash, who carried out a suicide operation in May 2001 in Netenya killing five Israelis and injuring over 100, begins his last will and testament with the following lines:

> The Palestinian people are encountering the cruellest times, *enduring daily killings, bombardment, displacement, and the most extreme forms of violence. Everyday its suffering increases. A group must rise to sacrifice itself* [my emphasis] and strive in the path of God to defend its honour and its people.[68]

Similarly, Ismail Masawabi who killed two Israeli soldiers in a suicide operation states in his will:

> *I reject this terrible and dark situation which I know and experience,* and I have decided to become a shining light, illuminating the way for all Muslims … *Just standing there and watching our Muslim people being slaughtered [by the*

> *Israelis] and not taking any action to change the situation is a dirty game I will not tolerate* [my emphasis].[69]

It is interesting to note that while personal revenge may be a motivation it tends to be subsumed in most explanations under the rubric of retaliating against the enemy on behalf of the *entire community*. This is perhaps a direct consequence of the fact that at least the rhetoric of *istish'had* requires the individual to be absolutely selfless and thus self-sacrifice must be in the name of God and not to fulfil individual desire. The reality however suggests that personal revenge and retaliation is definitely a powerful motivator and yet, while personal explanations exist, they tend to be mentioned briefly before the candidate reverts to justifying his/her decision on the basis of retaliating on behalf of the entire community. The individual therefore aggregates personal motivations with those of the Palestinian collective and then retaliates (simultaneously on behalf of both and with full knowledge of the strategic imperatives) through the single act of a suicide attack.[70]

Suicide bombings as an expression of survival for individual bombers

As mentioned previously a survey of poll results suggests that public support is highest in times when the society is under extreme pressure and has little hope for peace or resolution of the conflict. These peaks in public opinion are matched by a corresponding rise in suicide attacks in the same periods indicating what is potentially a rise in volunteers for suicide missions during such periods. As such, it seems that individual self-sacrifice is also impelled by altruistic motives rather than by organizational pressure alone and represents the individual's attempts to serve and defend their society when all other avenues seem to be closed. In other words, the bomber, as a highly integrated individual in Palestinian society, believes that his/her personal self-sacrifice furthers the possibility of his/her community's survival in times of extreme pressure. This sense of commitment to the survival of the community comes across very clearly in the statements made by individual candidates. For example, the last will of Hamas operative Muhammad Hazza al-Ghoul stated:

> How beautiful for the splinters of my bones to be the response that blows up the enemy, *not for the love of killing, but so we can live as other people live … We do not sing the song of death, but recite the hymns of life … We die so that future generations might live* [my emphasis].[71]

Similarly when Argo asked a bomber what the term *istish'had* (martyr) meant to him, he replied, ‘the *istish'had* will sacrifice his life *for the community* [my emphasis] in order to please the will of God’.[72] Another bomber told her: ‘I believe that it would *improve the situation of the Palestinian people in the future because the action would deter the Israelis from* [continuing to] *commit crimes against us* [my emphasis]’.[73] It is clear that the bombers believe that their

selfsacrifice is a service to their community, and one that will ensure its survival and enable others to live in a better future. As such, the act of suicide violence, as an act of extreme altruism, serves both expressive and instrumental purposes for the individual operative.

Such sentiments seem to be increasingly shared and supported by the bomber's close friends and family.[74] The family also invokes the sense of community service when speaking of the bomber's deeds. The mother of Hanadi Jaradat, for example, stated 'she has done what she has done, thank God, and I am sure what she has done is not a shameful thing, she has done it for the sake of her people'.[75] Similarly Miriam Farhat, a nominated Hamas candidate and the mother of Mohammed, Rawad and Nidal, all Qassam Brigades operatives who have died fighting for the Palestinian cause, remembers how she cried when Mohammed read out his last will before leaving for his suicide mission. When her son saw her tears and laughingly threatened to pull out of the mission, she encouraged him to carry out the attack and 'aim true'. She also remembers fearing that he would be arrested before 'he was glorified with martyrdom' and describes herself as 'his partner in jihad'.[76]

The bomber also consciously uses his/her self-sacrifice to convey multiple messages to multiple audiences. For example, one of Argo's interviewees stated how he believed that 'the operation would hurt the enemy … [and how a] successful mission greatly influences society. It raises the morale of the people; they are happy, they feel strong'.[77] This suggests that self-sacrifice is used to not only ensure the survival of the community but also of the struggle against the enemy by bolstering the community's morale. Martyrdom is also a conscious decision adopted by some bombers in order to encourage fellow Palestinians to follow in their footsteps. When Nasra Hassan asked a bomber when and why he had taken the decision to volunteer for a martyrdom operation he replied:

> In the spring of 1993, I began to pester our military leaders to let me do an operation … It was around the time of the Oslo accords, and it was quiet, too quiet. *I wanted to do an operation that would incite others to do the same* [my emphasis]. Finally, I was given the green light to leave Gaza for an operation inside Israel.[78]

Suicide operatives also wish to convey a message to the world and the Israeli state. For example, a graduate student preparing for a suicide operation explained how:

> At the moment of executing my mission, it will not be purely to kill Israelis. The killing is not my ultimate goal … *My act will carry a message beyond to those responsible and the world at large that the ugliest thing for a human being is to be forced to live without freedom* [my emphasis].[79]

The operatives know that the short-term benefits of their sacrifice may be minimal but are still willing to volunteer for an operation in order to send a message to the world. For example, an operative Argo interviewed stated: 'you cannot win by yourself, *but your sacrifice will help show the world the true nature of your sacrificial self and of your inhuman opponent* [my

emphasis]'.[80]

The conscious step taken towards militarization and radicalization is sometimes also rooted in frustration with the peace process or moderate politics. Luca Ricolfi gives the example of an individual named Ali who was enlisted as a member of al-Fatah after personally witnessing Israeli soldiers killing a number of his friends and family members during the first intifada. However eventually, disenchanted with the lack of any real progress made by peace negotiations, he volunteered for a martyrdom operation with the PIJ.[81] My own interviews, as well as poll results, also point to a trend where individuals often shift from moderate organizations to those more willing to undertake suicide missions as a direct result of frustration with the peace process and despair with conditions of Israeli occupation.

It seems that another key audience for the bomber is that of the Palestinian political factions. The individual's attitude towards suicide operations encourages hard-line groups such as Hamas to continue escalating the use of suicide operations as a policy of engagement and competition in order to constantly 'live up' to the expectations of their support base. In other words, the individual can force the Hamas to consistently prove its image of a party willing to 'resist by all means'. At the same time, the individual's willingness to shift political allegiances to parties which use suicide operations pressurizes moderate political factions to adopt suicide operation or else risk losing popular support. Thus the individual's attitude is a crucial determinant of the continuing dialectic that exists between both levels of analysis.

Suicide bombings as an expression of competition for individual bombers

Martyrdom has become a powerful source of honour in Palestinian society and one that is portrayed as such by both the organizational leaders as well as members of the society at large. Former Hamas leader and spokesperson in Gaza, Dr Abdel Aziz Rantisi, for example, stated how 'for Hamas and Palestinian society in general, becoming a martyr is amongst the highest, if not the highest, honour'.[82] This stand seems to be verified by the overall attitude towards suicide operations and martyrs in Palestinian society. The glorification of the martyr has become almost ritualistic in Palestinian society. A martyr's last will, often videotaped, is widely publicized, his parents are visited and the organization he died in the name of often organizes his funeral. Funerals are, in turn, becoming more and more like rallies and large-scale demonstrations. The martyr is remembered through posters, murals, photographs and plaques exhibited in public spaces. Generally, the martyr's family also displays his photographs and last will in the main room of the house where guests are received. The martyr's family is honoured and respected by not only the organization but also by the entire village/camp. It is a social obligation, especially in smaller villages and camps, to visit and pay respect to a martyr's family. Most members of

Palestinian society consider it an honour to help a family whose house has been demolished by the Israelis as a punitive measure for producing a suicide operative.[83]

A direct result of this glorification appears to be a degree of competition amongst the increasing number of candidates willing to volunteer for suicide operations. In January 2002, Reem Rayashi became Hamas's first woman suicide bomber. Hamas candidate Miriam Farhat describes the response to Rayashi's suicide:

> Hundreds of females came to me to complain about Reem being chosen ahead of them. They were *very jealous* about that. Many of the young girls descended on my house and *begged to be given priority to follow Reem* [my emphasis].[84]

Another Hamas volunteer, Salim speaking to Zaki Chehab, described how ‘martyrdom is like a dream’ and how when he failed in accomplishing his mission he ‘broke down in tears’. Chehab writes how Salim's anguish was further compounded when he discovered that one of his comrades had successfully completed his mission and was honoured with martyrdom.[85] A Hamas supporter I spoke to in Nablus also mentioned how he would be shamed if his friend was chosen for a suicide operation instead of him.[86]

Overall this seems to suggest that suicide bombers are regarded, at least by a section of Palestinian society, as a positive source of inspiration. Surprisingly those with close links to suicide bombers seem to also see the act in a positive light. Neda Taweel, the sister of the bomber Diya Taweel, for example believes that ‘it must be a great feeling to be able to do that [participate in a suicide operation]’.[87] Others stated how ‘how anyone with honour would choose the path of martyrdom’.[88] Luca Ricolfi's analysis determines that suicide operatives seem to originate from a very small number of places in WBG. A majority of suicide operatives come from the refugee camps surrounding Hebron, Nablus and Jenin. According to Ricolfi, this ‘clustering’ shows that emulation plays an important role in promulgating martyrdom in Palestinian society.

Edward Said, in his book *End of the Peace Process,* explained how the failure of the Oslo peace process and resulting closure of the territories shrunk Palestinian reality to a minimum.[89] There is no doubt that Israeli policies are placing the territories under tremendous pressure and this might explain why more and more people are willing to emulate suicide bombers. Ricolfi believes that in this contracting reality, where social life is frozen and normal careers no longer exist, the resistance movement has become the only real social system and as such the only available careers are now inevitably linked to the resistance. Among these ‘careers’ then, the highest position is that of the martyr since it confers upon the candidate eternal prestige, honour and glory.[90] That Palestinian society is following such a path seems most evident in the statements made by youngsters and school children. In conditions of protracted conflict even they seem to realize that their deaths might amount to more than their lives: children as young as

four years old want to ‘grow up to be martyrs’.[91] In an interview, some school children said: ‘we know it's a bad idea to run at heavily armed people with stones. But we can't stop it. As a living person here, you're nothing. As a dead person you become a hero, at least for a moment’.[92]

Another key reason for martyrdom operations becoming increasingly competitive may be the cash compensation received by the martyr's family both from the group that organized the mission and, until he was overthrown in 2003, from representatives of the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. Various sources point out that Iraq began compensating the families of Palestinian martyrs in 2000. Alan Krueger and Jitka Maleckova speculate if the sharp rise in suicide operations in March 2002 is linked to the increase in Iraqi compensation from $10,000 to $25,000 between February and March 2002.[93] Israel appeared to counter this incentive almost immediately by implementing a policy of inflicting heavy punitive measures on the bomber's family after his/her operation. Thus from July 2002, Israel began to systematically destroy the family homes of Palestinian martyrs. However, in the absence of solid econometric evidence these connections remain unverifiable to a large extent.[94]

What is obvious then is that martyrdom and suicide operations have been normalized in Palestinian society. Reuter, amongst others, describes how school children discuss and fantasize about martyrdom operations they will grow up to participate in. Sarraj explains how children now ‘play martyr’ in the streets. A young boy who spoke to Reuter described the details of the banquet that would be thrown in his honour after his martyrdom and hoped there would be lots of chocolate cake with coconut flakes, as that was his favourite dessert. His headmaster states: ‘I don't know [what will become of him]. It doesn't make any difference to him anymore whether he is shot dead while throwing stones or blows himself up’.[95]

Conclusion

What is evident from the above is that a *continuing dialectic* between the individual and the organization played a crucial role in propelling the use of suicide operations within the Palestinian context. Suicide operations thus essentially become the converging point of both instrumental and expressive violence, for both Hamas and its operatives. Hamas leader Abu Shanab explained the organization's logic behind the resort to suicide attacks after September 2000:

> I want to emphasise that at the beginning of the Al-Aqsa intifada, we in Hamas did not commit any acts of violence. Nothing. Israel, however, killed scores of Palestinian civilians. The Palestinian street began to criticise us, even people in the PA began to criticise us. What is the philosophy of resistance? To inflict losses upon the enemy. We have no way to defend ourselves. We can only put pressure on Israel, and make clear that ‘if you do not withdraw, then we will be able to cause death and destruction on your side’. The Palestinians turned from a cat into a tiger, because they put us in a cage with no chance to move.[96]

This statement demonstrates that the opinion of the common Palestinian is key to the way Hamas operates: ‘because ‘Hamas will never act against the Palestinian street’.[97] In 2003 an Israeli security official stated that:

> Hamas always seeks to be part of the Palestinian consensus and operates within it. We see this in the suicide operations. If the grassroots want operations, they will go for big attacks, because they do not want to lose support.[98]

Hence Hamas's consistently shifting attitude towards violence and its strategic use of suicide operations can be seen as intricately linked to broader popular attitudes. In fact, in times of open conflict, the Palestinian street tends to support Hamas, as opposed to a pacifist PA, primarily for its ability to strike back at the Israelis. As Ismail Habbash, a film-maker from Ramallah says:

> I can't even get from Ramallah to Birzeit University because of the Israeli roadblocks, but Hamas can get to the very heart of Tel Aviv. In the eyes of very many people, they are taking revenge upon those who prevented me from reaching Birzeit, and this only enhances their stature.[99]

The way that Hamas used suicide bombings against Israeli civilian targets, initially in 1994 and with increasing frequency during 1995 and 1996, is illustrative. It has been suggested that the use of suicide bombings in this period reflected Hamas's judgement that Palestinian public opinion would tolerate them. This assessment initially appeared correct, but Hamas badly miscalculated in thinking that it could cripple both the Oslo process and the PA by consistently escalating.

> Hamas, like other Palestinian opposition movements, was also initially hesitant to jump into the second intifada, which it feared was merely a temporary tactical ploy by the PA to extract Israeli concessions. It was only after the Islamists were persuaded that the uprising had sufficient autonomy and popular support that, as in 1987–1988, they committed their forces. By mid 2001, they were increasingly setting the pace, in no small part because they carried the conflict into Israel by resorting, with increasing frequency, to horrendous suicide attacks. Since September 2000, there emerged a consistent pattern of suicide attacks after high-profile Israeli assassinations.[100]

In turn, there has been a shift in the Palestinian public with an increasing number of individuals volunteering to participate in suicide operations and, most importantly, becoming increasingly loosely affiliated with specific organizations, choosing instead to use any group willing to provide them with the infrastructure and logistics to conduct an operation. This seems to suggest that not only has suicide bombing been fully *instrumentalized* by Hamas, but also that it has been *internalized* to a considerable degree by a significant proportion of the Palestinian population. Overall the result was the generation of an arena of political competition in a quasi-government and proto-state setting with suicide attacks serving the purpose of delineating organizational capacity and individual space. In other words, the instrumental and expressive use of martyrdom in its newest *avatar*, in this setting enabled Hamas and its operatives to utilize suicide bombings as a mechanism to ensure survival, competition and retaliation.

5 Palestinian nationalism, identity and the norm of militant heroic martyrdom

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When the blood of martyrs irrigates the land then roses appear

Hamas song[1]

The previous chapter located the instrumental and expressive rationality of suicide violence in order to explain why it was adopted as a form of protest in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. This chapter furthers our analysis by locating how a culturally specific concept of self-sacrifice and martyrdom was appropriated and rearticulated as suicide bombings by Hamas. In other words, this chapter seeks to explain *how* suicide violence evolved within the Israeli-Palestinian landscape of conflict and thus endeavours to account for the specific 'box' of Palestinian social reality in which such attacks operate.

Conceptually, this chapter is based upon the logic that locates Palestinian nationalism as the vital determinant in the emergence of suicide violence in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Tracing the evolution of Palestinian national identity in Chapters 2 allowed us to identify certain reoccurring key themes in the construction of Palestinian selfhood, including: *humiliation, dispossession, suffering, sacrifice* and most significantly for this analysis, *heroic martyrdom*. This account of Palestinian socio-political reality in *la longue durée* enabled us to locate the trajectory of protest and violence in the Israeli–Palestinian interaction over the past 50 years in direct relation to the crystallization of Palestinian nationalism and national identity. Further, it also enabled us to locate 'identity' and the 'notion of the other' as crucial elements in facilitating what this work identified as the historically developed 'norm of militant heroic martyrdom'. This contextualization ensured that multiple factors that would otherwise be ignored were taken into account when attempting to formulate a deeper understanding of how suicide violence emerged in the early 1990s and was adopted as a powerful form of protest and engagement by the start of the Al-Aqsa intifada. Predicated on this logic, this chapter now moves on to demonstrate how Palestinian identity is historically rooted in what is essentially a cyclical active-passive dichotomy of armed struggle/militant heroic martyrdom and suffering/sacrifice. Hamas is therefore identified as appropriating, re-Islamizing and rearticulating (in other words, transforming) the historically and culturally entrenched norm of militant heroic martyrdom into suicide violence at a very specific point within the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

Adopting this approach also facilitates an understanding of suicide violence on both an organizational and individual level and allows us to comprehend how a suicide bombing serves multiple functions for different levels in Palestinian society. Overall then, both the adoption and support of suicide bombings may be understood as the *assertion of power* in a situation of powerlessness as well as the assertion of a new, more *proactive* Palestinian identity. This assertion of power and identity operates simultaneously on three different levels, i.e. at the level of the organization (i.e. Hamas), that of the individual bomber and finally at the level of the Palestinian society. These three levels also constantly interact and influence each other's behaviour and expectations. Suicide attacks are also used as a means to delineate organizational and individual space within the Palestinian socio-political setting. Therefore suicide violence is a mechanism whereby organizations/individuals can not only stand apart from society as proactive and powerful actors but also, simultaneously, a mechanism utilized by both levels to reintegrate with Palestinian society and identify with its grievances. Thus this chapter also demonstrates how the assertion of this more proactive identity is, in fact, an assertion of power and closely tied into issues of legitimacy and esteem in Palestinian society. The success and survival of both levels, organizational and individual, appears to be based upon the *sustainable* ability to assert an identity distinct from the rest of Palestinian society as well as the ability to simultaneously affiliate and identify with the same society. Hence, it is essential that both the organization and the individual be consistently perceived to be *representative* of broader societal sentiments and also as furthering a common cause – in this case articulated as removing ‘Israeli occupation’ and establishing an independent Palestinian state. Given that militant heroic martyrdom has existed as a constitutive and regulatory norm in Palestinian cultural memory, knowledge and practice since at least the early twentieth century[2] it represents a key component in the construction, definition and assertion of a distinct Palestinian national identity. In other words, understanding militant heroic martyrdom as a historically established standard of proper behaviour allows us to identify the *act* of martyrdom as one which also *conveys* a very specifically proactive Palestinian identity to relevant others.[3] In short, while suicide violence in the Palestinian territories is rooted in ideational factors, changing material structures also impact its evolution and implementation. This explains how for a certain period of time, militant heroic martyrdom came to be fully constructed and operationalized in the conflict against the negative other,[4] i.e. the Israeli state and people, as a suicide attack.

Hamas inserts itself into an established narrative of Palestinian selfhood

As outlined previously Hamas, unlike Fatah, never really enjoyed an undisputed pre-eminence

within Palestinian politics until its 2006 electoral victory. However, at the same time Hamas has been able to successfully tap into popular sentiments in order to project itself as a legitimate alternative to the PLO and Fatah. As such it has managed to play an instrumental role in steering the course of Palestinian nationalism and national identity since its inception in 1987. Chapter 2 illustrated the evolution of this national identity and nationalism over the greater part of the twentieth century. In doing so it also located key political players that impacted this continuous evolution of Palestinian collective identity. These players included the Ottomans, the Jews (the Israelis post-1948), the British as well as the Palestinians as represented by peasants, the notables, Qassamites and then various *fedayeen* groups such as al-Fatah. Hamas must be seen as yet another party in this long line of political players impacting the consistently evolving Palestinian national identity.

Chapter 2 also identified how certain reoccurring key themes of Palestinian collective identity including *oppression, emasculation, degradation, dispossession, humiliation, sacrifice, martyrdom, suffering, and by the late 1960s also defeat and occupation*, have consistently propelled the evolution of Palestinian nationalism and the national struggle. Yet simultaneously, and as established in Chapters 2, depending on the time and circumstances, some of these themes tend to play a more prominent role than others. Even a cursory analysis of Palestinian politics since the emergence of Hamas suggests that, from 1987 to approximately 2006, the norm of militant heroic martyrdom *(shahadat)* increasingly played the most prominent role in the evolution of Palestinian national identity. Yet this norm of heroic martyrdom, as demonstrated above, had already emerged and developed as a key component of Palestinian collective identity much before the first intifada and the rise of Hamas. As such I believe that rather than actively creating this norm, Hamas merely needed to insert itself into a pre-existing ideology of heroic martyrdom in 1987. At the same time, Hamas first appropriated this norm before re-Islamizing it, and then finally rearticulating it as a suicide attack from 1993 onwards. In short, Hamas must be credited with consciously and coldly escalating what was essentially a historically developed and culturally entrenched norm of militant heroic martyrdom to a new level of violent selfsacrifice.

In a nutshell the key reason for the prominence and re-emergence of militant heroic martyrdom was the sheer powerlessness experienced by Palestinian society in the period immediately preceding the first intifada. Indeed Palestinian nationalism when examined in *la longue durée* reflects a cyclical pattern whereby the sense of powerlessness, itself rooted in themes of suffering, degradation, dispossession, humiliation etc., repeatedly engenders a renewal of armed struggle within Palestinian society. The violence inherent in armed struggle enables the Palestinians to recapture agency and thereby power, in a situation that otherwise denies them any. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu states that honour supposes ‘an individual who sees himself always through the eyes of others, who has need of others for his existence, because the image he

has of himself is indistinguishable from that presented to him by other people'.[5] In other words, honour is a social construction inextricably linked to narratives of selfhood. Richard Sennett explains that the affirmation of honour within a group can lead to destructive behaviour towards those who fall outside the group's boundaries. In short, the Palestinian exercise of agency in the form of self-sacrifice also allows them to 'reinvent' themselves and regain 'lost' honour, dignity and self-respect vis-à-vis negative others.

Sacrifice is thus a core ingredient of Palestinian national identity, and when agency is exercised in periods of resistance sacrifice assumes the fully developed form of heroic martyrdom. While this seizure of agency may or may not have tangible political results, every time it is exercised it further propels the evolution of Palestinian nationalism by regenerating the vital component of active identity creation. However, once armed struggle loses momentum, as it inevitably does, and agency is lost the core national identity reverts back to the passive one of the powerless, dispossessed and degraded. Thus the basic narrative of Palestinian selfhood and history embodies a basic 'active-passive' cyclical dichotomy of 'armed struggle/heroic martyrdom' and 'suffering/sacrifice'.

Interestingly those who opt for armed struggle always seem to escalate the violence and in doing so, each time, raise the benchmark of militant heroic martyrdom. This steady long-term escalation may be a response to the absence of tangible political results. Yet what is most significant is that each time, violence is justified by basing it on the *unchanging nature* of other components of Palestinian selfhood, especially the experience of misery, humiliation, occupation, emasculation and dispossession. Hence violence and militarized heroic martyrdom consistently, and cyclically, become the means to redress the trauma caused by the loss of land and prestige. The remainder of this chapter aims to illustrate how Hamas, by basing itself on this pre-existing logic and pattern, has in its turn not only been able to resort to and justify the use of violence but also how it escalated this violence to the level of suicide bombings. Therefore, it must be stressed that Hamas has by no means created a new paradigm of violence in the Israeli–Palestinian confrontation. Instead it has merely redefined the parameters of the violence it inherited.

A survey of Hamas's politico-ideological tracks, including its Covenant (*mithaq*), leaflets *(al-bayanāt)*, wall graffiti (*shi'arat*), murals, posters, songs, videos and official statements reflects how it is, like its other Palestinian political predecessors, preoccupied with the key components of Palestinian identity discussed above. Indeed, despite envisioning a radically different ultimate vision for Palestine, i.e. an Islamic Palestinian state as opposed to Fatah's Palestinian secular nation-state, Hamas's key concerns echo those of Fatah in its early years. Thus, the key themes for Hamas also include: (1) the trauma of defeat and concurrently the crisis of oppression and dispossession; (2) the long-standing experience of humiliation, suffering and degradation; (3) a

deeply ingrained sense of helplessness and emasculation; and (4) the necessity to exercise heroic martyrdom to regain freedom, land and dignity. Hamas inherited these concerns and used them to define its own identity as a truly Palestinian organization; reconfirm the Israeli identity as the most prominent 'other' for the Palestinians; and to propel its particular version of heroic martyrdom as a means of confronting occupation. Of these four themes while the last is central to our analysis of suicide bombings, the other three are also vital in that they represent the foundation upon which Hamas constructs and justifies its logic of self-sacrifice and militarized heroic martyrdom.

The trauma of defeat and concurrently the crisis of oppression and dispossession

First and foremost, Hamas clearly recognizes and draws upon the deeply internalized trauma of oppression and dispossession that traces its historical roots to first the British Mandate and Jewish immigration and then the experiences of the 1948 *nakba* and the 1967 *naksa* (i.e. 'the setback', as the defeat in the Six Day War is often referred to). This is reflected in how it repeatedly refers back to *nakba* and *naksa* in its literature, especially in its earlier leaflets. Each time it refreshes its audience's memory of violence, dispersal and dispossession. For example: 'On April 9 [1948], the Jewish butchers perpetrated the massacre of Deir Yassin, killing the aged, women, and infants, and ripping open the bellies of pregnant women in order to destroy the seed of our people …'.[6]

Key events that are constantly referred back to also include the Balfour Declaration and less often the Peel Commission of 1937, which 'proposed the creation of a Jewish and Arab state on the soil of Palestine'.[7] Again in both cases these events are part of the Palestinian memory of oppression and dispossession and are kept alive in popular consciousness by various political factions. Hamas tends to call for general strikes and an escalation of violence to commemorate all such events and dates that are perceived to have impacted the Palestinian national struggle.[8] For example: 'November 2, 1989 – A general strike on the anniversary of the wretched Balfour Declaration, as a proclamation by our people of their opposition to solutions that infringe on its rights and [causes them] to lose its land'.[9] 'Also: 'general strike on Saturday, April 9, 1989 – marking the advent of the 5th month in the second year of the blessed uprising. The uprising should be escalated to commemorate the massacre at Deir Yassin by Jewish terrorists'.[10]

This motif of violence and abandonment can also be located in popular Hamas sources. For example in Ahmad Ziad Ghanima's comic-book hagiography for children, *Ahmad Yassin: Sheikh of Palestine*, the following dialogue occurs between Yassin and his mother. Note how in the established tradition of saints Yassin speaks like a judge and holy man despite the fact that he was only 12 years old when he left his home in 1948 for a UN refugee camp in Gaza:

‘Why are we leaving our house, O my mother?’

‘Because, O Ahmad, when the criminal Jews arrive at our village, they will kill us.’

‘‘Where are our brothers? Why don't they rise up to defend us?’

‘‘They have forsaken us, May Allah forgive them, except for a small portion of them who are resisting the Jews with courage’.[11]

Occasionally in its literature, Hamas attributes the 1948 and 1967 defeats to the weakness of Arab regimes, reminding the Palestinians that they are, as always, alone in their struggle for freedom.[12] Emphasizing this isolation assists Hamas in naturalizing its call for sacrifice and martyrdom as a pre-requisite for liberation. Yet at the same time, and in response to the strategic ramifications of this isolation, Hamas also calls to the ‘Arab and Islamic masses everywhere’ to shoulder their duty towards Palestine:

> There is no excuse today for the Nation [i.e. the Arab and Islamic masses] for not shouldering its duty towards Palestine and its people. Consequently, it is high time for an Arab and Islamic change to take place quickly and seriously. This necessitates … [concern] with his Palestinian brother who is slaughtered daily and who is fighting alone with modest weapons against an army equipped with a huge military arsenal …[13]

Thus, Hamas literature illustrates how the organization first keeps a disaster-based historical memory alive before highlighting the isolated nature of the Palestinian struggle. Then based upon this construction, and using similar imagery, it articulates a powerful narrative of present-day oppression and dispossession experienced at the hands of the old enemy, the Jewish state of Israel.

> … An army equipped from head to foot is fighting our chained and weaponless people. Tanks, armoured vehicles, and airplanes pursue the inhabitants … toxic bombs are hurled at our masses … Curfew is imposed on towns, villages and camps; houses are broken into by day and by night … women are intimidated and children terrorized … mosques are invaded … youth are murdered in their houses and at road junctions and their bodies thrown between the trees; children are kidnapped and their feet broken; universities, schools, and scientific institutions are closed. The plunderer has revealed his malice and unmasked his true face, wielding an iron fist to impose a death sentence on the liberty and honour of our people.[14]

In all its literature, Hamas consistently portrays the Palestinians as the weaker party and thereby re-creates a David-Goliath scenario. This asymmetry in the confrontation is crucial for its construction of the Palestinian need for militant heroic martyrdom. Hamas also consistently identifies the Israeli state as a shared threat and in doing so contributes to the process of consolidating a collective disaster-based national identity. In repeatedly highlighting the Palestinian lack of security and freedom, it reflects an acute identification with, and instrumentalization of, day-to-day Palestinian experiences and concerns. This empathy enables it to cast itself as an organization that is rooted in Palestinian daily reality and thereby attract popular support.[15]

Interestingly, an analysis of Hamas leaflets suggests that it tended to refer back to the *nakba*,

naksa and other disasters much more frequently during the first intifada. These references are less frequent by the time the Al-Aqsa intifada erupts, and leaflets from this period are more focused on the Oslo peace process, the first intifada and, what is by then a fully developed narrative of militant heroic martyrdom in its current manifestation. This shift suggests that the themes of historical disaster had already served their dual purpose of imparting legitimacy to Hamas and enabling it to renew the norm of militant heroic martyrdom and could now be overshadowed by more contemporary narratives of 'disaster', i.e. the first intifada and the failed Oslo peace process.

The long-standing experience of humiliation, suffering and degradation

The second theme that Hamas consistently draws upon and instrumentalizes is the long-standing and widespread experience of humiliation, suffering and degradation. This humiliation and suffering has historical roots in the defeats of 1948 and 1967 and the corresponding loss of land, resources and population dispersal. Suffering at the hand of the Israeli state has thus been historically internalized by the population and continues to be a key component of Palestinian selfhood, and one which is consistently evident in popular contemporary depictions of the Israeli occupation. A good example is the poem 'And What Next' written in 1986, i.e. in the period immediately preceding the first intifada. The imagery in this work reflects a continuation from earlier literature, and if not identified as a more recent piece, this poem could well be from the 1948 or 1967 period:

> … They [the Israeli occupiers] have burnt it [the land], O my son
> They stole the za'tar[16] and uprooted the threshing floor
> They burned the churches, O Virgin
> They burned the mosques and destroyed the minbar
> They have killed my brother
> The body of my father
> Woe unto you, O settler …[17]

Contemporary day-to-day circumstances have definitely built upon the cultural memory of humiliation and suffering. Many Palestinians have grown up watching their houses destroyed by Israeli bulldozers in retaliation for attacks on Jewish settlements. Others have seen their friends shot down by Israeli soldiers. Most have watched their fathers humiliated at Israeli checkpoints after waiting in line for hours. Dr Eyad Sarraj, founder and director of the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme, succinctly sums up the daily life of a Palestinian:

> You are given an identity number and permit to reside. If you leave the country for more than three years in succession, you lose the right to residence. When you leave the country on a trip, you are given a *laissez passer*, a travelling document, valid for one year that tells you … that you are of undefined nationality. Israeli occupation means that you are

> called twice a year by the intelligence for routine interrogation and persuasion to work as an informer on your brothers and sisters … To survive under Israeli occupation you are given a chance to work in jobs that the Israelis do not like … You will have to leave your home in the refugee camp at 3 am, go through the road blocks and check posts, spend your day under the sun and surveillance, returning home in the evening to collapse in bed for a few hours ….[18]

Statements made by Palestinians echo this suffering and humiliation. In a personal interview Assam, a young student at the An-Najah University in Nablus, said:

> we live in misery and are treated like dogs. The Israelis kick us, spit on us, insult us and treat us like criminals for living on the land of our fathers. They want to break us and so they don't treat us like humans.[19]

Another student of the university who requested to remain unnamed described how she was sick of being humiliated at checkpoints:

> we are always searched and insulted at checkpoints. The *j'aish* [the Israeli army] decides if we can come to university, go to work, visit our families – if we can live and breathe. I don't know how much longer I can stand it.[20]

This 'checkpoint syndrome' has built up a feeling of immense humiliation and frustration in the Palestinian population and has had, according to Dr Sarraj, an extremely negative impact on the youth of Palestine: 'Do you know what it means for a child to see his father spat at and beaten before his eyes by an Israeli soldier? … we observe that they lose respect for their fathers. So they … tried the *intifada''*. [21] Once again it must be stressed that Hamas did not need to create this feeling of suffering and degradation but instead merely tapped into a pre-existing sentiment – one which continues to be widespread, deeply rooted and consistently revisited in Hamas literature. Hamas thus cunningly absorbed an established sentiment into its own narrative and used it to instrumentalize the option of militant heroic martyrdom.

Hamas's references to the humiliation, suffering and degradation of the Palestinian people can be traced throughout its literature, its songs, slogans, murals etc. as well as in the statements made by its supporters and operatives. In consistently referring back to what is a deep-rooted sentiment, Hamas displays an effective identification with popular grievances and its understanding of Palestinian circumstances while also simultaneously highlighting its ability to channel these grievances into political action. Hamas literature consciously underscores harsh Israeli policies and glorifies the suffering of the Palestinian people, constantly using this juxtapositioning as a rallying point for its resistance activity. It meticulously weaves the narrative of defeat, oppression and dispossession with that of humiliation, suffering and degradation. It therefore paints a picture of a people who suffer under an occupation yet who, despite being dispossessed, humiliated and degraded, possess the strength to fight back and regain their dignity and honour:

> The inhuman policy against a defenceless people was expressed in the arrest of thousands of men, women and children, who were beaten and tortured with abuse … the … resentful ruler [i.e. the Israeli state] … thought our people had indeed

> sunk into a state of despair and helplessness and was asking for mercy on bent knee … They expected the generation that grew up after 1967 to be wretched and cowed … Yet what actually happened … was the awakening of the people … avenging its honour and restoring its formal glory.[22]

Hamas therefore manipulates this ingrained sense of humiliation and suffering to justify violence against the Israeli state.

> Qassam Brigades declare responsibility for the missile bombing this morning … [which were fired] as a retaliatory warning to the Zionist criminals over their criminal bombardment of our people … along with the constant *insults, murder, destruction, displacement and detention of our people* [my emphasis].[23]

'The uprising continues, to flinch from it is death, the Zionist *occupiers torture and humiliate the people at every opportunity. Let the stone be our strong weapon against the occupiers!* [my emphasis]'.[24] Hamas operatives also echo this general sense of humiliation and degradation and refer back to past honour and glory. For example, the last will of Ismail Masawabi, a Hamas operative from Khan Yunis who blew himself up at the edge of a nearby Israeli settlement states: '… Before we had power, then we became weak. We live in humiliation, where we once lived in dignity … '.[25]

An important subtext to the narrative of humiliation and suffering which deserves a mention is the concept of *sumud* (steadfastness) and *sabr* (patience). Both can be traced as long-standing components of Palestinian selfhood. *Sumud* as a political strategy was based in the idealized image of the Palestinian peasant who stayed on his land and refused to leave. It was therefore a passive strategy of resistance and symbolized an unbreakable connection to the soil of Palestine, which countered the uprootedness of 1948 and 1967. While the genealogy of the concept is rather murky, *sumud* as a political strategy was actively pursued only from about 1967 and is believed to have failed as such.[26] Yet this work asserts that *sumud* as a component of Palestinian selfhood has been undoubtedly and irreversibly incorporated into contemporary Palestinian consciousness.[27]

Closely aligned with the concept of *sumud* is the concept of *sabr*, which literally translates as 'patience'. *Sabr* is a quality that ideally every Palestinian needs to possess and exercise for it is believed that it is this quality alone that enables Palestinians to bear the torment, oppression and the humiliation of defeat and occupation without breaking. The concept of *sabr* also seems to be closely linked to land, agriculture and indigenousness and is rooted in the image of the hardy peasant who unhurriedly works his land to make it bloom.[28] The concept of *sabr* is, like *sumud*, firmly rooted in the Palestinian consciousness and is once again a powerful construct because it draws upon the cultural memory of the land and the *fellah*, i.e. the peasant. Once again it represents a counter-narrative to the reality of dispossession and uprootedness. The following poem, which was popular much before the first intifada, and was often found written on the walls

of Israeli prison cells, reflects the centrality of the concept of *sabr* as a component of Palestinian selfhood and resistance:

> I will be patient until patience is worn out from my patience
> and I will be patient until Allah decrees my condition
> and I will be patient until patience knows
> that I will bear stoutly that which is more bitter than patience.[29]

Hamas consistently draws upon both these concepts in its leaflets and political statements thereby, once again, demonstrating its enormous dexterity in tapping into an established subtext. For example, it often addresses the Palestinians as 'Our patient Palestinian people' or 'Our *Mujahid* and patient people' or 'Our *Mujahid*, patient and steadfast people' or 'O patient murabitun',[30] thereby framing the passive qualities of patience and steadfastness as necessary correlates to active resistance. Hamas also often advises the masses to adopt the 'wait and see'[31] stance of a true *mujahid* and stresses that the people need to 'remain patient and steadfast'[32] for the sake of the resistance and Allah and face the enemy with 'determination and constancy'.[33] It also often represents the Palestinians as 'patient ones who resist all forms of oppression, humiliation, and surrender',[34] hence once again reviving the main narrative of humiliation and suffering while simultaneously referring to the established subtext of *sumud* and *sabr*. Hamas thus consciously plays an active role in developing the identity of the Palestinians as a people who can wait patiently and steadfastly bear oppression before striking the enemy at the most opportune moment.

The deeply ingrained sense of helplessness and emasculation

The third key components of Palestinian identity, which Hamas is keenly concerned with is the deeply ingrained Palestinian sense of helplessness and emasculation. This sense of helplessness as established above originates in the Palestinian experiences of colonization and the violence faced in 1948 and again in 1967. Hamas both revives and builds upon this experience in its literature. It encourages the Palestinian people to resist the occupation and, most importantly, it justifies its resort to violent activity by highlighting the unchanging brutal nature of occupation and the helplessness of the Palestinian society in the face of this suffering. Hamas's logic resonates with that of the literature from the period leading up to the Great Revolt of 1936 in which traditional portrayals of Palestinian impotence and degradation were increasingly accompanied by calls for sacrifice and martyrdom as well as celebrations of Palestinian violence against the British and the Jews. Thus, once again, Hamas inserts itself into and replicates an established traditional narrative.

> Now they [the Israelis] intend to expel a new group of inhabitants from their own land and their own native city to Lebanon – and they are killing and blowing up houses everywhere, particularly in the suffering village of Beita in which

> settlers sowed corruption – and the aged and children fall martyrs to the gas bombs that are hurled at them indiscriminately in houses and in every place.[35]

'The Zionists have exceeded all limits, they killed, displaced, imprisoned, destroyed houses and property even our graveyards were not spared. We have no other choice but Jihad and developing its means until victory or martyrdom'.[36] Like its Qassamite and PLO predecessors, Hamas also identifies *active resistance* as the answer to Palestinian helplessness and emasculation. It juxtapositions cowardice and dishonour with daring activism, pride and honour. It also accuses the Arab regimes of cowardice and of abandoning the Palestinian cause and, in doing so, once again underscores the isolated nature of the Palestinian struggle, and in turn the bravery of those who participate in the resistance against all odds. However, unlike the Qassamites, Hamas never refers to 'Palestinian cowardice and inactivity' potentially because the population was already mobilized and actively resisting Israeli occupation in 1987 when the group emerged. It is also quite possible that a pre-established and strong tradition of armed struggle made it both impossible and unnecessary to mobilize the Palestinians by accusing them of cowardice. Thus Hamas develops the 'cowardice/dishonour-activism/honour' narrative further by framing the Arab nations as impotent and dishonourable as opposed to the oppressed yet brave and active Palestinians.

> Our Mujahid, patient and steadfast people … in the entire land of Palestine are asking today, what is our Nation waiting for? What is our Nation's reaction while witnessing its sons in the holy land murdered, slaughtered, and their houses and villages demolished and destroyed? Is such silence towards this pogrom permissible among brothers and holders of the same religion? Will Arab dignity and chivalry accept continuation of that silence?[37]

Or:

> What has happened to you, O rulers of Egypt? … Has your national zealousness died and your pride run out while the Jews daily perpetrate grave and base crimes against the people and the children [of Palestine] … Have the rulers paralyzed your movement and stripped you of your power, making you so impotent that even the usurpers are no longer frightened of you.[38]

As opposed to:

> Our courageous pupils [the Palestinian youth] have taken active part in escalating the uprising, devoting all their time and effort. They were fired with the spirit of revolt against the occupation, the plundering, and the oppression. With chest bared they met the armed forces, determined to attain their freedom and to expel the usurpers of their land and homeland. They sacrificed martyr after martyr. Their spirit did not falter. They did not show weakness and had no fear of the Jewish nazism.[39]

And:

> Despite the ugly Zionist oppression and despite the policy of the iron fist and the thick club, despite the continuing procession of martyrs, the broken hands and legs that fill the hospitals, despite all this your blessed uprising continues … declaring to the world … that our people is opposed to the occupation and refuses to forgo its right to Palestine.[40]

A noteworthy subtext to the main narrative of impotence and emasculation is one that frames Palestine as a 'bride' whose honour every good Palestinian has a duty to defend. Again, this subtext has long-standing historical roots and is significant especially because of the progressive construction of what may best be described as the 'blood cult' in Palestinian social consciousness by the end of the first intifada. In casting the country as the bride of the martyr, this imagery refers back to a rich tradition where female honour must be defended at all costs. The main imagery here is that of Palestine as the bride of the martyr and of her *mahr* (bride-price) that must be paid, not in gold but in blood: 'My country is my bride, and her *mahr* is my martyrdom'.[41] It is therefore not surprising that the martyrs' blood also often takes the place of the traditional wedding henna that the bride decorates her hands with and forms a graphic, but effective, symbol of sacrifice and martyrdom in defence of national honour. Such symbolism is clearly reminiscent of the folk nationalism of the *fellahin* whose honour was inextricably linked to land. Hamas imbibes this melodramatic, yet powerful, subtext and plays its own part in furthering the construction of the blood cult in Palestine.

Militant heroic martyrdom_ reinterpreting and escalating an established norm

Just as Hamas inherited the three core components of Palestinian national identity delineated above, it also inherited an established norm of militant heroic martyrdom. As stated previously, this norm traces its roots to the armed resistance of the Great Revolt, the military action of 1948 and the *fedayeen* ideology of the 1960s. Militant heroic martyrdom had already emerged as a violent expression against occupation and served clearly instrumental and symbolic purposes for both political parties as well as individuals. While the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas's parent organization, had participated militarily in both 1948 and 1967, thereby very clearly contributing to the construction of this norm, its policy in the two decades after 1967 eschewed military action in favour of social service.[42] The creation of Hamas marked a clear break with this 20-year-old policy when in 1987 it entered the intifada as the 'military arm' of the Brotherhood. It is therefore not surprising that armed resistance and martyrdom are identified as pre-requisites to freedom in Hamas literature, slogans and graffiti from the very beginning. For example, Hamas's very first leaflet issued in January 1988 states:

> Let the whole world hear that the Muslim Palestinian people rejects the surrender solution, rejects an international conference, for these will not restore our people's rights in its homeland and on its soil. The Palestinian people accuse all who seek this [solution] of weaving a plot against its rights and its sacred national cause. *Liberation will not be completed without sacrifice, blood and jihad that continues until victory* [my emphasis].[43]

It is evident from the language in this very first political communiqué that Hamas consciously rejected peaceful political solutions in favour of militant activism. It has been illustrated

elsewhere in this work how, at least partially, this was a strategic decision rooted in the Brotherhood's fear of losing ground in the Palestinian political arena, especially in light of the activism that characterized the 1987 intifada.[44] However, what is most significant here is the way in which Hamas, from the very first instance, revitalized entrenched notions of sacrifice and martyrdom on the one hand while also reintroducing Islam into the narrative of Palestinian nationalism. In other words, Hamas, like all previous armed movements in Palestine, re-linked the traditional idea of sacrifice with the Islamic concepts of jihad (holy war) and *istish'had* (martyrdom).[45] Therefore from the time of its inception, Hamas consciously inserted itself into and attempted to both appropriate and operationalize an established narrative of militant heroic martyrdom.

It is crucial to note the way in which Hamas used other key narratives of Palestinian collective identity, alone or in combination, to rearticulate the necessity of self-sacrifice and martyrdom. Hamas achieved this by first highlighting key themes of Palestinian selfhood in its literature, i.e. the themes of defeat, oppression, dispossession, degradation, humiliation and emasculation. In doing so, it painted for a modern audience a picture of *passive* Palestinian suffering and sacrifice. Based on this, it then articulated the need to recapture agency through *active* armed struggle and militant heroic martyrdom. In entering the intifada as the military arm of an established Palestinian political entity, Hamas successfully wove itself into the *active* face of what is a complex and multi-layered narrative of Palestinian nationalism. More importantly it once again placed sacrifice and martyrdom at the very core of this narrative. Thus, Hamas not only inserted itself into but also propelled the basic ‘active-passive’ cyclical dichotomy of ‘armed struggle/heroic martyrdom’ and ‘suffering/sacrifice’ that characterizes the narrative of Palestinian selfhood. In short, Hamas's militant struggle signified the active reclamation of Palestinian honour, dignity and glory through militant heroic martyrdom, and thus contributed to the evolution of Palestinian national identity.

By placing heroic martyrdom at the very centre of its resistance narrative Hamas also revived and propagated the powerful Palestinian tradition of the blood cult, thereby normalizing and legitimizing violence in the intifada. Hamas was certainly not the only political faction to evoke the traditional imagery of blood and honour, and by the time the first intifada ended this occasional concept had evolved into a fully developed narrative of the blood cult. The message conveyed by the narrative of the blood cult was that the only way to stop the bloodshed caused by occupation was to kill and die for the nation, i.e. spill more blood. Blood, as Oliver and Steinberg put it, ‘was literally everywhere’ – it ‘soaked the land, which was commonly described as hemorrhaging like a wound’, the streets were awashed or ‘hennaed’ with it, the revolutionaries ‘paid a tax of blood and martyrdom’ and the blood of martyrs ‘was said to light up the way, make henna on the hands of the living … flow across the land or cover the land like a libation,

and perhaps the most common of all *intifada* figures, irrigate the soil of the homeland'.[46] Another common metaphor was the martyr ingesting the blood and/or flesh of his enemy while offering his own blood as a sacrificial gift at the altar of the nation. Thus the ' *intifada* was a tree irrigated by the blood of its martyrs' and when this 'pure blood irrigated the land roses would appear' [47] and suffering would be alleviated. Blood therefore came to be synonymous with purity, martyrdom, sacrifice and nationalism and blood allegories became acceptable expressions of militant heroic martyrdom serving to normalize and ritualize the escalating violence. Hamas encapsulated this symbolic imagery of blood and martyrdom in many of its songs, videos, leaflets and speeches:

> Palestinian blood has been flowing since the feet of the new Tatars set foot on a land blessed by Allah … this torrent will not be stopped except by a torrent of revolution and giving …[48]
> Flay my bones with a whip; put my neck under the knife.
> Break, break my bones and shed my blood …[49]
> Kill me, rend me, drown me in my blood;
> You will never live in my land, you will never fly in my sky …[50]
> … the only solution to the problem is blood, knee-deep …[51]

Thus Hamas gradually re-created an environment where violence was normalized and the martyr and bloodshed glorified. By using imagery reminiscent of the *fedayeen* culture of the 1960s the blood cult rebuilt the image of the martyr as a cultural hero. Martyrs represented Palestinian performative identity because martyrdom signified struggling in response to suffering. As such, martyrs were once again the living embodiment of *active* Palestinian nationalism. They were to be cherished and specific days were devoted to honour them. Symbolic funerals processions were held and death for the nation glorified. Funerals increasingly became large-scale 'nationalist demonstrations and manifestations'.[52] All this served to create a space where Palestinians could revel in the pride and glory of militant heroic martyrdom – an exercise that was fully facilitated by Hamas. Hamas revived martyrdom as the honourable way of confronting the enemy and reclaiming agency. Like its predecessors, it once again juxtapositioned the honour of martyrdom with the dishonour of negotiations, oppression and occupation through slogans like, 'Yes to martyrdom and immolation … no to disgrace'.[53]

Having re-established the position of self-sacrifice in the nationalist discourse, Hamas then played a key role in *escalating* the manifestation of heroic martyrdom, thereby consciously participating in the evolution of Palestinian nationalism and national identity formation. A survey of early Hamas leaflets suggests it had adopted a pre-meditated strategy of confrontation and escalation from the very beginning of the intifada. It justified this escalation by drawing upon other key themes of Palestinian selfhood and the violent response of the Israeli state towards the Palestinian intifada:

> Today as the Muslim Palestinian people persist in rejecting the Jews' policy, a policy of deporting Palestinians from their homeland and leaving behind families and children – the people stresses to the Jews that the struggle will *continue and escalate, its methods and instruments will be improved, until the Jews drink what they have given our unarmed people to drink* [my emphasis].[54]
>
> O plundering occupier, *violence on your part will only bring about an escalation of the outburst* [my emphasis]. What has taken place so far is a prologue to what is yet to come, and the land will not be able to bear the oppression.[55]

Hamas therefore actively encouraged the Palestinians to graduate from using stones towards more violent confrontation through slogans like: 'Strike, strike by Molotov … after the stone, the Kalashnikov!'[56] A survey of Hamas literature from the first intifada reflects a consistent escalation in the weapons its *shabab* used against the Israeli army. Yet it must be emphasized that while early Hamas leaflets speak of martyrs, and even bomb attacks, no mention is ever made of suicide bombings. In other words, despite Hamas's deliberate efforts to escalate the conflict and revive the blood cult, it had as yet not evolved its narrative of militant heroic martyrdom to the point that it was manifested as a suicide attack: 'The blood of our martyrs shall not be forgotten. Every drop of blood shall become a *Molotov cocktail, a time bomb and a roadside charge* [my emphasis] that will rip out the intestines of the Jews'.[57] This however changed by the early 1990s. Many scholars attribute this shift towards suicide missions to the December 1992 deportation in which 415 Islamic activists were deported to southern Lebanon by the Rabin government as punitive action taken for the killing of five Israeli servicemen.[58] The Lebanese government refused to take in these deportees. Unable to take shelter in Lebanon and not allowed to return to the territories, these deportees were therefore forced to live in makeshift camps in the hills of southern Lebanon for much of 1993. It was in these circumstances that they came into contact with the Hizballah that provided them with both material and moral support. Consequently a strategic transfer of military skills and tactics is believed by many to have occurred at this point, resulting in the first successful suicide bombings in 1993.[59]

Scholars like Yoram Schweitzer believe that the idea that suicide bombings were 'imported' from Lebanon is a myth because suicide missions had been attempted in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict before the deportees returned from southern Lebanon. Instead he attributes the emergence of suicide bombings in Palestine to the 'copy-cat phenomenon' that was based on purely strategic considerations.[60] However, the fact that the first successful attacks were conducted only from 1993 onwards suggests that while the *concept* of suicide attacks may not have been directly imported there was at least some degree of transfer in military technology as a result of the 1992 deportations, making the attacks conducted post-1992 more effective.[61]

In the early 1990s, Hamas merged this newfound military expertise with its original rhetoric of militant heroic martyrdom successfully negotiating the shift in which the narrative of martyrdom escalated and acquired the profile of a suicide operation. With this shift it was no longer enough

that agents of the nation were willing to die for its preservation; now their deaths became a necessary pre-requisite. Hamas's literature shows this shift quite clearly. Its narrative progressed to clearly identify militant heroic martyrdom with suicide bombings as the next step in confronting the enemy: 'After the stone, a knife, and after that martyrdom'.[62] Hamas further bolstered and normalized this interpretation of militant heroic martyrdom through a concentrated campaign of glorifying bombers. Palestinian society was inundated with the image of the heroic martyr from the early 1990s. Hamas's text and electronic publications now carried elaborate eulogies of each suicide bomber that described in depth the operation in which he was killed along with the casualties he inflicted upon the enemy. Hamas's children's magazine, *al-Fatih*, carried stories about the life and death of its martyrs. Often the magazine also reproduced their last wills. The *shahic's* family was visited and assisted. Hamas literature and videos often showed the *shahid's* family expressing pride and joy at his martyrdom. Pictures of the martyr were distributed as fliers and posters and larger-than-life murals were drawn on buildings. Hamas posters often showed its bombers as irrigating the land with their blood or marrying the land of Palestine. Faces of martyrs were printed on T-shirts and caps.[63] All this worked towards normalizing suicide attacks as an acceptable version of militant heroic martyrdom for Palestinian society.

Sporadic martyrdom operations were conducted by Hamas and other organizations between 1993 and 2000. But by the time the Al-Aqsa intifada erupted in 2000 the total number of incidents had increased significantly as had the number of individuals volunteering to take part in such missions. This increase suggests that suicide missions had by now been fully entrenched into and operationalized within the Palestinian landscape thereby reflecting a consolidation of the reinterpreted norm of militant heroic martyrdom. Hamas continued to actively disseminate this narrative through various means including its leaflets, graffiti and poetry. A July 2001 Palestinian television broadcast, for example, featured a programme on Hamas summer camps in which a young boy was shown reciting a poem he had learnt in his time there:

> I dedicate this poem to the prisoners, martyrs, and the wounded,
> Oh nation, oh, my people, make your roar and the sound of thunder heard
> *Strike the rock, explode, stop the soldier's advance* [my emphasis]
> Make your scream of anger heard by everyone everywhere …[64]

Another Hamas poem revives memories of suffering before portraying the fearlessness that is supposedly characteristic of a suicide bomber:

> My life, although one of suffering and strife,
> My path crossing places where troubles are rife,
> Still I am oblivious to fear and the wicked do not scare me
> *Since my flesh, like wolves, will tear apart its prey* [my emphasis].[65]

As these statements illustrate, Hamas's imagery of militant heroic martyrdom became progressively more reflective of suicide violence. However, while Hamas played an active part in reviving and escalating the norm of militant heroic martyrdom in Palestinian society, the concept of the militant martyr, as established above, was already very much a part of the cultural struggle for national validation and legitimacy. Yet there is no denying that Hamas reinterpreted the concept of heroic martyrdom as suicide attacks. It is also evident that it channelized key themes of Palestinian selfhood into constructing a narrative that glorified and actively encouraged a new variant of militant martyrdom, thereby creating a conducive environment for the progressive normalization of suicide attacks. This conscious radicalization of the 1987 intifada served to engender a climate of relentless violent struggle, which opposed any form of negotiation or compromise. It is perhaps because Hamas adopted such an active role in steering the intifadas that some writers attribute the emergence and rise of suicide attacks in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict to organizational brainwashing and coercion.[66] However, while the role of the organization was certainly a factor, the sheer number of individuals willing to volunteer for suicide operations by September 2000 suggests that traditional explanations of 'brainwashing' and organizational manipulation/recruitment are not enough to explain the *society's* willingness to support suicide bombings.[67] The active–passive dichotomy of the national struggle delineated above offers a more nuanced explanation by highlighting how Palestinian society, already steeped in the norm of heroic martyrdom, opted for violent struggle, which gradually escalated to a new level. Moreover, the manner in which martyrdom was revived and reconstructed enabled individuals to achieve a significant degree of moral disengagement and de-individuation (where social identity subsumes individual self) vis-à-vis the enemy, and thereby sanction suicide violence.

As described in the previous chapter, the Palestinian reversion to violent struggle and its acceptance of suicide missions at a societal level is well demonstrated in Nichole Argo's November 2002 study of 15 pre-empted suicide bombers which she conducted in Israeli prisons. Of the 15 bombers she interviewed, one had attempted his operation without any aid from any Palestinian organization, two had first attempted operations on their own and turned to organizations for support only upon incurring problems, eight out of the 15 had *volunteered* for their suicide missions, and five out of the 15 had commenced executing their missions within ten days of committing to the operation, and over 90 per cent undertook their mission within a month of committing to them.[68] Thus Argo concludes that 'throughout the course of the second intifada, the ability for bombers to de-individuate – that is, completely assume actions for a social identity – *without* ties to a "cell", "training", long-or even medium-term preparation',[69] became evident. In other words, more and more bombers seem to have been self-selected and the role of organizations as facilitators seems to have declined considerably. This is clearly

manifested in the loose allegiances that many bombers have to organizations. Argo's interviews indicate that the lack of material or logistical expertise caused three out of eight bombers who volunteered for a mission with one organization to ultimately switch to another.

For our purposes, that Hamas conducted the first suicide operation may have initially been significant in terms of how the norm of martyrdom came to be rearticulated and expressed in Palestinian society. But by September 2000, the rearticulated norm seems to have gained enough legitimacy in its new *avatar* to deem organizations peripheral. Once again this suggests that the norm of militant heroic martyrdom as a component of Palestinian identity was far more embedded in society than the organization(s) articulating or escalating it. It was, therefore, potentially uncomplicated for certain sections of society to internalize a new variation of an older established norm. In other words, suicide missions were propelled not only by organizations like Hamas but also by Palestinian *society*. Furthermore, it must be stressed that suicide attacks emerged and continue to exist side-by-side with more traditional forms of violent struggle, i.e. roadside bombs, knife attacks etc. Research reveals how only the number of total suicide attacks increased in the Palestinian scenario rather than the overall *propensity* for suicide missions in preference to conventional attacks.[70] This further suggests that the norm of militant heroic martyrdom has merely *expanded* to make *space* for a newer form of violent confrontation rather than altered significantly. This might also explain how the debate on the validity of suicide operations has been systematically accommodated within Palestinian society.

Individual agency and the narrative of Palestinian selfhood

Interestingly, data shows that individuals who took part in suicide missions from 1993 to 2006 also echoed Hamas's logic when explaining why they opted for these operations. In other words, these individuals tended to refer back to key themes of Palestinian selfhood that Hamas used to construct its narrative of escalated heroic martyrdom. This suggests that the discourse that Hamas constructed to legitimize suicide operations had been internalized by Palestinian society to a significant degree. Again, it must be stressed that this internalization, while certainly facilitated by Hamas cleverly tapping into established narratives of Palestinian national struggle and selfhood, was relatively simple because these narratives *already* existed in the Palestinian consciousness. Therefore, individuals justified their militant heroic martyrdom by evoking established discourses of Palestinian selfhood and reframing them in the context of a modern suicide attack. For example, Argo's interviewees when asked what motivated them to become *istish'hadi* (martyrs) stated: ‘I did this because of the suffering of the Palestinian people. The falling of the shahadin [those killed by Israeli forces] … and the destruction everywhere in Palestine’.[71] Or:

> I didn't decide in one moment. I had been thinking about it from the beginning of the intifada, looking for an opportunity and an organization to help me do it. There were few factors affecting the decision – the stress of the occupation, the humiliation of my cousin being searched by soldiers, the killing … against the kids …[72]

In every instance, the case for suicide bombing is built upon the perceived injustice of occupation. As stated above Hamas built the narrative of martyrdom by highlighting the inhumanities of Israeli oppression, which enabled it to justify suicide attacks against this apparatus as an act of selfless martyrdom. Hamas also highlighted the obvious asymmetry in the conflict and the helplessness of the Palestinian population. In doing so, Hamas successfully dehumanized the enemy and formulated the mechanisms of moral disengagement, which enabled the option of suicide attacks to be practised without guilt. Palestinian society seems to have internalized this very clearly constructed narrative and thus in turn imbibed the mechanisms of moral disengagement to such an extent so as to be able to both volunteer for and support suicide missions in this particular period.[73]

Munabrahim Daoud, the mother of Mohammed al Daoud, who was killed shortly after the beginning of the second intifada, explains why her son was killed: 'The soldiers that were there that day are savages. They came to kill. They thought that by killing a lot of people they would end it [the intifada] quickly'.[74] The helplessness, anger and dehumanization voiced by Munabrahim are typical of many Palestinians and it is this which fuelled suicide attacks against the Israelis. The elements of revenge and retaliation as established in the previous chapter are also common features that emerge in individual motivations for suicide attacks. Dr Eyad Sarraj describes how the motives behind a suicide bombing are often rooted in personal tragedy or trauma – injury to a family member or the death of a friend.[75] Again the logic of revenge may be built upon experiences of humiliation and oppression under occupation but a recent trauma often seems to act as a trigger. For instance Ala, a Hamas activist, asked me in an informal discussion:

> The Israelis take your father from your home in the middle of the night with no explanation; you hear nothing about how he is, where he is or even if he is alive for months. Then he comes back, paralyzed neck-down. What would you do? Stay quiet or take action? Take revenge?[76]

Hence, conditions of protracted conflict fed the construction of a culture of misery and blood in which revenge was not discouraged but instead framed as an acceptable, justified and even desirable course of action.

Issues of asymmetry, fear and victimization are clearly evident in these statements and it seems that violent action in this period not only expressed frustration and revenge but also enabled the individual to seize back agency and therefore power in a situation of powerlessness. Sarraj, for example, described how children in Palestinian territories dream of martyrdom. The way the *shahid* is honoured and glorified in Palestinian society certainly contributes to this

desire. However, Sarraj also stresses that 'martyrdom gives [the child] the feeling of power to compensate for the weakness of the father who cannot defend his family'[77] – a feeling again very clearly rooted in the humiliation, helplessness and violence that is so intrinsic to the Palestinian experience. Numerous other statements from this period suggest that violence imparted agency to the individual exercising it. When Argo asked the bombers she interviewed what the term *istish'had* (martyrdom) meant to them one of them replied: 'it is martyrdom_ the holding of land, religion, respect'.[78] A suicide bombing thus incorporated for the individual an assertion of identity, respect and *sumud*, all of which enabled him/her to seize power and agency.

Moreover, these statements also suggest that suicide bombing enabled agency to be exercised in the only sphere which the Israelis could not control, i.e. the body:

> we do not have highly advanced weaponry with which to face a regular army. All we are in control of is our bodies. We do not like or want to die. But if this is what it takes to terrorize them as they brutalize us all the time, why not do it?[79]

The bombers believed that their actions would 'destroy Israeli social life … and force them to leave the country because they are afraid'.[80] Thus, suicide attacks were used specifically to retaliate against Israeli occupation by instilling the same insecurities within Israeli society as those faced by the Palestinians. In other words, as described in Chapters 4, these attacks were an attempt to establish what can be best described as a balance of terror. It is thus obvious that individual motivations of survival, retaliation and competition as outlined in the previous chapter came to be encouraged and exacerbated by the narratives of humiliation, misery and blood.

Thus militant heroic martyrdom, including in its manifestation suicide attacks, can be best framed as the 'natural response to the brutality of Israeli occupation'[81] and a response that consolidates the image of an active Palestinian identity. Closely aligned to this is an 'us' versus 'them' subtext which frames the Israelis as weak, brutal, violent, greedy, dishonourable, cunning and corrupt negative others and the Palestinians as their direct opposite.[82] Thus, Israelis love life while the Palestinians not only do not fear death but love it passionately – a trait that gives them the edge over the Israelis despite the latter's military superiority.[83] This subtext frames Palestinian martyrs as positive internal others, i.e. individuals to be admired, imitated and avenged.[84] These internal others are special carriers of Palestinian identity as they alone exercise agency within the society through the act of bombing. In other words, they defend the helpless through their selfless sacrifice. Once again, this subtext was effectively internalized by Palestinian society in the period under study. For example Shaheel al-Masri, the father of the 2001 Sbarro Pizzeria bomber Izzidene al-Masri, stated how proud he was at his son's wake: 'He [Ariel Sharon] is continuing the policy of killing our people, and my son succeeded in carrying out a suitable response'.[85] In short, the norm of militant heroic martyrdom, operationalized as a suicide attack in this period, enabled the Palestinians to consolidate the active-passive dichotomy

of their national identity while also framing positive and negative others vis-à-vis this identity. Needless to state, the narrative of militant heroic martyrdom as a component of Palestinian nationalism is in constant flux and made more complex by a continuing internal battle between rival perspectives and political factions who see different futures for it.[86] This, along with changing political circumstances, can also effectively explain how armed struggle/militant heroic martyrdom mainly reverted back to its passive manifestation of sacrifice/suffering in the post-2006 period.

Conclusion

Having first assumed the importance of social context this chapter specifically drew attention to the element of changing Palestinian identity and its emergence and (re)definition in direct relation to the 'significant other', as represented by the Israeli state. This approach did not reduce Palestinian national identity to a reactive, residual category that was merely parasitic on the Israeli one. Instead, highlighting the element of 'identity' and 'the other' forced us to hone in on the *process* of Palestinian identity formation and recognize it as an inter-subjective practice. It also implicitly placed attention on the Palestinian narrative of social reality as opposed to the Israeli one, a logical focus given the social and political origins of the suicide bomber. A key complexity that must be highlighted here emerges because the focus of this research, i.e. Palestinian identity, is in a state of constant flux and reformulation as a result of interactions with the other. The same can be said for the identity of the significant other. This chapter attempted to circumvent these complications and at the same time avoid 'conceptualizing identity as a unitary circumscribable concept'[87] by establishing some base givens about both the self and the other prior even to a first encounter.[88] Thus despite shifting identities, Palestinian self-perception was shown to be based consistently on a narrative of suffering and dispossession. Similarly the Palestinian construction of the Israeli other in negative terms of the colonizer, the oppressor and occupier, and its chosen strategy to confront the same was shown as evolving in processes of interaction. Most striking in this construction was the unswerving attribution of power in the Palestinian narrative to this significant other. This held true in all situations *except* those where violence was exercised by the Palestinians; in those situations the power was redistributed, if not equally between both actors, at least more evenly than in situations of non-violent passivity.[89] The chapter also identified this attribution of power as the crucial point where a selfimage of heroic martyrdom is inserted into the analysis and which acquires significance as a historically important facet in Palestinian identity formation. In other words, militant heroic martyrdom in the Palestinian consciousness may be understood as emerging within the confines of the two broad stabilities of 'foundational' identity (based on suffering and dispossession) and the

‘foundational’ other (based on oppression and occupation). Identifying these two stable foundational elements then permits this work to recognize martyrdom as a longstanding powerful norm in Palestinian society and categorize suicide bombings as its latest, most violent manifestation. In other words, the chapter contextualizes suicide operations as a more violent articulation of a foundational identity based primarily in suffering, dispossession and martyrdom. This allows it to successfully position suicide bombings in the escalating trajectory of militant heroic martyrdom within the Palestinian context and understand *how* they emerged within this specific context. This escalation, illustrated by the normalization and internalization of suicide operations by significant sections of the Palestinian population in the period under study, demonstrates the inter-subjective evolution of martyrdom as a norm.

6 Political Islam and rhetoric of jihad and martyrdom

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And it is a Jihad until
either victory or martyrdom

Hamas slogan

The preceding chapter illustrated how the culturally specific norm of militant heroic martyrdom was appropriated and rearticulated as suicide violence by Hamas in order to explain how this phenomenon emerged within the Israeli–Palestinian landscape of conflict. In line with the assertions made in the previous chapters, that suicide attacks, as practised by Hamas, are rational acts of violence rooted in the norm of militant heroic martyrdom historically constructed within the Palestinian socio-political reality, this chapter will strive to probe and illustrate the role of religion in these operations. In doing so, this chapter hopes to contribute to the debate on the relationship between violence, Islam and the contemporary world and demonstrate that Hamas's use of religious rhetoric to justify its use of violence facilitates a distinctly state-oriented political agenda, where the language of religion, in this case of political Islam, is used specifically to grant legitimacy to the movement. In addition, by identifying how the ideological framework of jihad was reinterpreted by Hamas using political Islam this chapter explains *how* suicide violence is justified, legitimized and enacted specifically within the Palestinian socio-political, cultural reality.

Of the many theological concepts invoked by Hamas, the call to jihad is central to the fight for the Palestinian state. Classical Islam, as outlined in Chapter 2, divides the world into the ‘domain of Islam’ (*dar al-islam*) and the ‘domain of war’ (*dar al-harb*) and believes that participation in the jihad to overcome *dar al-harb* is the moral responsibility of all Muslims capable of assuming it. Of course, like other contemporary movements Hamas depicts the dichotomy between *dar al-islam* and *dar al-harb* as a struggle between Islam (i.e. Palestine) and the West (i.e. the USA and its ‘proxy’, Israel, in the Middle East). Hamas not only alludes to the moral responsibility of jihad but effectively harnesses it to the modern Palestinian nationalist project. By portraying itself as the vanguard of Islam, Hamas is able to frame both, its political ambition and the deliberate re-Islamization of Palestinian society, as necessary steps in the jihad dedicated to wrestling the holy land of Palestine away from infidel occupiers. This chapter thus contextualizes ‘martyrdom operations’, i.e. suicide bombings, as an intrinsic part of the broader rhetoric of the

jihad narrative constructed by Hamas and demonstrates how political Islam enabled Hamas to place suicide violence at the very core of this rhetoric. This focus on political Islam as an alternative value system also explains how, for a supposedly radical Muslim organization like Hamas, there is no real conflict between the state, modernity and religion. Instead, Hamas's political ambitions are clearly state-oriented and political Islam is used specifically as a tool to facilitate the goal of establishing a Palestinian nation-state.

Of the main proponents that have shaped contemporary understandings of political Islam Hamas seems most closely aligned with the ideas of Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb. Given their direct ideological links with the Muslim Brotherhood and therefore, Hamas, this is perhaps not so surprising. Hasan al-Banna was, in fact, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan al-Muslimun) in Egypt and a proponent of Islamization by education and missionary activity (*tabligh wa da'wa*). He incorporated social and political goals within the movement in a bottom-up approach, which can still be traced in the Brotherhood's activities, and believed that a reformed, virtuous society would give rise to a just Islamic state. As the movement gained momentum in Egypt, al-Banna expanded its original character and from a solely reformist missionary project, the Muslim Brotherhood grew to incorporate revolutionary methods, including a 'penetration of the military, the use of political violence, and the creation of an armed force',[1] which led to a clash with Nasser's regime. Thus for most of its initial years since its foundation in 1928, the fortunes of the Brotherhood, and its members, remained intricately linked to Nasser and his ideology of Arab nationalism. For the most part, under al-Banna, the state was never an arena of contest for the Muslim Brotherhood which insisted upon societal reform before all else. Al-Banna was assassinated at the hands of the Egyptian police in 1949 and in 1954, Nasser's regime began a brutal crackdown on the organization which drove it effectively underground.[2] It was this environment of persecution and violent repression that gave shape to the radical ideology of Sayyid Qutb.

Qutb, who joined the movement in 1951, had already been forced to resign from his government post as a result of his increasingly radical political views. He spent most of his Brotherhood years in prison before being hanged in 1966, and it was in prison that he produced five books which marked a decisive break with al-Banna's philosophy.[3] Qutb was deeply impacted by the writings of Abu Ala Mawdudi, a Sunni theologian and political philosopher and the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami, and his theory of modern *jahiliyya*, i.e. the pre-Islamic era which is regarded as a period of darkness, disorder and ignorance. Qutb's central idea concerned his own views on modern *jahiliyya* which he expounded in his 1953 publication, *In the Shade of the Qur'an,* where he merged Mawdudi's concept of modern *jahiliyya* with those of the medieval Salafi scholar, Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyya, who argued that the unity of God required all Muslims to follow the divine law. Thus, Qutb created a harsh social dichotomy in which those who did

not put ‘faith into action through an Islamic legal system and strictly obey the commands of God were part of the modern *jahiliyya* and no longer [true] Muslims’.[4] Qutb advocated jihad to establish an Islamic state and, in doing so, challenged established ideas of a defensive jihad.[5] In preaching to the masses, Qutb maintained the Brotherhood's traditional audience but simultaneously represented a critical break from its earlier philosophy as he now urged the people to shed their passive roles and engender political change against illegitimate states and ruling authorities. Qutb's message of violent revolution as a means of establishing the Islamic state has inspired a number of radical Islamist groups, both in Egypt and elsewhere, and he is often regarded as the founder of radical political Islam.

Political Islam is thus central to this analysis: first, because, as specified in Chapter 2, it enables organizations like Hamas to harness classical Islamic symbols and conceptions to modern secular ideologies – in this case, Palestinian nationalism. Second, it enables Hamas to weave an intricate narrative of jihad that meshed the ideals of an offensive jihad, waged against all those in the path of establishing a free, Islamic Palestinian state, with those of a defensive one. Hamas therefore effectively frames and justifies suicide violence as a defensive jihad necessary to confront a disproportionately powerful Israeli state. Thus, on the one hand, it constructs an elaborate narrative to bolster its right to defend (i.e. via a defensive jihad) the Islamic territory of Palestine from Zionist aggression and occupation using any means possible, while, on the other, it frames its long-term goal as the national liberation of all historic Palestine through aggressive armed struggle (i.e. an offensive jihad) with Israel and firmly opposes, at least in its rhetoric, any peace settlement which would compromise any part of a territory that is considered to be an Islamic *waqf* (endowment).[6] At the same time, Qutb's legacy of political Islam successfully enables Hamas to portray all Palestinian secular opposition as part of the modern *jahiliyya*, and as such obstacles to the acquisition of a free Palestinian state. Hence, political Islam has been used specifically as a tool to legitimize an escalation in violent confrontation with Israel as part of the Palestinian struggle for statehood. Such legitimization not only propelled the use of suicide violence in the territories from 1993 to 2006 but also successfully consolidated Hamas's unique position in the Palestinian political arena vis-à-vis more established players, like Fatah and the PLO. In other words, by accusing Fatah and the PLO of straying from the path of true Islam and compromising with the Israeli state, Hamas has managed to consolidate its unique position as an Islamic revolutionary organization in Palestinian politics. As such, it not only holds Fatah/the PLO responsible for hindering the establishment of a free and Islamic Palestine but also frames its own participation in the political process in 2006 as a necessary step in the jihad that seeks to establish a free Palestinian nation-state in all of historic Palestine. Thus, political Islam has essentially facilitated the convergence of the Palestinian nationalist project (which would obviously establish a state in the Westphalian

sense) with the classical Islamic agenda of establishing *dar al-islam* (i.e. the abode of peace which transcends all state and national boundaries).

Locating political Islam in Hamas rhetoric: legitimizing jihad and martyrdom

Hamas's radical political activism marked the beginning of the Brotherhood's militant jihad against the Israeli state and the positioning of Islam as an ideological, political and military mode of struggle against the occupation. In presenting itself as an alternative to the secular national movement, Hamas may be categorized as a modern political movement which is involved in a traditional struggle for power and whose oppositional discourse is based on political Islam. Beverley Milton-Edwards points out that a lack of an indigenous tradition of *ijtihad* (interpretation) has led Islamist organizations in Palestine, including Hamas, to depend overwhelmingly upon external Islamic ideologues. Consequently, Hamas's religious rhetoric exhibits a unique combination of Palestinian concerns with larger pan-Islamic perspectives, including the relationship between the Arab world and the West. The anti-secular, anti-colonial ideology of Hamas is fused with an anti-Zionist, anti-Jewish perspective that has been 'shaped both by doctrine drawn from the Qur'an and other Islamic sources as well as by Eurocentric anti-Semitic perspectives'.[7] An additional layer is added to its ideology by its dialogue with modern international ideas and approaches. Thus, despite its repetitive use of specific religious concepts, Hamas demonstrates an impressive flexibility and expediency in how it interprets these concepts and tailors them to suit its purposes and address rapidly changing political realities. In this regard, Hamas despite its Islamic hue has always functioned, first and foremost, as a pragmatic political organization with a distinctly modern agenda. To this end, this chapter will first briefly outline the main issues of concern for Hamas and endeavour to illustrate how Hamas's ideology not only links its political objectives with religious rhetoric but also how the latter is shaped both by pan-Islamic concerns as well as specific Palestinian circumstances. It will demonstrate these links by using examples taken from Hamas leaflets, official statements and wall graffiti. In doing so, this section will illustrate *how* Hamas has utilized political Islam to construct a unique identity for itself and adopt a strategy of jihad and thereby facilitate the use of suicide violence in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The second part of this chapter will illustrate how this deliberately constructed strategy of jihad and martyrdom was accepted and internalized by both Hamas operatives and segments of Palestinian society.

Even a cursory survey of Hamas's politico-ideological tracts, including its Covenant (*mithaq*), leaflets, wall graffiti as well as official statements, reflect its preoccupations with a specific set of concerns. These unswerving concerns include: (1) the challenge of Zionism and the Jewish-

Israeli state; (2) the crisis within both the Palestinian and wider Muslim community and concurrently the challenge posed by the secular nationalist opposition; (3) the sanctity of Palestinian land and the predicament of foreign occupation of Jerusalem; (4) the defence of Palestinian national aspirations as a legitimate Islamic goal and the establishment of a Palestinian Islamic state; (5) the declaration and justification of jihad as a legitimate strategy to accomplish specifically nationalist goals; and (6) the defence of martyrdom as a legitimate Islamic tool of struggle within this jihad against Zionist/Israeli oppression and occupation.[8] Of these six themes, while the last two are crucial to our analysis, the other four are also vital components in Hamas's step-by-step construction of the overarching narrative of jihad and martyrdom (especially its construction of martyrdom as a suicide attack) within the territories.

First and foremost, Hamas's rhetoric does not make a distinction between Judaism, Zionism and Israel and tends to use the terms ‘Jews’ and ‘Zionists’ synonymously and interchangeably. The state of Israel is therefore framed as the product of Judaic faith and, consequently, Hamas believes that the only way to combat it is by establishing an Islamic state, which alone possesses the strength to confront and counter all other faiths and ideologies.[9] At its very core, Hamas's ideology emphasizes the ‘Islamic essence’ of the Palestinian cause (*Islamiyat al-qadiyya al-Filastiniyya*) and, by extension, of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.[10] For Hamas then the conflict is cast primarily as a confrontation not between nationalisms but between faiths and, as such, represents an unbridgeable dichotomy between absolutes. For instance, in a leaflet addressed to Israel the organization states: ‘Get your hands off our people, our cities, our camps and our villages. Our struggle with you is a contest of faith, existence and life’,[11] or ‘So Israel with its Jewishness and its Jewish population challenges Islam and Muslims’.[12] A 3 May 1988 Hamas leaflet states:

> O Muslims, the month of Ramadan falls in the shadow of the oppression and occupation and the escalation of the actions of the *tyrannical Zionists*: restriction of worship, restriction of the Islamic giant, which had begun to pour out of the mosques and turn[ed] this battle into a *war of religion and faith* [my emphasis], in order to eradicate this cancer [of Zionism/Judaism/the Israeli occupation] which is spreading …[13]

Hamas also explicitly roots itself in the Palestinian historical experience while simultaneously aligning itself with broader political Islamic concerns of the modern Middle East. This allows it to identify and demonize the Jews/Zionists as not only occupiers of the holy land but also as instruments of the ‘West’ in the region. Various references are made to the power exercised in turn by the Zionists over the ‘West’. Of course, this association of Israel/Zionism/the Jewish people with imperialist Western powers is firmly rooted in the broader anticolonial, anti-imperialist concerns and memories that are deeply echoed elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa:

> With wealth they controlled imperialist nations and pushed them to occupy many nations and to exploit their resources and spread mischief in them … They [the Jews] were behind the First World War in which they destroyed the Islamic Caliphate, picked up the material profit, monopolized the raw wealth, and got the Balfour Declaration. They created the League of Nations through which they could rule the world … they ordered the United Nations to be formed … so they could rule the world through them … So the imperialist powers in the Capitalist West and the Communist East support the enemy with all their might, with material and human aid, and they change roles.[14]

In framing the challenge of Zionism and the Jewish-Israeli state in such explicitly religious terms Hamas places Islam and Islamization at the core of the Palestinian resistance movement. This bolsters its own position as an Islamic organization that is fighting for a Palestinian homeland. In other words, Hamas uses political Islam to carve out a unique space for itself, thereby legitimizing both its existence and participation in the Palestinian national struggle.

Second, Hamas's narrative also projects it as being deeply concerned with the crisis of occupation faced by the Palestinian community. The defeat of Arab armies by Israel and the resulting loss of Palestine is seen by Hamas as a major symptom of the malaise prevalent in the wider Muslim community. For Hamas then, Israeli occupation is the direct result of the society's loss of faith.[15] Moreover, as Israeli occupation is punishment for straying from the path of true Islam, Hamas stresses that only by returning to the faith and strictly observing its rules can political freedom be achieved.

> O ye who believe! If ye believe the Unbelievers, they will drive you back on your heels, and ye will turn back (from Faith) to your own loss. Nay, Allah is your protector, and he is the best of helpers.[17]

> In the absence of Islam, conflicts arise, oppression and destruction are rampant, and wars and battles prevail… *When faith is lost there is neither security nor life for those who do not receive religion* [my emphasis]. And whoever is satisfied with life without religion then he has allowed annihilation to be his partner.[16]

Hamas therefore believes, much like the Muslim Brotherhood, that the re-Islamization of the Palestinian community is a crucial *predecessor* to Palestinian liberation. The strategic imperative for such re-Islamization is, of course, closely linked to Hamas's construction of a specifically Islamic identity for itself in Palestinian politics, which provides it with the opportunity to garner legitimacy and consolidate its position vis-à-vis its secular political rivals. At the same time, as this re-Islamization has gained ground, it has enabled Hamas to further develop its intricate narrative of jihad and martyrdom which has in turn, served to further strengthen the movement and its hold on the Palestinian national imagination. Thus for Hamas, unlike its parent organization, liberation is attainable only through a combination of *tabligh wa da'wa* (education and preaching) *and* military jihad. Hence, Hamas literature outlines that because Palestine is central to Islam, it can only be recovered as an *Islamic* state by *true* Muslims. As such the secular national movement is lost and doomed to fail in its intended goal:

> … despite our respect for the Palestinian Liberation Organization … we cannot exchange the Islamic nature of Palestine

> to adopt the secular ideology because the Islamic nature of Palestinian issue is part and parcel of our religion, and whoever neglects part of his religion is surely lost.[18]

By using the language of political Islam in this manner, Hamas once again not only delineates its own political space but also tries to gain an upper hand by identifying the established secular opposition as misguided at best and an obstacle to Palestinian liberation at worst. It is worth noting that from an early stage Hamas literature effectively delineated its unique position in Palestinian politics despite it being a relatively new and relatively weak organization. Even more significantly, by using political Islam it managed to do this without aggressively challenging what was at that point a much more powerful Fatah/PLO.

Third, Hamas stresses that the land of Palestine is sacred for all Muslims for a number of reasons. Most importantly, God chose the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem (Al-Quds) as the site of the Prophet Muhammad's ascension to heaven (*al-Isra' wal-Miraj*) and also as the first *qibla* (direction to face during prayer). Hence, Hamas repeatedly refers to the sanctity of the mosque and Jerusalem and stresses that the Israeli occupation of Jerusalem is an affront not only for the Palestinians but also for the wider Arab and Islamic world:

> Let the whole world understand that the holy Aqsa Mosque is the property of more than one billion Muslims and that any tampering with it is a red line and a declaration of war against our Nation [the *umma],* its religion and its pride … Let the Palestinian bloodshed continue in defence of Al-Quds and the Aqsa. Let our holy land turn into volcanoes burning the usurpers.[19]

The sanctity of al-Aqsa and Jerusalem is also extended to Palestine as a whole which is repeatedly referred to as the 'land of *al-Isra' wal-Miraj*', 'land of *al-Isra*' and '*Miraj'*. By virtue of being the land of *al-Isra,* Palestine is simultaneously distinguished from other Islamic lands and also made the inheritance of all Muslims.[20]

Another component of the sanctity of Palestine is based on it being a designated a *waqf*, i.e. an inalienable religious endowment, for all Muslims by the Caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khattab. Palestine's special religious significance is consolidated further by the 1935 fatwa (religious ruling) declared by the Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husayni, which describes all of Palestine as a trust (*amana*) given by God and all Muslims to the Muslims of Palestine.[21] Hamas thus states: '… the land of Palestine is an Islamic land entrusted to the Muslim generations until Judgement Day. No one may renounce all or even part of it'.[22] This of course means that Hamas frames any compromise or political settlement over this land as tantamount to sacrilege. This effectively serves to further pressurize and corner its secular opposition. Furthermore, as an Islamic trust the liberation of Palestine becomes a responsibility for the wider Muslim *umma*. Hamas uses this to identify the Palestinian cause with broader Islamic concerns and to rally support from the Arab world: '… The problem of the liberation of Palestine relates to three spheres: the Palestinian

circle; the Arab circle; and the Islamic circle'.[23] At the same time, Hamas is also keenly aware of its isolation and the lack of support forthcoming from the Muslim world. It thus also chastises the Arab and Muslim masses for abandoning the Palestinian cause:

> It is a shame on Arabs and Muslims to stand idle by vis-à-vis the daily and continuous extermination of an Arab, Islamic people on the land of *al-Isra' wal-Miraj*! There is no excuse for the Nation [i.e. the Islamic Nation] for not shouldering its duty towards Palestine and its people.[24]

Hamas's adoption of a nationalist stance can be seen as a necessity rooted in competition with the established secular national movement whose rhetoric was predicated upon popular notions of self-determination, independence and democracy. Yet nationalism is severely at odds with the traditional Islamic concept of *dar al-Islam* in that the 'realm of peace' transcends national and state boundaries. As such, Hamas has had to, first and foremost, create a narrative whereby it could justify Palestinian Islamic nationalism as a legitimate Islamic goal. It has done this by carefully constructing links between the Islamic sanctity of Palestinian land and Palestinian nationalism. Hamas therefore first depicted the attainment of a Palestinian state as a crucial step towards securing a divine territory of immeasurable importance in Islam. It then further justified the demands for a Palestinian state and Palestinian nationalism by placing them both firmly within the boundaries of faith, for example: 'Nationalism from the point of view of the IRM is part and parcel of religious ideology … giving up any part of Palestine is like giving up part of religion'.[25] In creating this narrative, Hamas successfully retained its essence as an Islamic organization while simultaneously merging this Islamic identity with a pragmatic nationalist stance which has allowed it to compete with the PLO and the PA. By positioning itself as a political group whose nationalism encompassed the 'materialistic, humanistic and geographical ties' of other nationalisms *as well as* 'divine reasons',[26] Hamas has managed to evolve and consolidate its unique identity in the Palestinian political arena over the past 20 years. Nationalism (*wataniyya*) can therefore be located as a dominant theme in Hamas's ideology and it repeatedly portrays itself as an Islamic-nationalist organization with clearly Palestinian roots and aspirations of establishing an 'Islamic Palestine from the Sea to the River'.[27] Interestingly, a survey of Hamas leaflets and press releases indicates that Hamas defended its nationalist aspirations as a legitimate Islamic goal only in its early years. While the literature from about the mid-1990s continues to depict Palestine as a cause for Arabs and Muslims everywhere, it seems that Hamas no longer found it necessary to reconcile its *wataniyya* with the traditional Islamic stance on nationalism, suggesting perhaps that its identity as an Islamic-nationalist movement had gained popular acceptance by this time; representing, in other words, the successful re-Islamization of Palestinian nationalism. Given this background one can now focus in depth on how Hamas used the concept of jihad and martyrdom to facilitate the use of suicide violence in

the Israeli–Palestinian conflict from 1993 to 2006.

Political Islam, jihad and shahadat in Hamas literature

The Islamization of Palestinian nationalism and the national struggle engendered by Hamas sheds light on how it constructed and naturalized the call to jihad and martyrdom as a legitimate course of action in the struggle against Israel. In direct contrast to the purely ideological call of the Mujamma', Hamas's stress upon the strategy of a military jihad can be traced throughout its literature. In the text of the Hamas Charter alone, there are numerous references to jihad as the means to liberating the holy land of Palestine; for instance: 'There is no solution to the Palestinian problem except through jihad' …. 'The IRM is a link in the chain of Jihad against Zionist occupation'.[28] Furthermore, because this jihad has been declared in response to the usurpation of Muslim lands by foes that cannot be repelled with a small force, Hamas emphasizes that every individual Palestinian Muslim is obliged to participate in fending off the enemy. Thus, by predicating its logic on the Jewish theft of Palestinian lands, Hamas is able to portray its jihad of liberation as a individual obligation (*fard ayn*) as opposed to a collective one (*fard kifaya):* 'If an enemy invades Muslim territories, then Jihad and fighting the enemy becomes an individual duty on every Muslim. *A woman may go fight without her husband's permission and a slave without his master's permission* [stressed in the original]'.[29] Hamas also illustrates its acceptance of the Islamic principle that jihad may be waged by multiple means – both military and non-military. Thus for example it states:

> When an enemy usurps Muslim land, then jihad is an individual religious duty on every Muslim; and in confronting the unlawful seizure of Palestine by the Jews, it is necessary to raise the banner of jihad…. *Jihad means not only carrying arms and confronting the enemy. The positive word, excellent article, beneficial book, aid and support* [my emphasis] … also constitute Jihad for the sake of God.[30]

Therefore, Hamas's modern narrative of jihad is harnessed to the Palestinian national movement and purposefully infused with the powerful imagery and symbolism of classical Islam.

Hamas also deliberately places martyrdom (*shahadat*) at the very centre of its strategy of military jihad and portrays suicide attacks, or 'martyrdom operations' as they are commonly called, as the epitome of martyrdom. The Hamas Charter outlines the motto of the IRM as follows: 'God is its goal; The messenger its Leader.The Qur'an its Constitution. Jihad is its methodology, and Death for the sake of God its most coveted desire.'[31]

However, because suicide (*intihar*) is a highly problematic concept in Islamic theology often categorized by jurists as *haram,* i.e. forbidden, Hamas consciously and systematically circumvents this theological pitfall by terming its suicide attacks 'martyrdom operation' (*amaliyat istish'hadiyya*). This effectively evokes the notion of self-sacrifice (*istish'had*) which is

extolled through the Qur'anic teachings, commentaries and fatwas as not only permitted (*halal*) but also desirable. The *shahid* (i.e. the martyr), unlike the suicide, is honoured and guaranteed a place in paradise for all eternity.[32] Hamas emphatically stresses this difference between *intihar* and *istish'had*. Suicide is a shameful path adopted by the weak, despairing and depressed but martyrdom is the beginning of hope and deliverance and is a path chosen only by the strong-willed, noble individual who is, therefore, also worth emulating. For example, according to the former second-in-command of Hamas's political wing, 'Abd al-Aziz Rantisi, if a Muslim wants to 'kill himself because he's sick of being alive, that's suicide. But if he wants to sacrifice his soul in order to defeat the enemy and for God's sake – well, then he's a martyr'.[33] Hamas further substantiates its position on martyrdom by referring to the numerous *hadith* and commentaries that venerate the martyr. The medieval Sunni theologian Al-Bukhari, for instance, is quoted as describing how Allah bestows heavenly awards upon the martyr and describes how

> nobody in Paradise would wish to return to earth, with the exception of the martyr, who died in battle for God's cause. He would return to earth to be killed again ten times over after all the salutes accorded to him in Paradise.[34]

The narrative of *shahadat* constructed by Hamas is thus a crucial component of its military strategy and a key example of the expediency of political Islam and how it was channelized into facilitating suicide violence in the territories. Hamas substantiated its claim for the necessity of sacrifice in Palestine by drawing on the abundant Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions that refer to jihad and martyrdom. It could thus urge the Palestinians to fight persecution and injustice on the path of God and to never fear death, as those killed in battle were rewarded by God. A survey of Hamas leaflets indicates that most communiqués generally begin or end with one or more Qur'anic verses which extol the virtues of sacrifice, urging Muslims to be God's hands on earth. The verses ask them to struggle in His path and for His cause, without fearing death, for those who die waging a jihad attain Paradise. For example:

> Surah 14:52 – And what though ye be slain in Allah's way or die therein? Surely pardon from Allah and mercy are better than all that they amass. What though ye be slain or die, when unto Allah ye are gathered?[35]
>
> Surah 8:60 – Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies, of Allah and your enemies.
>
> Surah 3:139 – Fight them! Allah will chastise them at your hands, and He will lay them low and give you victory over them, and He will heal the breast of folk who are believers.
>
> Surah 2:154 – Think not of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the Presence of their Lord.

Hamas's narrative, as it is built through its leaflets, thus begins by recalling and aligning with Qur'anic tradition before progressively constructing the Palestinian martyr as the spearhead of its

jihad against the Israeli state. It consolidates the position of the martyr in society by honouring them and their families after their passing. By insisting that the strength of the Palestinians lies in their willingness to sacrifice themselves in a holy struggle Hamas juxtaposes the strong, noble Palestinian martyr who embraces death with a smile against the weak, frightened Israeli who is scared of dying. Hamas's very first communiqué thus asserts:

> … during one week, hundreds of wounded and tens of martyrs offered their lives in the path of God to uphold their nation's glory and honour, to restore our rights in our homeland, and to elevate God's banner in the land. This is a true expression of the spirit of sacrifice and redemption that characterizes our people. This spirit has robbed the Zionists of their sleep and rocked their foundations, even as it proved to the whole world that a people that welcomes death shall never die. Let the Jews understand that … our people's *perseverance and steadfastness* shall overcome their oppression and arrogance. Let them know that their policy of *violence shall beget naught but a more powerful counter policy by our sons and youths who love the eternal life in heaven more than our enemies love life* … The intifada is here to convince them that Islam is the solution and the alternative. Let the reckless settlers beware: Our people know the way of *sacrifice and martyrdom and are generous in this regard… Let them understand that violence breeds nothing but violence and that death bestows but death* [my emphasis].[36]

Thus Hamas builds and manipulates an intricate narrative which brings together concepts of Zionism, Islam, nationalism, the Palestinian *waqf* and jihad, which bundled together contribute to formulating the consistently escalating rhetoric of martyrdom. In other words, by justifying these concepts through the language of political Islam, Hamas is able to frame martyrdom operations as a fulfilment of sacred imperatives in the fight against occupation. A large number of Hamas leaflets, especially from the late 1990s and early 2000s, end with the slogans ‘And it is Jihad until victory or martyrdom’, ‘Glory and immortality for our martyrs’ or ‘Victory for our Mujahid people’ – reflecting both the growing militarization and religiosity of Palestinian society as well as the increasing centrality of martyrdom in the landscape of conflict. Indeed this growing importance of the martyrdom rhetoric is most evident when compared with the fact that Hamas leaflets from the first intifada tend to end with the slogans ‘Allah is great, praise to God’, ‘Let the uprising continue until victory’ or at the most ‘And it is Jihad until victory’. Thus, even an analysis of Hamas's martyrdom rhetoric shows a significant shift with literature from the first intifada containing only generic references to martyrdom and martyrs, to the second intifada, which is replete with such references. In fact, earlier leaflets tended to provide directives for action via strike calls, prayers, rejection of settlements, and escalation in violence while generally encouraging resistance activities. Martyrdom in this period was alluded to and honoured but not portrayed as a desirable means of resisting the occupation. A typical leaflet from the first intifada reads as follows:

> O our *mujahid* Palestinian people, … [who] serve as exemplars in the jihad, the steadfastness, and the sacrifice … beware of conceding a single grain of soil from the land of Palestine. We call on the hypocrites and the defeatists and pimps of the enemy: *stop the concessions and the deterioration because there can be no peace with murderers … we call on the merchants to undertake to boycott Israeli goods, and we call on our [fighting] arms who are everywhere to impose [the*

boycott]forcibly … Sunday, May 5, 1991, *a day of escalating the protest against the policy of expropriating land and establishing settlements* … Wednesday, May 15, 1991, a *general strike marking the creating of the despicable Jewish state in 1948* … Praise and honour and glory to … our leaders who led the people … and are now suffering behind bars. *Praise to all the fathers and mothers who took leave of their martyred sons* … Praise to all the members of our mujahidun Palestinian people for their sacrifice … *Let the uprising continue until victory* [my emphasis].[37]

However, by the mid-1990s, this rhetoric had developed into a sophisticated narrative, which not only extended legitimacy to suicide operations as a means of resisting occupation but also provided forceful propaganda for the organization's military activities by listing the names of martyrs as well as detailed accounts of Israeli attacks and the organization's vows of revenge. The leaflets and wall graffiti glorify the deeds of martyrs through elaborate eulogies and describe in detail the costs and casualties that were inflicted upon the enemy in the name of God. Of course, there is a constant reaffirmation of the martyr's attainment of eternal life and his/her place in paradise as one of God's favourites.

Our heroic Palestinian people: *a star has fallen from the skies of Palestine but its splinters would burn the heart of Zionists* … Who will deter the angered (avenging) heroes? Who will dare halt the blood-painted revenge? … The martyr commander was the knight that annoyed occupation; its soldiers and settlers in all areas of Palestine and his students have learnt from him the arts of combat and graduated from his school with distinction. They realize that the time has come now to play their role and teach the Zionists unforgettable lessons so that they [the Israelis] would know that if a knight had fallen a group of cavaliers would show up after him … the heinous crime perpetrated by the *Zionist terrorist leaders in assassinating commander of the Qassam Brigades the martyr Mujahid hero Mahmoud Abu Hannoud and his brothers Ayman and Ma'moon Hashayka will not pass unpunished* … we in the IRM … *bear with pride and glory the glad tidings of the martyrdom of commander Mahmoud Abu Hannoud and his brothers, a thing that they have always yearned for after he and his brothers managed to survive the enemy's various assassination and arrest attempts for years*. We vow before Allah to remain faithful to blood of the martyr and all martyrs of our people and we will remain insisting on resistance until end and ejection of occupation from our lands sacrificing our souls and blood as cheap price along that road. *And it is a Jihad until either victory or martyrdom* [my emphasis].[38]

Hamas Military Communiqués are even more unique in that they detail and claim responsibility for specific military actions. While all those who die in the struggle against occupation are termed martyrs there is often a qualitative difference discernible between descriptions of those who die in shelling, grenade and other armed attacks versus those who specifically conduct suicide attacks. It seems this qualitative difference is based in suicide bombing being a politically superior tool of propaganda as opposed to conventional armed attacks. Suicide operations are thus marketed specifically to highlight Qassam's military power while simultaneously being legitimized using the language of political Islam. Thus conventional armed attacks are generally described plainly and briefly, for example: ‘the Qassam Brigades declare responsibility for the armed attack using hand grenades and machine guns against a convoy of Zionist usurpers … [the] Executor of the attack is the martyr hero Osama Hillis’.[39] Or:

The Qassam Brigades declare responsibility for attacking and storming the Zionist army post established on our Palestinian lands in the area called Doget settlement … Three Mujahideen from the Qassam Brigades were martyred in

> this operation: Martyr hero Othman Deeb Al-Razayna, 22, from Jabaliya refugee camp. Martyr hero: Iyad Rabee Al-Batsh, 21, from the town of Jabaliya. Martyr hero: Fuad Mustafa Al-Dahshan, 17, from Zaitun suburb, Gaza.[40]

As opposed to:

> *The tenth martyr the hero Saeed Hassan Hussein Al-Hoteri, 20, approached his target confidently last Friday* at 11:30 pm according to the plan. He carried out his *qualitative martyrdom operation in the enemy's depth and heart and then ascended to heavens to meet the prophets, the truthfuls and the martyrs in Allah's Jannah (paradise*) … *The blast was made using a highly explosive material (Qassam-19), which was developed by the Qassam Brigades' experts in their own factories* [my emphasis]. The enemy experienced its bitterness in the first test in Netenya at the hands of the martyr hero Mahmoud Marmash. We tell our people and Nation to rest assured that the Brigades' reprisal, by the grace of Allah, would always be a pioneering retaliation in its implementation, quality and effect.[41]

Hamas's spiritual leader Sheikh Yassin voiced this conscious legitimization of suicide operations in 2002 when said:

> Our only initiative against the enemy is resistance until we liberate our homeland … The Palestinians have the right to use all their weapons against this enemy, *including the martyr death attacks* [my emphasis]. If we are asked to stop these operations, Israel must be forced to first stop its occupation of Palestinian lands. If the Israeli enemy wants to decide for me how to handle opposition against him that would no longer qualify as opposition.[42]

Hamas directives are also seen to continue being dispersed through leaflets. By the late 1990s, leaflets also carry directives regarding martyrdom operations in addition to the usual calls for strikes, boycotts and protests. Some of these directives also carry details of geographical areas of operation. For example, in a December 2001 leaflet Hamas declared a *hudna* (unilateral ceasefire) on martyrdom operations within Israeli territories:

> we declare a suspension of martyrdom operations [i.e. suicide attacks] in the 1948 occupied territories and a stoppage of mortar fire until further notice. We affirm that all Hamas cadres especially the Qassam Brigades should abide by this matter until Allah ordains whatever He wills.[43]

Hence what is seen is a systematic use of political Islam by Hamas with the express purpose of legitimizing and facilitating the enactment of suicide attacks within the Israeli–Palestinian landscape of conflict. The political manipulation of religious rhetoric effectively explains how suicide violence came to be absorbed under the broad rubric of jihad in the Palestinian territories.

Political Islam, jihad and shahadat in individual statements

Apart from organizational rhetoric, individual belief and sentiment are also evident in the letters and wills written by the 'living martyr' (a suicide bomber in waiting) which are widely publicized by Hamas. This seems to suggest that Palestinian society both accepted and internalized Hamas's rhetoric of jihad and martyrdom to a certain degree. Individual wills and last testimonies can either be found in the form of a document or later on in the second intifada in the form of a 'living will', i.e. a videotape. A significant number of these wills reflect amongst

other emotions a deep profession of faith. In a prototypical letter, the martyr urges his/her family and community not to mourn their passing but to rejoice and celebrate their martyrdom as if it were their wedding day.[44] They stress that through this act of martyrdom they have attained eternal life and the ability to intercede with Allah on their family's behalf. The martyrs also ask their families to pray and fast regularly and to be good Muslims. The last will and testament of the Martyr Hamed Abu Hejleh illustrates some of these elements:

> Rejoice, for I have *fulfilled my wish and achieved martyrdom in the path of God with the help of the determined holy fighters* … know that the Prophet Muhammed, peace be upon him, has said that the martyr intercedes with God on behalf of seventy of his family members … *My last wish to you my family is that none of you should weep in my procession to heaven. Indeed, distribute dates and ululate in the wedding of martyrdom* [my emphasis]. I conclude by saying we shall meet soon, God willing, in a paradise prepared for those who fear the Lord, the size of which spans heaven and earth.[45]

Muhammad Hazza al-Ghoul who executed the 18 June 2006 bus bombing at the Patt junction in Jerusalem killing 20 people and injuring 52, wrote similar words in his last will and testament:

> The triumphant outcome will be to those who fear the Lord, but this will not happen until we champion God and His religion … The martyr intercedes on behalf of seventy of his family members, so I request of Him that you be from among them. *I ask you, for God's sake, not to cry for my absence, for we will meet shortly in Paradise, God willing* [my emphasis].[46]

Shadi Sleyman al-Nabaheen who carried out a failed suicide operation on 19 May 2003 stated in his last will and testament:

> My dear brothers and sisters … Be from among the patient and steadfast and hold tightly to the religion of God. *Guide your children to the mosque and instruct them to read the Qur'an and attend the recitation lessons, and teach them to love jihad and martyrdom* [my emphasis].[47]

The act of martyrdom thus becomes the vehicle by which to demonstrate and fulfil individual commitment to God who urges true believers to fight persecution and never fear death, where persecution is successfully framed by Hamas in terms of the Palestinian nationalist project. In addition to this, a sense of deep religious responsibility, and concurrently religious guilt, also seems to bear down upon a number of these bombers. Thus Ismail al-Masoubi states in his last will how:

> Love for jihad and martyrdom has come to possess my life, my being, my feelings, my heart, and my senses. My heart ached when I heard the Qur'anic verses, and my soul was torn when I realized my shortcomings and the shortcomings of Muslims in fulfilling our duty toward fighting in the path of God Almighty [i.e. in liberating the land of *al-Isra' wal-Miraj*].[48]

Most strikingly, this sense of deep belief and religious responsibility can be found in not only the personal wills of martyrs but also in statements made by their close friends and family. The following statement by the mother of a Hamas bomber illustrates this:

> I am a compassionate mother to my children, and they are compassionate towards me and take care of me. Because I love my son, I encourage him to die a martyr's death for the sake of Allah … Jihad is a religious obligation incumbent upon us, and we must carry it out. I sacrificed Muhammed as part of my obligation.[49]

Mohammed Hafez in a study of Palestinian suicide bombers locates a certain quality of personal and societal redemption in such statements. He points out how the act of martyrdom provides individual redemption because it is a privilege accorded only to committed believers. Simultaneously, he stresses that the act also attempts to redeem society's failure to act righteously. This logic can perhaps be further extended to the relatives of the bombers who seem to believe that in fulfilling their duty of 'sacrificing' their sons and daughters, they too are not only demonstrating their faith but perhaps also participating in the redemptive function of martyrdom.

Other than faith and religious responsibility, a number of other themes can be located in last testimonials and 'living wills'. In many cases, the bomber calls upon the both the Palestinian masses and the wider *umma* to follow the example of jihad set by themselves. The last will of Ismail Masawabi from Khan Yunis, who blew himself up at the edge of a nearby Israeli settlement killing two Israeli soldiers eloquently states:

> … In Paradise I shall be immortal, so you should be glad that I am there. To all those who have loved me, I say: don't weep, for your tears won't give me peace. This is the way I have chosen. *So, if you have really loved me, carry on and carry my weapon* [my emphasis] …[50]

Muhammad al-Habashi, who carried out his attack on 9 September 2001 near a train station in which three Israelis were killed and 90 wounded also wrote:

> I ask God almighty that *my martyrdom is a message to all the Arab and Muslim nations to get rid of the injustice of their rulers that weigh heavily on their shoulders, and to rise to bring victory to Muslims in Jerusalem and Palestine* [my emphasis], and in all conquered Muslim lands …[51]

These 'living wills' seem, in effect, to echo Hamas's jihad and martyrdom rhetoric, a trait which can be further located in the tendency of martyrs to call for the destruction of the Jews and Israel. Some of these wills clearly refer to the idea of jihad and indicate that the bomber's self-image is that of a warrior fighting the holy battle for Palestine. Jihad Walid Hamada's will articulates this particularly well:

> … I write this testament in the depth of jihad, waiting for the *ultimate battle against those who violated our homeland* [my emphasis]. I ask God to bless his soldiers and give me the strength to severe the heads of Jews from their bodies.[52]

Hamas martyrs, like their organization, also recognize their isolation in this jihad and chastise the Muslim nations for their inaction, urging them to shed their fear of death and fight for the sacred land of Palestine. Mahmoud Sleyman Abu Hasanein addresses the Arab and Muslim nations of the world and asks: 'Why are you so committed to this transient world? Why the fear? We die

only once, so let it be for the sake of God'.[53]

Similarly individual rhetoric also echoes the organizational one by equating martyrdom with strength, courage and true belief. Fouad Ismail al-Hourani asks in his will: 'Can there be men of truth if we are not (willing to be) men? A believer without courage is like a tree without fruit'.[54] Thus, these 'living wills' are a complex combination of religious fervour and guilt, national consciousness and social responsibility. Shadi Sleyman al-Nabaheen, who was mentioned above, stated:

> *How beautiful for the splinters of my bones to be the response that blows up the enemy, not for the love of killing, but so we can live as other people live … We do not sing the song of death, but recite the hymns of life … We die so that future generations might live* [my emphasis].[55]

This combination of national consciousness and religious belief is also evident in Jihad Walid Hamada's last will and testament. Hamada who conducted an operation on 4 August 2002 which killed nine Israelis and injured 40 said: 'May our blood become a lantern that lights up for those around us the *path towards liberation, to raise the banner of truth, the banner of Islam* [my emphasis]'.[56]

The same complex combination of sentiments is also echoed in the statements made by close relatives and friends of the martyr. For example, a videotape of a Hamas operative's last will shows him holding hands with his mother, who says:

> I am not losing you because you are going to paradise … Our message to the Israeli occupiers and killers is that this is our land. And our sons that we love are no more dear to us than our land. Their blood will redeem it.[57]

Martyrdom operations thus seem to be regarded, even at the individual level, as religious tools that can be implemented to achieve explicitly political ends, in this case, national liberation. Therefore martyrdom allows the operative and his social affiliates to not only fulfil their duty to God but to their country. In this way the single act of martyrdom becomes a mechanism to end injustice and simultaneously seek liberation and vengeance.

There is thus an intricate weaving of a militant, revenge rhetoric with the ideas and language of nationalism and religiosity. Yet while certain dominant themes can be traced in the written and 'living wills' it is still much more difficult to pin down each and every individual reason for opting for suicide operations. All that can be said with authority is that while personal reasons can range from redemption to national responsibility they seem to have been facilitated by Hamas's re-Islamization of Palestinian society and its narrative about the role of jihad and martyrdom in the national struggle. Thus, a number of 'living wills' echo the rhetoric constructed by Hamas in its literature and reflect the power the group exerted over the imagination of an entire nation. Because 'living martyrs' are taped reading out their wills it has been suggested that these statements are scripted by Hamas and not individual bombers. But it is unclear if this is

indeed the case or if the bombers themselves have prepared these wills. The recurring appearance of particular themes certainly suggests that some sort of political template either exists or is mimicked. Yet at the same time it must be emphasized that suicide bombers sometimes produce two testaments. One is the 'official' version that is used for publicity and the other is a private testament addressed to their immediate family. While documentation is limited, it can be tentatively asserted that the 'official' statements tend to be more politicized than the private statements that are much more personal.[58] However, other full-text wills that could be accessed reflect a combination of personal and official statements and hence no longer represent the political–personal divide. But because these additional testaments were posted on and accessed from Hamas's official website it is possible that they had been doctored, i.e. edited to read as one text, hence the blurring of the political–personal divide.

What is amply clear is that both the personal and official individual testaments reflect a certain degree of personal faith. The wills also are a reflection of Hamas's key political concerns, which might indicate at least a degree of manufacturing. There are three key points of similarity between Hamas rhetoric and the individual wills. First, the individual wills reflect the same combination of faith and nationalism as do Hamas leaflets. The excerpts reproduced above provide abundant verification of this. Second, the same sense of isolation that is evident in Hamas rhetoric is also prevalent in the language used by their martyrs. Third, individual wills, like Hamas leaflets, also privilege martyrdom and selfsacrifice and indicate the successful framing of suicide attacks as acts of martyrdom, as opposed to suicide, in the jihad against Israel. The end result is the successful manufacturing of the belief that martyrdom operations serve the cause of both God and the nation. This framing explains *how* suicide violence came to be successfully justified, legitimized and enacted specifically within the Palestinian milieu.

Yet despite attempting to make clear distinctions between suicide and martyrdom, made by both the organization and the individuals who call these operations *amaliyat istish'hadiyya* (martyrdom operations) or *amaliyya fida'iyya* (sacrificial operations) and attempt to align them with the Islamic legacy of *sha-hadat*, obvious tensions still exist within the Muslim community regarding the legitimacy of such attacks.[59] This seems to hint at the inherent tension that exists between Islam as a political movement and Islam as a religious ideology. Hence while a fierce debate has raged between Muslim scholars and theologians over the validity of suicide attacks no firm consensus has ever been reached. This tension might also explain why Hamas went to such lengths to construct an elaborate martyrdom narrative and appropriate culturally resonant themes, such as militant heroic martyrdom (discussed in Chapter 5) to further bolster its rhetoric. Of course, Hamas's use of religious themes and symbols specifically support what are otherwise secular political concerns. However, its primarily political tilt certainly does not mean that religious scholars have no influence. In various interviews Sheikh Yusef al-Qaradawi, one of the

most significant contemporary Sunni scholars declared his support for the Palestinian use of suicide operations against Israel, stating:

> The operations are the highest form of jihad and are most certainly permitted by the Shari'a … the *mujahid,* the warrior, has total faith in God's mercy. He does battle with the enemy and the enemy of God with this new weapon which Providence has put in the hands of the weak so that they are in a position to fight the powerful and arrogant.

Qaradawi insisted that Israeli women and children are not to be spared:

> for Israel is in its very essence a military society. Both men and women serve in the army. To be sure, if a child or old person is killed in the process, then it's not intentional but an oversight; a mistake for reasons of military necessity. Necessity justifies what is forbidden.[60]

Again in a July 2004 interview he reiterated:

> I consider this type of martyrdom operation [attacks on Israeli civilians] as indication of justice of Allah almighty. Allah is just. Through his infinite wisdom he has given the weak what the strong do not possess and that is the ability to turn their bodies into bombs like the Palestinians do.[61]

Yet various fatwas have also condemned such attacks. One such series of fatwas were issued, apparently at the behest of the PA, immediately after the wave of bombings which occurred in February-March 1996. These fatwas declared that acts of violence against civilians and unarmed people were not acts of martyrdom in a holy struggle, thereby implying that these were acts of individual suicide. In April 1996, Sheikh Muhammad al-Sayyid al-Tantawi, Grand Mufti at Cairo's al-Azhar University, also categorized suicide operations and the killing of innocent unarmed civilians as 'evil'.[62] Then in 2004 Tantawi further qualified his 1996 statement by stating that: 'suicide operations are an act of self-defence and a type of martyrdom so long as their intention consists of killing the enemy's soldiers, but not women and children'.[63]

Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela believe that such denunciation and debate is what led Hamas's initiative of the 1997 Damascus publication, *al-'Amaliyyat al-Istishhadiyya al-Mizan al-Fiqhi* (literally: The Suicide Operations in the Balance of Jurisprudence). This book was aimed ostensibly at refuting all criticisms levelled at Hamas for killing innocent Israeli civilians and establishing the Islamic legitimacy of these acts. This publication listed Islamic scholars who argued that martyrdom in the course of jihad was a legitimate Islamic tool with a sound historical and religious basis. The Palestinian religious establishment, in its turn, has remained ambiguous and actively avoided issuing a definitive position sanctioning or condemning suicide operations. For example, Palestinian Grand Mufti Sheikh Ekrima Sabri very vaguely stated:

> The person who sacrifices his life as a Muslim will know if God accepts it and whether it's for the right reason … God in the end will judge him and whether he did that for a good purpose or not. We cannot judge. The measure is whether the person is doing that for his own purposes or for Islam.[64]

As such, the debate has continued to rage. In April 2001 the Saudi Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdulaziz bin-Abdullah al-Ashaikh rejected suicide attacks and asserted that they had no basis in shari'a. He stressed: ‘such attacks are not part of the jihad, and I fear that they are just suicides plain and simple’.[65] While not a formal fatwa, this was a very powerful statement nonetheless and provoked a series of responses in return. Hamas's Sheikh Hamid al-Bitawi, for example, stated that if even the smallest portion of Muslim land is occupied then jihad becomes incumbent upon every individual and consequently suicide attacks permissible. As the debate regarding the legitimacy of suicide operations continues amongst both Muslim scholars as well as within popular discourse it is unsurprising that no single fixed position on suicide operations has ever emerged. This has enabled political organizations like Hamas to use this very ambiguity and fluidity in their favour when justifying such attacks.

Conclusion

This chapter illustrated how Hamas's use of political Islam justified its use of violence and facilitated a distinctly state-oriented political agenda. Political Islam was seen to have been used to both carve a unique identity for the movement and to legitimize the use of suicide violence in the national struggle. Thus, this chapter located suicide violence in the Palestinian territories as the product of an elaborate jihad narrative, which was systematically constructed by Hamas and deliberately harnessed to the Palestinian nationalist project. Within this narrative, both *istish'had* and *amaliyat istish'hadiyya,* occupied a central space. Hamas thus built *istish'had* as a key aspirational goal for the true believers in Palestinian society and in doing so it justified its use of suicide violence against Israel from 1993 to 2006 as part and parcel of the national struggle for liberation.

This chapter began by illustrating how Hamas used political Islam to construct a unique identity for itself, adopt a strategy of jihad and facilitate the use of suicide violence in its confrontation with Israel. Hamas literature reveals its preoccupations with a specific set of concerns. Most obviously Hamas tended to depict Israel as an instrument of the ‘West’ in the Middle East. It also tended to frame the traditional conflict between *dar al-islam* and *dar al-harb* in the rather stark terms of a confrontation between Islam and the West. Similarly, Hamas believed that the occupation was the result of the crisis within the Palestinian and wider Muslim community and underscored the sanctity of Palestinian land. These concerns were key components of its step-by-step re-Islamization of both Palestinian society and the national struggle. In other words, by successfully pulling together the core Palestinian concerns with Zionism, Islam, nationalism and jihad in a single narrative Hamas constructed a powerful and consistently escalating rhetoric of militant heroic martyrdom.

Of course, while Hamas's use of political Islam to justify suicide violence was directed at establishing a free and Islamic Palestine, it also served its own political agenda. Thus for Hamas the state not only represented a key arena of contestation but its political, military and social programme was particularly geared towards consolidating its unique position in the Palestinian political arena. As such, Hamas effectively justified its campaign of suicide violence as a defensive jihad against a disproportionately powerful enemy. At the same time, it categorically framed its long-term goal as the national liberation of all of historic Palestine through aggressive armed struggle (i.e. an offensive jihad) with Israel and thus firmly opposed, in its rhetoric, any peace settlement that would compromise any part of a territory that is considered to be an Islamic *waqf* (endowment). This enabled it to carve out a unique position in Palestinian politics vis-à-vis more established political players while at the same time providing it with a powerful means of opposing Israeli occupation.

Of course, given that Hamas's ideology, as that of a modern Islamist organization, exists in constant interaction with modern secular concerns and realities, it is perhaps not surprising that Hamas acknowledged, albeit tacitly, that suicide violence as a mechanism of engaging and opposing Israeli occupation was a problematic practice. It is possibly this knowledge which forced it to formulate an intricate jihad narrative which consistently referenced classical Islam in order to facilitate its contemporary political agenda. At the same time, Hamas's elaborate justification for its use of suicide violence also reflects its potential uneasiness with regard to both modern humanitarian values as well as modern fatwas condemning such attacks. In response its language tended to over-compensate when justifying its use of suicide attacks. Thus, the idea of defensive jihad repeatedly cropped up in statements made by both the organization as well as its individual operatives. Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar, for example, summarized this position in an interview conducted in May 1995:

> They [the Jews] made their religion their nation and state … They have declared war on Islam, closed mosques and massacred defenceless worshippers at Al-Aqsa and in Hebron. They are the Muslim-killers and under these circumstances we are obliged by our religion to defend ourselves.[66]

The second part of this chapter illustrated how this deliberately constructed strategy of jihad and martyrdom was accepted and internalized by both Hamas operatives and segments of Palestinian society. Thus, Hamas's rhetoric placed both jihad and violence at the very centre of its political strategy. By establishing the centrality of jihad, Hamas successfully framed suicide attacks as the very epitome of self-sacrifice and martyrdom in the Palestinian struggle for statehood. In other words, addressing its key concerns through the medium of political Islam enabled Hamas to frame and legitimize martyrdom operations as a fulfilment of the sacred imperative of jihad in the fight against the Zionist occupation of the holy land of Palestine. Hamas's literature

systematically developed this sophisticated narrative of martyrdom with the result that suicide operations came to be accepted as a legitimate means of resisting the occupation and further consolidated Hamas's unique position in Palestinian politics by supplying it with a forceful propaganda tool. The statements made by individual operatives, their families and friends reflect the same concerns. Thus, for individual bombers the act of martyrdom became a vehicle by which they demonstrated and fulfilled their individual commitment to God. Martyrdom operations thus seem to have been accepted, even at the individual and societal levels, as religious tools that could be used to achieve explicitly political ends. Therefore, martyrdom allowed both the operative and his social affiliates to not only fulfil their duty to God but also to their country. This suggests that Hamas's rhetoric of nationalistic jihad was both accepted and internalised by significant sections of Palestinian society in the period under study; and this effectively explains how Hamas's use of political Islam to construct its narrative of a nationalistic jihad essentially bolstered the use of suicide operation from 1993 to 2006.

7 Concluding remarks

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We do not sing the song of death
but recite the hymns of life.
We die so that future generations might live

Shadi Sleyman al-Nabaheen[1]

This book questioned why and how suicide attacks emerged, escalated and became a mode of engagement in the Israeli–Palestinian landscape of conflict from 1993 to 2006. Its starting point was, first and foremost, a rejection of a monolithic Islamist global threat of suicide violence in favour of an in-depth analysis of one single case. This approach was expected to generate specific answers to a particular manifestation of the phenomenon of suicide attacks in a given socio-political cultural setting. Three concepts were applied to study and analyse suicide attacks in this book, namely:

1. The expressive and instrumental rationality of suicide missions: that effectively explained *why* suicidal violence came to be *used* as a mechanism of engagement with the Israeli state by both Hamas and its individual operatives.
2. The evolution of Palestinian nationalism and the culturally entrenched norm of militant heroic martyrdom_ that explained *how* suicidal violence *evolved* and *emerged* specifically within the Palestinian socio-political setting.
3. The use of political Islam to frame violent resistance against the Israeli state as a modern day jihad, which explained *how* suicide violence was *justified, legitimized and enacted* specifically within the Palestinian socio-cultural milieu.

By simultaneously employing these three concepts one can more comprehensively answer *both* why and how suicide violence emerged, escalated and became a mode of engagement in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict as each of these approaches explains a very specific facet of suicide violence: strategic, sociocultural or ideological. The coordinated application of all three concepts also allows multiple causes and levels to be factored into an analysis of suicide attacks. While this work focused most overtly on the role of two levels of analysis, i.e. the organization (Hamas) and the individual operative in promulgating suicide violence, it also acknowledged and included the role played by Palestinian society, which was seen to represent the broader socio-political-cultural milieu that generated both the organization under study as well as its operatives.

To this end, Chapter 4 looked specifically at how both Hamas and its individual operatives viewed suicide attacks as a strategic choice that served multiple purposes. Both organizational and individual motives were seen to conflate along the three broad concerns of *survival, retaliation* and *competition*. This chapter stressed the equally significant role played by both Hamas and its individual operatives and argued that while Hamas could certainly identify, manipulate and/or encourage certain popular emotions to facilitate recruitment for its suicide bombing campaigns, exploitation alone could not explain the large overall increase in individuals volunteering for such missions in the Palestinian territories. Nor could organizational manipulation and exploitation alone explain the increasing number of unaffiliated and loosely affiliated bombers, the drop in training and indoctrination times and why more individuals consistently and repeatedly volunteered for suicide missions. In other words, while the chapter recognized that organizational support was a crucial factor in the promulgation of suicide attacks it also identified individual motives as playing an equally significant role in propelling the phenomenon, thereby stressing the *dialectic* that exists between Hamas and its members. This chapter also argued that individual rationality could not be ignored nor be subordinated to organizational rationality and, as such, one could not disregard the rationality of symbolic action and nonmaterial incentives and goals when analysing suicide attacks in the Palestinian territories. Suicide attacks were therefore seen as acts of expediency and practical reason as well as acts that were simultaneously symbolic, ritualistic and communicative.

This chapter illustrated how Hamas used suicide attacks as a mechanism to garner public support in order to ensure its *survival* in a political landscape that had been dominated by two players – Israel and Fatah/PLO/PA. In the period before 2000, a weak and nascent Hamas was seen as using suicide operations intermittently and generally in conjunction with other armed attacks to raise group profile and assert a unique group identity. Unable to pose a direct challenge to key political rivals in this period, Hamas tended to use suicide missions instead to *compete* with Fatah/PA in order to both undermine Fatah's legitimacy and hinder the Oslo peace process. Hamas's use of suicide operations from 1993–2000 were also clearly a *retaliatory* response to Israeli policies and used strategically to illicit a harsh Israeli response. This engendered an escalating tit-for-tat cycle of violence that creating conditions in which Hamas could successfully justify using violence, and especially suicide attacks as a defensive policy against Israeli punitive action while simultaneously portraying itself as an able military successor to the now passive Fatah and PA. That Fatah also began using suicide missions in 2002 not only suggests that Hamas had managed to successfully normalize suicide violence but also indicates the intense pressure the PA and Fatah now faced vis-à-vis a steadily consolidating Hamas. As such, 2002 represents the beginning of a period where equally influential political factions vying for power and supremacy began using suicide bombings *competitively* in the Palestinian political

landscape. In short, Hamas's use of suicide operations evolved in response to its need to survive, compete and/or retaliate within the Palestinian political scenario.

This chapter also illustrated how suicide operations encompassed a symbolic rationality for individual operatives in Palestinian society. It seems that a significant number of Palestinian suicide bombers believed that their death would contribute to the long-term *survival* of their society/community while simultaneously allowing them to *retaliate* against the oppressive Israeli state and its occupation of their homeland. As such, the individual's decision to opt for a suicide mission tended to be primarily rooted in altruistic motives where martyrdom became the mechanism by which the bombers asserted their affiliation and integration with Palestinian society while simultaneously delineating personal space and carving out a unique personal identity. The belief that their martyrdom was crucial to their society's survival may explain the exponential rise in individuals volunteering for suicide missions in direct correspondence with the failure of the peace process and Israel's increasing use of collective punishment. Under conditions of mounting pressure, Palestinian society's increasingly ritualistic portrayals of its suicide bombers as heroic martyrs also converted these individuals into powerful role models and, as such, examples to be emulated by other Palestinians. Given that self-sacrifice is traditionally honoured, celebrated and idealized in Palestinian society it is no surprise that martyrdom operations came to represent an avenue of amassing honour and social prestige for individuals and their families. In direct correspondence to Mead's concept of an ‘inter-subjective social reality’ martyrdom as a mechanism of accumulating societal honour also become *competitive* over time, with each bombing representing the stimuli that triggered the one that followed in a self-replicating cycle. Thus, the concept of militant heroic martyrdom that was introduced and legitimized by Hamas developed a certain momentum of its own. For the individual then suicide attacks represented a powerful means to communicate the bomber's message to multiple audiences and achieve equally important material and nonmaterial ends.

Having addressed these strategic and symbolic imperatives, Chapter 5 moved on to analysing how suicide violence originated and evolved specifically within the Palestinian socio-cultural setting by studying how the cultural concept of self-sacrifice/heroic martyrdom was appropriated and rearticulated as suicide violence by Hamas in the period following the first intifada. While the focus of this chapter was most overtly on the impetus supplied by the organization the work simultaneously stressed the significance of social context and, therefore, the role played by both Palestinian society and the individual operative in promulgating the phenomenon of suicide violence. The argument here was essentially based upon social considerations where Palestinian nationalism was identified as a vital determinant in the emergence of suicide attacks. Within the context of Palestinian nationalism and notions of selfhood, the norm of militant heroic martyrdom was seen to have particularly encouraged and lauded self-sacrifice for the national

cause. This socio-cultural understanding allowed one to contextualize the Palestinian use of violence as being directly related to the crystallization of Palestinian nationalism. Thus, suicide violence was identified as yet another step in a long-standing, and escalating, trajectory of protest and violence that has been aimed at constructing a national identity and attaining a state.

Palestinian national identity was also understood as based in a narrative that encompasses a set of reoccurring themes that have consistently propelled the evolution of Palestinian nationalism and the national struggle. Each of these themes emerged and evolved as a direct result of the Palestinian experience in the twentieth century. Yet depending on the time and circumstances, some of these themes tended to play a more prominent role than others, which were temporarily subordinated. Chapter 5 located the key reason for the prominence and consistent re-emergence of the norm of militant heroic martyrdom in the powerlessness experienced by Palestinian society in every period *preceding* the resurgence of this norm. Thus Palestinian nationalism, when examined in *la longue durée* was seen to reflect a cyclical pattern, where powerlessness repeatedly engendered a renewal of armed struggle within Palestinian society. Chapter 5 illustrated how the violence of armed struggle allowed Palestinians to recapture agency and power and assert a proactive national identity. Exercising this agency in the form of self-sacrifice also enabled Palestinian society to 'reinvent' itself and regain 'lost' honour, dignity and self-respect vis-à-vis the Israeli 'other'. Self-sacrifice was therefore identified as a core ingredient of Palestinian national identity. When agency was exercised in periods of resistance it was this very ingredient of self-sacrifice that assumed the fully developed form of militant heroic martyrdom. In short, the seizure of agency propelled the evolution of Palestinian nationalism by regenerating the vital component of active identity creation. Once the armed struggle lost momentum, as it inevitably does, the core national identity reverted back to its passive state (represented by themes of the powerless, dispossessed and degraded). The element of selfsacrifice, in turn, reverted from its active militant variation back to its passive articulation, characterized by suffering and forbearance. Thus this chapter demonstrated how the basic narrative of Palestinian selfhood embodied the basic 'active-passive' cyclical dichotomy of 'armed struggle/heroic martyrdom' and 'suffering/sacrifice'.

The chapter also underscored that while Hamas may have played a part in reviving and escalating the norm of militant heroic martyrdom in Palestinian society, the concept of the militant heroic martyr was already very much a part of the cultural struggle for national validation and legitimacy. Hence, Hamas was seen as merely inserting itself into an established narrative and channelizing key themes of Palestinian selfhood into a narrative that glorified and actively encouraged a new variant of militant martyrdom. This effectively created a conducive environment for the progressive normalization of militant heroic martyrdom as suicide attacks.

Chapter 6 further developed this strategic and social understanding of suicide operations in the

Israeli–Palestinian conflict by analysing how political Islam was used to frame violent resistance against the Israeli state as a modern-day jihad. First, Hamas's political ambitions were identified as specifically state-oriented and the political language of religion, in this case of political Islam, was seen as being used systematically to grant legitimacy to the movement by facilitating the use of its key mechanism of amassing support and legitimacy, i.e. suicide violence. This violence was deliberately constructed and categorized as a legitimate jihad waged against the oppressive Israeli state thus explaining *how* suicide operations came to be so willingly enacted by certain sections of Palestinian society. Hamas's militant jihad against Israel and its positioning of Islam as an ideological, political and military mode of struggle against Israeli occupation also enabled it to present itself as a credible alternative to the secular national movement. In other words, political Islam supplied Hamas with its oppositional discourse and was systematically used to create a unique identity for movement. This unique identity, in turn, further fed into Hamas's ability to adopt the strategy of jihad and suicidal violence against Israel.

Of course, Hamas's rhetoric of political Islam served distinctly political objectives and included a set of reoccurring concerns, including: (1) the challenge of Zionism and the Jewish-Israeli state; (2) the crisis within both the Palestinian and wider Muslim community and concurrently the challenge posed by the secular nationalist opposition; (3) the sanctity of Palestinian land and the predicament of foreign occupation in Jerusalem; (4) the defence of Palestinian national aspirations as a legitimate Islamic goal and the establishment of a Palestinian Islamic state; (5) the declaration and justification of jihad as a legitimate strategy to accomplish specifically nationalist goals; and (6) the defence of martyrdom as a legitimate Islamic tool of struggle within this jihad against oppression and occupation. Each of these themes contributed to Hamas's step-by-step re-Islamization of the national struggle and constructed an overarching rhetoric that justified the use of suicide violence in the struggle against Israel. Hamas rhetoric was thus constructed with the aim of placing jihad and violence at the very centre of its political strategy. Having successfully established the centrality of jihad and violence, Hamas was then able to frame suicide attacks as the very epitome of self-sacrifice and martyrdom with relative ease. In short, Hamas successfully built and manipulated an intricate narrative which brought together core Palestinian concerns with Zionism, Islam, nationalism and jihad, which bundled together contributed to formulating a powerful and consistently escalating rhetoric of militant heroic martyrdom. In other words, addressing these concerns through the medium of political Islam enabled Hamas to frame and legitimize martyrdom operations as a fulfilment of the sacred imperative of jihad in the fight against the Zionist occupation of the holy land of Palestine. Hamas's literature systematically developed this sophisticated narrative of martyrdom that not only served to extend legitimacy to suicide operations as a means of resisting the occupation but also provided forceful propaganda for the organization's military activities.

Chapter 6 also analysed how for the individual bombers the act of martyrdom operated as the vehicle by which they demonstrated and fulfilled their individual commitment to God, who urges true believers to fight persecution and never fear death. A significant number of last wills analysed reflected, amongst other emotions, a deep profession of faith as well as a sense of national responsibility. In addition, a sense of deep religious responsibility, and concurrently religious guilt, also seems to bear down upon a number of the bombers and their close friends and family. Martyrdom operations thus seem to have been accepted, even at the individual and societal levels, as religious tools that could be used to achieve explicitly political ends, illustrating Hamas's successful dissemination of its brand of political Islam. Therefore, martyrdom allowed both the operative and his social affiliates to not only fulfil their duty to God but also to their country. In this way, the single act of martyrdom became a mechanism to end the injustice of Zionist occupation while simultaneously liberating the holy land of Palestine, attaining a nation-state and seeking vengeance. Hence, militant revenge rhetoric came to be intricately woven together with the ideas and language of nationalism and religiosity. Finally, while certain dominant themes could be traced on the part of the individual operative it was still much more difficult to pin down the wide range of individual reasons for opting for suicide operations. However, at the same time, it is amply clear that a number of individual bombers echoed the rhetoric constructed by Hamas thus reflecting the power the group exerted over the imagination of an entire nation.

I began this work by explaining why another book on Hamas was a necessity before proceeding to analyse why and how suicide violence emerged, escalated and became a mode of engagement in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Not only was Hamas's use of suicide attacks from 1993 to 2006 placed within a broader trajectory of violence in the occupied territories but such attacks were also identified as being inextricably linked to both the group's political ambitions and the Palestinian national struggle. However, suicide attacks, including Hamas's use of such operations, have essentially tapered off in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict since late-2006. Indeed, Hamas conducted its last suicide operation in November 2006 and since then, while it may have expressed support or sympathy for suicide attacks, it has never claimed responsibility for one. This shift, especially in light of its intensive suicide bombing campaign of the preceding years, begs two key questions. The first, and most obvious, one is why did Hamas stop using suicide operations in the Israeli–Palestinian landscape of conflict? This is especially significant given that Hamas was one of the main proponents of this tactic and as such its shift in policy translated into a significant drop in the overall number of suicide attacks conducted the post-2006 period. Second, can the three concepts used in this work, to explain the emergence and prevalence suicide attacks, also be effectively applied to explain this shift and their disappearance? It is worth underscoring that violence has continued to characterize not only internal Palestinian

politics since 2006 but also the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian confrontation. However, as stated above Hamas had effectively phased out suicide attacks against the Israeli state by late-2006. A number of Israeli experts contribute the significant drop in suicide operations post-2004 to the construction of the controversial barrier between the West Bank and Israel (referred to as the security fence by the Israelis and the apartheid wall by Palestinians). However, this alone cannot explain the drop in suicide operations, especially given that Israel's unilateral disengagement from Gaza enacted in August 2005 provided Hamas with a secure space from which to plan and launch such attacks. However, while Hamas has continued to fire missiles into Israeli territory it has fully eschewed the use of suicide operations. Obviously then there are other considerations at play that need to be probed and that can perhaps only be understood by tracing Hamas's steady political integration post-2006 and locating the role of violence in its socio-political arsenal.

Hamas and the use of political violence since its 2006 electoral victory

The years of 2004–2005 were pivotal for Hamas and represented, in many ways, a turning point both in the history of the Palestinian national struggle and the evolution of the organization. For one, Hamas lost its charismatic founder and mentor, Sheikh Yassin, in March 2004 as a result of an Israeli helicopter strike. Second, Arafat, the indomitable head of Fatah and the Palestinian national movement since its re-emergence after the 1967 war, passed away on 11 November 2004. While Hamas's loss represented a significant set-back for the group it has, in the years since, not only managed to recover from this loss but also maintain both a coherent leadership and its ideological integrity. However, Arafat's death has served to deeply alter the Palestinian political landscape as Fatah, already decaying and deeply divided under his leadership, has continued to fray and fragment. As a result, Hamas presented with a set of ideal conditions has rapidly moved from the periphery towards the political centre stage through a process of systematic integration.

Various experts have asserted that the deceptively smooth election of Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) as Arafat's successor after his death in November 2004 served to conceal not only the PA's growing weakness but also the systematic fragmentation that Fatah had undergone during the years of protracted conflict.[2] Abbas, well aware of this organizational fragility, recognized that he could neither reinitiate the peace process nor viably establish his internal authority without a commitment from Hamas (and other factions) to renounce violence. Thus, in what was a sharp departure from his predecessor's stance towards the Islamists, he opted to negotiate with Hamas and other rival factions, as clearly demonstrated in the signing of the March 2005 Cairo

Declaration.[3] Abu Mazen was not only willing to negotiate with these factions but, most significantly, also offer them a power-sharing solution in return for their cooperation. In short, for the first time in its history, Hamas was presented with the opportunity to politically integrate with the PA through an electoral process if it promised to assist in maintaining internal law and order and refrained from conducting armed attacks, including suicide bombings, against Israel.

Simultaneously, it was also perhaps the most opportune time for Hamas to join the political process. For one, though it was riding a wave of unprecedented popular support largely generated by its campaign of violent attacks during the second intifada, much of its top leadership had been decimated as a result of Israel's policy of targeted assassinations. Its remaining leaders were also under considerable pressure and forced to remain underground for extended periods of time making it increasingly difficult for the grass-roots-based organization to 'represent and respond'[4] to its constituents' needs and concerns. At the same time, Israel's announcement of a unilateral disengagement from Gaza had provided Hamas an ideal opportunity to claim that it was, in fact, its policy of armed struggle and martyrdom operations that had pushed the Israelis out and 'liberated' the Strip – an assertion that was, by and large, accepted by many Palestinians. Moreover, the floundering Oslo peace process also ensured that Hamas could integrate with PA's political institutions with the assurance that it would not need to compromise its ideological integrity and renounce its jihad against Israel. In other words, for many Hamas members political integration was going to complement armed struggle rather than replace it[5] and it is worth underscoring that Hamas never explicitly or fully eschewed the use of violence and violent tactics. Hence, throughout 2005, even though it broadly adhered to its definition of *tahdiya*, i.e. 'a conditional ceasefire in which it would still reserve the right to respond to Israeli attacks upon Palestinian population centres and its cadres',[6] it still continued to fire missiles into Israel from the Gaza Strip.

It was, therefore, the combination of these multiple factors that promoted Hamas's entry into institutional politics in 2005–2006. It is worth noting that Abu Mazen, having offered Hamas the option of political integration, now came under increasing pressure from Fatah's leadership to postpone the legislative elections scheduled for July 2005. Fatah feared that the electoral process would to its own detriment benefit Hamas, and Abbas was eventually forced to postpone the elections into early 2006. The PA, counting upon greater external economic assistance in the post-Gaza disengagement phase to attract voters, hoped that this delay would allow Abu Mazen and a disarrayed Fatah to gain some lost ground. But Hamas, strong in mid-2005, was an even more formidable competitor in January 2006 and it swept the elections, winning 74 out of a total of 132 seats in the legislative council in stark contrast to Fatah's merger 45 seats.[7]

Hamas's victory in the Palestinian national elections held on 25 January 2006 marked the culmination of what had been a long process of progressive political integration for the group.[8]

However, this victory was met by consternation, not only on the part of Israel and the international community but also Fatah.[9] As a result of the elections, Hamas gained control of the PA government and parliament while Fatah retained control over both the PA presidency and the PLO. What resulted was not a power-sharing arrangement, as promised by Abbas, but rather a bitter struggle between two power-centres for political control and supremacy.[10] Fatah, long used to political supremacy, was unable to accept its electoral loss and blatantly used its grip on the civil services and security forces to subvert Hamas's ability to govern. Israel and the Quartet (US, EU, UN and Russia) also responded by attempting to subvert the Hamas-led government through political and economic isolation while simultaneously empowering Abbas with the hope that this would not only force Hamas towards a more moderate stance but also to discredit it to the point that the Palestinian people would voluntarily oust it from power.[11] To its credit Hamas, represented by Prime Minister Ismail Haniya, withstood these multiple efforts to eject it from power. However, 'starved of resources and instruments to exercise institutional power',[12] its cabinet government also proved unable to rule. Instead, Hamas came to be 'locked in an increasingly bitter and violent conflict with external and internal adversaries'[13] and once again reverted to using violence in order to ensure political survival and retain power. To this end, in June 2006 it formally renounced the *tahdiya* adopted in March 2005, thereby signalling to both its internal and external rivals that it would openly use violence to retaliate if it were either prevented from governing or removed from power.[14]

An increasingly bloody power struggle ensued with both Hamas and Fatah mobilizing armed militias, stockpiling weapons and resorting to killings in the Occupied Territories. The 8 February 2007 Saudi-brokered Mecca agreement, urgently sought to promote dialogue and power-sharing while suspending intra-Palestinian political strife. However, the agreement did no more than provide a temporary lull in the simmering conflict between the rival movements, which gained both 'the opprobrium of other organizations and widespread public disgust'.[15] By June 2007, renewed clashes between the two factions had degenerated into an all-out struggle for the control of the Gaza Strip and, in under a week, well-armed and organized Hamas forces overran PA security installations and key Fatah centres to take control of the territory.[16] President Abbas responded to the takeover by dismissing the national unity government led by Haniya and appointing an emergency one led by Salam Fayyad in its stead. Ismail Haniya, in turn, ignored the decree and continues to exercise authority in the Gaza Strip.[17] The international community also condemned what they categorized as Hamas's 'illegal coup of Gaza' and supported Abbas in his decision to dismiss Haniya's government. It also swiftly routed both political and material assistance to the Fatah-held West Bank while imposing a strict sanctions regime on the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip.[18]

In the three years since this violent putsch Hamas has managed to consolidate its hold over

Gaza despite its continued political and economic isolation, a deteriorating security environment and a host of other challenges. External challenges to administering Gaza have come in the form of the pressures exerted by the West Bank-based PA which, immediately after the takeover, boycotted security, judicial and other government sectors in Gaza and steeply curtailed their administrative links with the Hamas government. It also urged PA employees in the public sector to stop working or risk being struck off the government payroll, sought to deny the Hamas government revenue by declaring a tax holiday across Gaza and made only intermittent salary payments to non-essential public sector staff (such as hospital cleaners and municipal workers).[19] In addition, the West Bank-based PA occasionally interrupted Gaza's fuel subsidies and according to the International Crisis Group even pressured donors to postpone new Gaza projects.[20] Hamas's other external challenges have included the Israeli blockade which banned exports, sharply limited imports and disallowed the passage of over 100,000 Gazan labourers into Israeli territory. In fact by late 2007 Israel, in response to continuing and intensifying Palestinian shelling from Gaza, had further reduced food supplies, slashed fuel imports and restricted foreign currency supply[21] – a policy which with minor shifts holds until today. As a result, Gaza's manufacturing, construction and transport industries have been devastated and the bulk of its private sector workers laid off. Hamas has thus come under increasing pressure to break the blockade in order to kick-start Gaza's collapsing economy. Consequently, its ability to govern Gaza is heavily dependent upon these two external forces – i.e. upon the Israelis lifting the blockade on the one hand and the PA releasing funds for the public sector in Gaza on the other.

Within Gaza, Hamas has also had to overcome a number of obstacles including Gaza's powerful and heavily militarized network of clans and families and various other party militias.[22] These militias have not only included traditional secular rivals like Fatah but also other Islamists like the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and increasingly a host of pro-Al Qaeda groups, including most recently the Jund Ansar Allah.[23] Yet despite such formidable challenges Hamas has not only survived but also managed to consolidate its regime. It has done so by choosing to focus on the factors it can control, i.e. its internal challenges, while continuing to behave like a resistance movement towards those it cannot, i.e. the external influences as exercised by Israel and the PA.[24] In light of continuing sanctions and given how strongly security issues resonate with the population, Hamas has used security to demonstrate its governance credentials in Gaza and it has achieved relative internal order by establishing an unchallenged monopoly of violence using its reorganized security apparatus.[25] The Gaza blockade implemented by Israel and international actors with the hope of isolating and eventually ousting Hamas has thus failed to weaken the group and has instead facilitated its ability to govern unimpeded while simultaneously marginalizing the more moderating influences within the group. ‘While the Gazans may fault

Hamas for being unable to end the siege they also blame Israel for imposing it, the international community for supporting it and Fatah for acquiescing in it.'[26] As a result, Hamas has been free to remake the political landscape of Gaza and consolidate its position and all this by making internal security and the use of force the backbone of its administrative rule in the territory.

Violence as a means to political survival, competition and retaliation

The tone of how Hamas would administer Gaza was set during its brutal takeover of the territory in June 2007 itself. The confrontation leading up to the putsch was itself triggered by Hamas's security concerns as Fatah insisted on retaining control over the security apparatus in Gaza in the face of Hamas's determined efforts to bring these security forces under its own authority. Knowing that its position in power would never truly be secure unless backed by force, Hamas also sought formal recognition for its Executive Support Force (ESF) – a force that was set up after its 2006 electoral victory and which is now the Gaza police.[27] The resulting takeover itself was remarkably violent and the internecine bloodshed accounted for more Palestinian lives in 2007 than the conflict with Israel. Unlicensed public assemblies, particularly if linked to Fatah, were seen as a disturbance to the peace and dispelled, occasionally through the use of live ammunition. Small acts of dissent were also brutally repressed often with the use of disproportionate force. As Hamas targeted rival security groups and Gaza's civil society, human rights organizations reported that Gaza's amputee population *doubled* in four days.[28] Unwarranted detentions, summary executions and torture have come to characterize both Hamas's takeover and subsequent campaign to gain control of the territory. What has resulted since is a seizure of all Gaza-based PA institutions, the systematic quashing of political and civil opposition, a strengthening regime of censorship and surveillance and a consolidation of Hamas's security apparatus which is unashamedly utilized to implement these changes. Thus, the Qassam Brigades, Hamas's paramilitary wing, have been transformed from an underground guerrilla force into a uniformed, disciplined and effective military force responsible for suppressing armed groups within Gaza and also protecting it from external attacks. Hamas has also reformed the ESF into three branches responsible for managing Gaza's internal security: the Civil Police, the Internal Security Forces (an intelligence agency) and the National Security Force (a border police force).[29] In short, Hamas has established and maintained administrative rule in Gaza, hence ensuring its political survival, by acquiring an undisputed monopoly of violence which has given it the ability to control an area hitherto run by competing clans and rival militias. While there has certainly been a dramatic decline in internal chaos as a result, the popular response has been mixed: while some Gazans feel relief at the restoration of internal law and order others continue to live in a state of distrust, anxious about Hamas's hegemony and fearful of its use of force and

violence.

At least some of these fears are justified as Hamas has also used these transformed security forces to clamp down on any challenges posed by competing militias and clans to consolidate its control over Gaza. Clans had steadily amassed power in Gaza since the second intifada when Israeli incursions resulted in a rapid weaponization of families which stepped in to provide military protection and economic support where the government infrastructure could not. However, after the takeover Hamas launched a campaign to dismantle the economic and military clout of Gaza's clans. Families were, often forcibly, disarmed, their informal welfare economy was regulated and family associated criminal activities such as kidnapping, car theft and drug smuggling were sharply curtailed. Declining clan influence has reinforced Hamas's ability to govern Gaza effectively and the resulting stabilization and pacification of society has been welcomed by many in the Gaza Strip even though some observers accused Hamas of pitting clans against one another in order to consolidate their party's rule.[30]

Hamas's ability to effectively administer Gaza has been further bolstered by bringing various armed militias under control. The flight of Fatah's Gaza-based leadership during the takeover had left the movement divided and directionless and its militia demoralized. Even so, some within Fatah adopted a strategy of armed struggle and operating under a diffused leadership resorted to tactics reminiscent of those Hamas had used in the first intifada, i.e. wall graffiti, shootings and fire-bombings on the one hand and an escalated targeting of Israel on the other with the hope that the latter would provoke a military response against Hamas. Hamas reacted by confiscating weapons, arresting politicians, security personnel and suspected insurgents and violently suppressing all those either associated with the movement or suspected of supporting/sympathizing with it. As a result, the challenge posed by Fatah within Gaza was effectively, albeit brutally, crushed. Islamists groups such as PIJ also constitute a key challenge to Hamas's position as the principal arm of the Islamic national resistance and it has tended to curb their activities by confiscating weaponry, monitoring and limiting training exercises, and on occasion forcefully taking control of their mosques. At the same time, while Hamas has stringently restricted the use of force by militias within Gaza it has mostly turned a blind eye to their activities against Israel and consistently shied away from either curbing rocket fire into Israel or dismantling the rocket-manufacturing industry that makes these attacks possible. In doing so, it has made clear that it has little to gain by persuading these militias not to attack Israel, especially in light of Israel's continued siege and military incursions into Gaza. At the same time, in controlling militia activity within Gaza, Hamas has also clearly signalled that it will not tolerate any obstacles to its internal authority and control.[31]

However, Hamas has typically adopted noticeably harsher measures against the more radical Islamist factions recently appearing on Gaza's political landscape. The August 2009 crackdown

on Jund Ansar Allah, for instance, was one of the most violent incidents in Gaza since the Israeli offensive Operation Cast Lead and symbolized Hamas's deep intolerance towards any internal political challengers, especially those who could be even loosely linked to a wider Salafi-Jihadist ideology. This stance may be rooted in Hamas's rejection of repeated Al Qaeda attempts to appropriate the Palestinian cause and gain a foothold in the Territories. Moreover, though their allegiances and pedigrees remain unclear, Hamas may also fear that these radical factions could potentially supply Al Qaeda with inroads into Gaza and in doing so open it to unprecedented Israeli and international intervention, thus altering the conditions under which it has so successfully established and strengthened its rule.[32]

It is also worth mentioning that since the termination of Operation Cast Lead in early 2009, Hamas has attempted to calm tensions and convince various militant groups to refrain from firing rockets into Israeli territory. This shift can be credited to Hamas's efforts to prevent another Israeli ground offensive into the Gaza Strip that could potentially end its rule over the territory. By and large a shaky ceasefire and relative clam have been maintained for well over a year in April 2010. However, not all factions have accepted this stance and sporadic attacks have continued along the Gaza border. Hamas forces have responded by increasing patrols in areas from where rockets are normally fired at Israel and occasionally using force to persuade other factions to halt their military operations.[33] Hamas also continues to exert its power in the Gaza Strip by continuing to summarily execute any Palestinian convicted of collaborating with Israel. Such executions are not only a firm assertion by Hamas of their control over Gaza but also a rejection of the authority of the West Bank-based Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, whose final approval is required before any death sentence can be carried out.[34]

The unrelenting economic challenge: a barrier to long-term survival?

While this focus on internal security has been the benchmark of Hamas's administrative programme in Gaza it has been unable to force Israel to lift the blockade imposed after the 2007 takeover, despite repeated efforts to do so, as seen in the January 2008 Rafah breach and then again in its escalated shelling of Israel that eventually led to the December 2008-January 2009 Israeli Operation Cast Lead.[35] This blockade, as mentioned above, has generated unprecedented macroeconomic compression in Gaza.[36] The UN Relief and Works Agency in Gaza reported in October 2009 that the number of Gazans considered ‘abject poor’ had tripled to 300,000 this year, i.e. one in every five Gazans.[37] Under these conditions, Hamas's principal economic goal has been that of survival and it has sought to maintain legitimacy through the use of violence against Israel. At the same time, the economic sanctions and the resultant collapse of the private sector have been a mixed blessing for Hamas authorities. Thus, on the one hand the slow

strangulation of Gaza's economy and the resultant poverty has created a humanitarian crisis, engendering popular discontent and limiting Hamas's ability to govern, yet on the other hand it has also allowed Hamas to achieve economic dominance and effectively tightened its grip on Gaza.

A host of factors have allowed Hamas to finance itself and its activities and prevent a total economic meltdown. First, despite deep hostility and many irregularities, the Fayyad-led PA continues to be the largest contributor to Gaza's salary bill and therefore the main force moving the Palestinian market. Given that almost 50 per cent of Gaza's workforce is on a government payroll this contribution is a crucial and indispensable source of economic support for the Hamas government. Ironically, it was the Hamas takeover of Gaza and the restoration of non-Hamas governance in the West Bank which motivated Israel to resume the customs transfers that replenished PA coffers and enabled the PA to assist Gaza.[38] Second, the UN and other international donors have continued to pump money into Gaza for welfare operations while also substantially increasing their humanitarian assistance to compensate for the dramatic drop in development aid since mid-2007. According to the International Crisis Group, UN agencies spent over $350 million in Gaza in 2008 alone.[39] The Hamas government has also found innovative new ways to generate additional funds. For instance, in the initial months after the takeover the government charged approximately $400 as bail for those held on suspicion of anti-Hamas activities. Observers have noted that foreign donations have also contributed significantly to the revenues of the government in Gaza. Iran, for one, has made sizeable contributions and along with various other Gulf States the Hamas government is thought to have received as much as between $150 million and $200 million in revenue from foreign donations.[40] Finally, Hamas has also benefited from establishing a monopoly over and regulating the extensive tunnel smuggling between Gaza and Egypt. In an environment where the sanctions prohibit everything but a limited list of humanitarian items these tunnels have become vital lifelines for Gaza. Hamas not only controls the majority of these tunnels but also regulates prices and collects taxes on all goods passing through them. According to one shop owner in Gaza, a value added tax of 14.5 per cent is levied on every item that comes through the tunnels.[41] It is also worth noting that despite maintaining *tahdiya* since early 2009 in the hope that this would ease Gaza's economic hardship, the Israeli blockade has neither eased nor ended. Hamas is undoubtedly under extraordinary pressure as economic conditions in the Gaza Strip continue to worsen. Interestingly, in April 2010 Hamas police began seizing cigarettes from shops across Gaza in order to raise money from taxes. Hamas has also been trying, since March 2010, to raise taxes on smuggled petrol, luxury cars, and ordinary businesses – a strategy that has led various analysts to suggest that the movement may be acutely short of cash and desperate to raise money quickly.[42]

In the three years since its takeover Hamas has not only managed to successfully ‘administer

the crisis' but also consolidate its power and cripple potential foes. Most ministries and public sector institutions have been fully purged of Fatah loyalists and replaced by Hamas sympathizers and a somewhat stable, albeit brutal, regime has been established. Hamas's model of governance seems to be based on securing internal order and regime consolidation on the one hand and refusing to compromise on the movement's key principles with regards to its external challengers, Israel and the PA. However, even though Hamas has managed to survive under circumstances of extraordinary pressure Gaza remains volatile. For one, the present economic situation is neither viable nor sustainable in the long run. Hamas's attacks on Israel in the hopes of forcing it to lift the siege and the resulting 2008–2009 'War in Gaza' have not altered the situation on the ground: the crossings remain largely shut, reconstruction and rehabilitation is progressing at a snail's pace, rockets continue to be fired into Israel and tunnels from Egypt are still being used to smuggle weapons in. Neither has Hamas's post-Operation Cast Lead policy of attempting to implement a ceasefire succeeded in easing the Israeli blockade and the economic crisis. It is also clear that Hamas is unable to persuade its own members and other factions from fully halting rocket and mortar attacks upon Israel and it is only a matter of time before Israel mounts a new offensive in response.

At the same time, there are positive signs that the international community is steadily more willing to establish some form of contact with Hamas, even if through second-party talks.[43] Barak Obama's administration, for instance, has marked a break from previous policy which refused to even acknowledge the possibility of talks with Hamas, which the US designates a terrorist group. According to various media outlets, both Robert Malley, 'a former campaign advisor to President Obama and Thomas Pickering, a former U.S. ambassador, also with close connections to Obama, met with Hamas leaders in summer 2009'.[44] Rachel Schneller, International Affairs Fellow in Residence at the Council on Foreign Relations, also publicly met with a top Hamas official in March 2010. 'Schneller is currently on leave from her permanent post at the State Department, and is closer in an official capacity to the administration than the other former diplomats who are engaging with the militant group in a civilian capacity'.[45] Of course, US officials are quick to emphasize that US policy towards Hamas remains the same and no official dialogue can begin until Hamas meets a set of pre-requisites, including the recognition of Israel. At the same time, these second-party talks also suggest a distinct recognition on the part of the US and international community that no solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict can be achieved without initiating dialogue with Hamas. At the same time without a rapprochement between the Palestinian factions in the West Bank and Gaza, the international community is unlikely to permit Gaza's recovery for fear of directly assisting Hamas. However, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is deepening as second-party initiatives take their course and the international community continues to view Hamas with suspicion.

Explaining the absence of suicide attacks

The developments summarized above effectively explain why Hamas's use of suicide attacks petered out post-2006. They also illustrate that the three concepts originally used to analyse the emergence and escalation of suicide attacks in 1993 can be applied with equal ease to explain their disappearance in 2006. How? For one, the process of progressive political integration focused Hamas's attention more fully upon the elements of competition, retaliation and survival *within* Palestinian politics. As a result, its focus has effectively shifted away from the military engagement with Israel towards policies and tactics that would enable it to maintain its position of power within Gaza. Its electoral victory in 2006 clearly indicated to Hamas that it had won the full support of the Palestinian constituency. As such, it no longer had to rely on the continued use of suicide attacks as a mechanism to earn legitimacy and garner popular support. At the same time, Abu Mazen's basic criteria for allowing Hamas to politically integrate with the PA through an electoral process was contingent upon its commitment to both maintaining internal law and order and refraining from conducting armed attacks, including suicide bombings, against Israel. In attempting to adhere to these requirements, both in the period leading up to and following the elections, Hamas had to effectively temper its rhetoric of militant heroic martyrdom. Simultaneously, the loss of its key leaders, including the charismatic Sheikh Yassin in 2004, as well as the fact that its surviving leaders were under considerable pressure and hence forced to remain underground for extended periods of time also meant that Hamas was struggling to maintain close contacts with its constituency. Of course, by mid-2005 the Al-Aqsa intifada was also losing momentum and a key reason that Hamas had participated in the parliamentary elections was because it had recognized that its long-term political survival could no longer be ensured merely by its image as the military alternative to Fatah. Hence, it not only became progressively more difficult for the organization to maintain its rhetoric of militant heroic martyrdom but also increasingly unnecessary. Hamas's electoral victory also brought with it a surge of hope among many sections of Palestinian society, which believed that Hamas could potentially provide a solution to Israeli occupation and successfully meet the Palestinian demands for statehood where Fatah and the PA had failed. All this served to effectively change the socio-political conditions under which individuals and Palestinian society supported the use of (or volunteered for) extreme tactics of violence such as martyrdom operations. It is also worth noting that the increasing disillusionment of the Palestinians and their disgust with the power struggle that has since ensued between Fatah and Hamas has also served to effectively leech away volunteers for any sort of violent operations from both organizations.

As a result, what we see is a break in the *continuing dialectic* of instrumental and expressive

rationality that existed between Hamas and its individual suicide operatives with the result that suicide missions were no longer seen, nor depicted as necessary for achieving the common organizational and individual goals of survival, competition and retaliation. This, in turn, served to push the overall notion of Palestinian selfhood, which continues to embody an ongoing active-passive cyclical dichotomy, away from its active manifestation of armed struggle/militant heroic martyrdom back towards the passive expression of suffering/sacrifice. At the same time, by never fully eschewing violence and continuing to portray its acceptance of any Palestinian state limited to the territories of West Bank and Gaza as no more than a step in its historic jihad against Israel, Hamas has never needed to compromise its ideological credibility in the aftermath of its electoral victory in 2006. Indeed, all it had to do was shift the primary focus away from its narrative of historical jihad and martyrdom towards the challenge posed by the secular nationalist opposition, i.e. Fatah, while portraying its own political consolidation as a necessary first step towards achieving the long-term strategic goal of a Palestinian nation-state. Of course, it has continued to maintain its rhetoric on the challenges posed by the Jewish-Israeli state and the predicament of the foreign occupation of Jerusalem while simultaneously underscoring its commitment towards establishing an Islamic state on the holy land of historic Palestine. As a crucial part of this rhetoric, Fatah and the secular opposition continue to be painted as key obstacles to the goals of Palestinian liberation and a nation-state, which are seen as unachievable without the re-Islamization of Palestinian society. At the same time, while Hamas can justify, to some extent, the use of violent tactics in its intense competition with Fatah, it can never legitimately use suicide attacks against any internal rivals as this violates the very basis of how militant heroic martyrdom is constructed and enacted within the Palestinian socio-political cultural setting. All these factors, combined with Hamas's post-electoral shift in focus away from its external rival towards its internal rivals, are essentially what have made suicide bombings redundant in the Israeli–Palestinian landscape of conflict.

It must be said that Hamas's violent takeover of Gaza in 2007 has effectively changed the face of the Palestinian national struggle and cemented the traditional West Bank-Gaza divide like never before. Hamas, on its part, has managed to maintain a semblance of legitimacy as a national movement fighting for a Palestinian state by following a policy of controlled violence towards Israel. However, it is both too inward-looking and under too much pressure to continue using violent tactics like suicide attacks against the Israeli state. Indeed, Hamas is keen to avoid any violent action that may trigger another Israeli ground assault in the Gaza Strip as this could potentially end its rule over the territory. As such its limited attack policy towards Israel is aimed more at maintaining a façade of credible resistance rather than posing any real challenge to the Israeli state. Abu Mazen's Fatah, on the other hand, is completely passive. It is not only heavily dependent upon international support but also in such an advanced state of decay that military

resistance against the Israeli state is no longer even a realistic option for the group. The political resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict has also stagnated as Palestinian national leadership remains divided and much more interested in maintaining power over the fragmented territories of Gaza and the West Bank. Israel, on its part, continues to stall while simultaneously flouting agreements for a moratorium on the construction of illegal settlements and demolishing Palestinian homes. It is obvious that Palestinian reconciliation is crucial, for without it, not only will the Palestinian national movement remain in shambles, but the siege on Gaza will continue and peace with Israel will remain as illusive as ever. Yet, neither Hamas nor Fatah will relinquish their exclusive holds on power so easily. Hamas is well aware of the strategic importance of Gaza in terms of a peace process that has Palestinian statehood as its end-goal.[46] It is, therefore, both able and willing to leverage its grip over Gaza to gain political capital in its intense competition with Fatah for political supremacy. At the same time Hamas recognizes that President Abbas is undoubtedly under greater pressure than its own leaders to engender reconciliation between the two movements and restore political unity to Gaza and the West Bank. However, despite all this political manoeuvring, Hamas will eventually need to move towards reconciliation. This is because without rapprochement not only will the national struggle remain fragmented, weak and ineffective but intra-Palestinian fighting combined with the deepening humanitarian crisis in Gaza will also eventually delegitimize Hamas's other achievements and in the end stymie its chances of long-term political success. It will also, perhaps more crucially, provide the space and conditions enabling other political players to emerge to confront Israel and challenge the ineptitudes of Hamas and Fatah. In short, unless and until the core concerns of a deep-rooted discontent are addressed and resolved, segments of the Palestinian population will continue to use violence, perhaps even suicide violence, with the hope of altering prevailing socio-political realities.

Appendix A

List of interviews

Attributable (on the record) interviews

Saad Abdel-Haq, Humanitarian Affairs Assistant in Nablus, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): 5 January 2005, Jerusalem.

Dr Farid Abu-Dheir, Assistant Professor in Media Studies, An-Najah University, Faculty of Art (Journalism Department): 19 January 2005, Nablus, West Bank.

Vardit Agassi, Organizational Psychologist: 28 December 2004, Jerusalem.

Prof. Hisham A. Ahmad, Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science, Birzeit University: 30 December 2004, Ramallah, West Bank.

Dr Hussien Ahmad, Director, An-Najah National University Center for Opinion Polls and Survey Studies: 19 January 2005, Nablus, West Bank.

Dr Eitan Azani, Deputy Executive Director, the International Policy Insititute for Counter-Terrorism at the Interdisciplinary Centre, Herzilya: 20 January 2005, Herzilya, Israel.

Hafez Barghouti, Editor, *Al-Hayat Al-Jarida:* 1 January 2005, Ramallah, West Bank.

Dr Helga Baumgarten, Professor of Political Science Birzeit University and Head of the DAAD Information Center (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst), East Jerusalem_ 6 January 2005, Birzeit, West Bank.

Dr Anat Berko, Criminologist, the International Policy Insititute for Counter-Terrorism at the Interdisciplinary Centre, Herzilya: 27 December 2004, Ramat ‘Gan, Israel.

Pierre Bessuges, Humanitarian Affairs Officer, Deputy Head of Office and Field Coordination Manager, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): 8 January 2005, Jerusalem.

Dr Musa Budeiri, Research Fellow, Muwatin (the Palestine Institute for the Study of Democracy), Ramallah and Professor of Political Science, Birzeit University: 31 December 2005, East Jerusalem.

Dr Boaz Ganor, Founder and Executive Director of the International Policy Insititute for Counter-Terrorism at the Interdisciplinary Centre, Herzilya: 20 January 2005, Herzilya, Israel.

Aziz Hakimi, Director, the Killid Group: 18 January 2005, Nablus, West Bank.

Dr Rema Hammami, Assistant Professor, Birzeit University: 31 December 2005, East Jerusalem.

Amira Hass, journalist and columnist with *Ha'aretz:* 3 January 2005, Ramallah, West Bank.

Prof. Manuel Hassassian, Executive Vice President, Middle East and International Relations Specialist, Bethlehem University: 4 January 2005, Bethlehem, West Bank.

Dr Norma Hazboun, Associate Professor, Social Science Department, Bethlehem University: 4 January 2004, Bethlehem, West Bank.

Dr Jamil Hilal: 8 January 2005, Ramallah, West Bank.

Dr Islah Jad: 3 January 2005, Ramallah, West Bank.

Dr Ely Karmon, Senior Research Scholar, The International Policy Insititute for Counter-Terrorism at The Interdisciplinary Centre, Herzilya: 21 December 2004, Herzilya, Israel.

Dr Anat Kurz, Jaffee Center: 27 December 2004, Tel Aviv, Israel.

Dr Meir Litvak, the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University: 26 December 2004, Tel Aviv, Israel.

Dr Riad Malki, General Director, Panorama (The Palestinian Centre for the Dissemination of Democracy and Community Development): 1 January 2005, Ramallah, West Bank.

Tamar Malz, Jaffee Center of Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University: 23 December 2004, Tel Aviv, Israel.

Taysir Nasrallah, Palestinian National Council (PNC) member: 18 January 2005, Nablus, West Bank.

Dr Ruven Paz, Director, PRISM (Project for the Research of Islamist Movements): 17 January 2005, Herzilya, Israel.

Andrea Recchia, Humanitarian Affairs Officer, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Jerusalem_ 8 January 2005, Jerusalem.

Erik Schechter, Journalist with *WorldPress* and the *Jerusalem Post:* 10 January 2005, Tel Aviv, Israel.

Dr Yoram Schweitzer, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University: 23 December 2004, Tel Aviv, Israel.

Yasser Ahmad Shalabi, Associate Researcher, The Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS): 2 January 2005, Ramallah, West Bank.

Ziad Abbas Shamrouch, Co-Director, Ibdaa Cultural Center, Dheisheh Refugee Camp, Bethlehem_ 4 January 2005, Dheisheh Refugee Camp, West Bank.

Aram M. Shrif, PR Coordinator, One Voice Palestine: 10 January 2005, Ramallah, West Bank.

Salim Tamari, Director, Institute of Jerusalem Studies: 7 January 2005, Ramallah, West Bank.

Dr Lisa Taraki, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Birzeit University: 1 January 2005, Birzeit, West Bank.

Graham Usher, Palestine correspondent for the *Economist* and *Middle East International:* 31

December 2004, East Jerusalem.

Alaa Yousef, Zajel Youth Exchange Program (Zajel), Public Relations Department, An-Najah National University, Nablus: 19 January 2005, Nablus, West Bank.

Sheikh Hassan Yussuf, Hamas political leader and spokesperson in the West Bank: 3 January 2005, Ramallah, West Bank.

Appendix b

Suicide bombings conducted by Hamas, 1993–2006

Date	Target and location	No. of bombers	No. of victims		Name of the bomber	Additional information
			Killed	Injured		
1993						
16 Apr.	Military personnel/Mekhola	1	2	5	–	Car bomb
12 Sept.	–	1	0	2	Aymen Attallah	–
14 Sept.	–	1	0	0	–	–
26 Sept.	–	1	0	0	Ashraf Mahadi	–
4 Oct.	–	1	0	0	Suleyman Zadan	–
1994						
06 Apr.	–/Afula	1	8	44	Raed Abdullah Zakama	QB claimed responsibility
13 Apr.	Bus Stop/Hadera	1	5	30	Amar Amama	QB claimed responsibility
19 Oct.	Bus/Tel Aviv	1	22	46	Hassan Abd al-Rahman al-Suway	Bus No. 5 exploded on Dizengoff Street; one Dutch citizen was killed
25 Dec.	Bus stop/Jerusalem	1	0	13	Ayman Kamil Radi	The bomber was a Palestinian policeman affiliated with Hamas
1995						
25 Jun.	–/–	1	0	3	Muawiya Ahmed Roka	–
24 Jul.	Bus/Ramat Gan	1	6	31	Labib Anwar Azem	A ‘Dan Cooperative’ bus which exploded at the ‘Elite’ intersection

21 Aug.	Bus/Jerusalem	1	4	100	Sufian Sbeih Jabarin	–
1996						
25 Feb.	Bus/Jerusalem	1	26	80	Majdi Abu Wardeh	Claimed by the Squads of the New Disciples of Martyr Yahya ‘Ayyash’
25 Feb.	Bus stop/Askelon	1	1	0	Ibrahim Sarahneh	Sgt Hofit Ayyash killed at hitchhiking post
03 Mar.	Bus/Jerusalem	1	19	6	Ra'id Shamubi	–
1998						
21 Mar.	Coffee shop/Tel Aviv	1	3	48	Musa Ghneimat	–
30 Jul.	Market-place/Jerusalem	2	16	178	Mouaya Jarara and Bashar Zoualha	Attack at Mahane Yehuda Market
04 Sept.	Shopping Centre/Jerusalem	3	8	200	Tawfik Yassin and Yusef Shouli; third bomber unknown	Attack at Ben Yehuda Pedestrian Mall
1998						
29 Oct.	Bus/Gush Khatif, Gaza	1	1	8	Shuib Timraz	–
2000						
30 Oct.	Restaurant/Jerusalem	1	15	130	–	Attack at Sbarro Pizzeria
2001						
01 Jan.	Intersec tion/Netanya	1	0	60	Hamed Saleh Abu Hejleh	Car bomb
04 Mar.	Market/Netanya	1	3	50	Ahmed Omar ‘Alayyan	–
27 Mar.	Bus/Jerusalem	1	1	27	Dia'a Mohammed Hussein al-Tawill	–
28 Mar.	Bus Stop/Neve Yamin	1	3	4	Fadi Attalah Yousef ‘Amer	–

22 Apr.	Bus stop/Kfar Sava	1	1	60	Omar Salem Abu ‘Ateiwy	–
29 Apr.	Bus/near Nablus	1	0	0	Jamal Abdel-Ghani Nasser	Car bomb – exploded near a bus
18 May.	Shopping centre/Netanya	1	6	100	Mahmoud Ahmad Mannash	Attack at the entrance to the HaSharon Shopping Mall
01 Jun.	Club/Tel Aviv	1	20	120	Sa'ed al-Hotary	Hamas and PIJ joint operation at the Dolphinarium night club
22 Jun.	Military personnel/Dugit, Gaza	1	2	0	Ismail al-Masoubi	Car bomb
10 Jul.	–	1	0	0	Nafez Ayesh al-Nad'ar	–
04 Aug.	Bus/Jordan Valley	1	0	0	–	The bomber was disabled by two soldiers who were on the bus
08 Aug.	Military personnel/B'kaot	1	0	1	–	Car bomb
09 Aug.	Restaurant/Jerusalem	1	15	130	Ezzedin Ahmad al-Masri	Hamas and PIJ joint attack at Sbarro Pizzeria though later investigations seem to suggest this may have been a Hamas's mission alone
04 Sept.	Road/Jerusalem	1	0	13	Ra'ed Nabil al-Barghouti	–
09 Sept.	–/Nahariya	1	3	90	Muhammad al-Habashi	Attack near train station
08 Nov.	–/–	1	0	2	–	–
26 Nov.	–/–	1	0	2	Taysir Ahmed Ajrami	–
01 Dec.	Pedestrian Mall/Jersualem	2	11	188	Osama Mohammed Abed Baher and Mohammed Nabil Jamil	The two different bombs were detonated at different points along the mall at the end of Jewish Sabbath. A car bomb

					Abu Halabiyeh	also exploded 40 metres away approx. 20 minutes later and seemed to be aimed at the rescuers, though no one was hurt
02 Dec.	Bus/Haifa	1	15	60	Malier Habashi	Attack at Halissa, known for peaceful co-existence between Jews and Arab
2002						
09 Mar.	Restaurant/Jerusalem	1	11	54	Fouad Ismail al-Hourani	Attack at Moments Cafe
27 Mar.	Hotel/Netanya	1	29	150	Abed al-Basat Muhammad Ouda	Passover bombing at the Park hotel dining room
31 Mar.	Restaurant/Haifa	1	15	40	Sh'hadi al-Tubas	–
10 Apr.	Bus/Yagur Junction	1	8	22	Ayman Abu Haijah	Haijah was from Jenin and carried an IDF bag and wore fatigues
07 May	Entertainment facility/Rishon Letzion	1	16	60	–	Attack in a billiards hall called the Sheffield Club
19 May	Market place/Netanya	1	3	59	Osama Boshkar	Boshkar was disguised as a solider
18 Jun.	Bus/Jerusalem	1	20	52	Muhammad Hazza al-Ghoul	Attack at the Patt Intersection
4 Aug.	Bus/Meron Junction	1	10	40	Jihad Walid Hamada	–
19 Sept.	Bus/Tel Aviv	1	6	59	–	–
10 Oct.	Bus/Ramat Gan	1	1	16	Rafik Hamad	Attack at the Bar Ilan Junction. Bomber was pinned to the ground and failed to enter the bus
27 Oct.	–	1	3	20	Muhmaamed Kazid al-Bastami	–
21 Nov.	Bus/Jerusalem	1	11	50	Nael Abu Hilail	–
2003						

19 Feb.	–/–	1	0	0	Karim Batron	–
29 Apr.	–/–	2	3	60	A sif Mohammed Hanifa and Omar Khan Sharif	A joint attack conducted by Hamas and Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade
17 May	–/–	1	2	0	Fuad Qaswasmeh	–
18 May	–/–	1	7	20	Bassam Takruri	–
18 May	–/–	1	0	0	Abdel-Fatah Ja'abari	–
19 May	–/–	1	0	3	Shadi Sleyman al-Nabaheen	–
11 Jun.	–/–	1	17	100	Abd el Muti Shabana	–
12 Aug.	–/–	1	1	3	Khamis Ghazi Gerwan	–
19 Aug.	–/–	1	20	128	Raed Abdel-Hamid Masq	Joint attack by PIJ and Hamas
09 Sept.	–/–	1	8	15	Iyhab Abu Salim	–
09 Sept.	–/–	1	7	40	Ramez Abu Salim	–
2004						
14 Jan.	–/–	1	4	12	Reem al-Riyashi	Hamas's first female suicide bomber
06 Mar.	–/–	2	0	0	–	Joint attack by PIJ and Hamas
13 Mar.	–/–	2	10	18	Nabil Ibrahim Masoud and Muhammad Zahil Salem	Joint attack by Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade and Hamas
17 Apr.	–/–	1	1	3	Fadi al-Amoudi	Joint attack by Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade and Hamas
31 Aug.	–/–	2	16	100	Aluned Qawasmeh and Nassim Subhi Jabari	–
2005						

18 Jan. **2006**	–/–		1	1	7	Omar Tabash	–
23 Nov.	–/–						

A note on sources: the primary limitation of this research was the quality of the sources used. First, empirically suicide attacks are recorded in various databases without adequate distinctions being made between successful operations in which the target was achieved and the bomber died during execution, and operations which failed either due to intervention by Israeli counter-terrorism agencies or as a result of errors made by the bomber at the time of executing the mission. A third category of failed missions that are not distinguishable from most databases are those that failed due to 'citizen'/'civilian' intervention at the time of execution. Bystander intervention in Israel characteristically tends to either limit casualties or result in the complete failure of the suicide mission. In addition, different databases used different standards for categorizing suicide operations. The Israeli Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) database, for example, tends to use the category of 'suicide bomber' (as opposed to 'suicide mission') in a very narrow sense and to record incidents of suicidal violence where the perpetrator was killed as a direct result of conducting the operations as opposed to his/her death being caused by other external sources. Yet at the same time certain internal inconsistencies can be located in the ICT database, for example, attacks conducted by vehicles carrying explosives are sometimes categorized as 'suicide bombings' and at other times as 'car bombings'. A final drawback of using statistics from databases is that none of the existing databases is complete. In fact, Luca Ricolfi believes that even the most complete databases (a category in which he includes the ICT) do not record all known incidents of suicide attacks but only about 70 per cent of them.[1]

This work circumvented some of these inconsistencies by adopting a series of measures. First, I used ICT as my main source when constructing this list of Hamas attacks between 1993 and 2006. This is primarily because the ICT was remarkably precise in categorizing a suicide bombing as an attack in which the perpetrator kills, injures and dies as a direct result of conducting the mission. This approach excluded all categories of failed missions and consequently worked from a more accurate data set. It also circumvented internal database inconsistencies to a large degree by categorizing all bombings in which an individual delivered the explosives, either in a vehicle or in the form of a suicide belt, as a suicide mission. The incomplete character of the database was also mitigated to some degree by adding to it from three additional sources: academic works (included only if two or more sources referred to a particular attack); news sources (again included after verifying that two or more sources reported the attack); and from the data compiled by Mohammed Hafez.[2] Hafez's compilation was

favoured over any other source because it professed to utilize the ICT as a key source and thereby applied the same standards. This enhanced consistencies between the two data sources. Yet despite taking these measures this work is fully aware that the compiled data set on suicide bombings in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from 1993–2006 is not wholly accurate. However, it is believed that the data used has been made as internally consistent as possible. Moreover, while the data set may be incomplete this work believes that it is still sufficient to illustrate the broad trends in the suicide bombing campaigns conducted by Hamas from 1993 to 2006.

Glossary

Al-bayanāt
: leaflets and communiqués

Al-Isra' wal-Miraj
: the site of the Prophet Muhammad's ascension to heaven, i.e. the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem

Al-Quds
: Jerusalem

Al-sawa' id al-ramiya
: Hamas' strike groups; literally translates as 'shooting arms'

Amaliyat istish'hadiyya
: martyrdom operation

A'yan
: city notables of the early twentieth century

Caliph(ate)
: a successor to the Prophet Muhammad (the institution of Islamic government after Muhammad)

Dar al-harb
: realm or abode of war

Dar al-Islam
: realm or abode of peace

Da'wa
: call to Islam; preaching

Fard Ayn
: individual obligation

Fard Kifaya
: collective obligation

Fatwa
: a religious decree issued by a religious scholar

Fedayeen
: revolutionary guerrilla groups based on the ideology of self-sacrifice

Fellah/Fellahin
: peasant/peasantry

Fida'i
: the revolutionary

Hadith
: commentary on Prophet Muhammad's dictums

Halal
: allowed by Qur'anic law; sanctified

Haram
: forbidden by Qur'anic law

Hashishiyun
: an eleventh and twelfth century Persian Shi'ia sect who were renowned assassins (also

known as Ismaili–Nazaris)

Hijra
: the emigration of the Prophet and his followers from Mecca to Medina following persecution

Hudna
: unilateral ceasefire

Ijtihad
: the tradition of interpreting Islamic religious texts

Ikhwan
: brethren

Intihar
: suicide, which is *haram*

Isra
: the night journey of the Prophet

Istish'had/istish'hadi(yyin)
: martyrdom/martyrs who sacrifice their lives in jihad, generally refers to suicide bombers/bombings in contemporary terminology

Jahiliyya
: originally referred to the darkness and unrest of total pagan ignorance in the pre-Islamic era. In modern times it is used to characterize all societies which are not genuinely Islamic

Jihad
: traditionally defined as both a holy and just war; literally internal striving on the path of God

Kata'ib ‘izz al-din al-qassam
: Battalions of ‘Izz al-Din al-Qassam, Hamas’ formal military wing

Mahr
: bride-price

Mawwal
: the chanted introduction to a song/anthem

Miraj
: the heavens; the Prophet's ascent to the heavens

Mithaq
: covenant (in this work Hamas's Covenant)

Mufti
: Muslim legislator

Mujahidah
: struggle for the sake of the Lord

Mujahid/Mujahidin(un)
: a warrior on the path of God; fighter(s) of the jihad

Mullah
: a local religious leader

Murabit(un)
: Muslim settler(s) of the frontier

(al-)Nakba
: the defeat; literally ‘the catastrophe’, a term which refers to the 1948–1949 war and largescale expulsion of the Palestinians

(al-)Naksa
: literally ‘the setback’; the term refers to the defeat of 1967

Qibla
: the direction to face during prayer

Sabr
: patience

Shabb/Shabab
: literally ‘young men’ or ‘guys’; the term historically signifies uprooted peasants and poorer urban strata who participated in resistance activity

Shahada
: the affirmation of the faith

Shahadat
: martyrdom

Shahid/shaheed shuhada
: martyr, often a non-combatant or civilian casualty in contemporary terminology and used as a counterpoint to *istish'had*

Shari'a
: Islamic law

Shatat
: the dispersal of the Palestinian population following the 1948 establishment of the Israeli state and the First Arab-Israeli War

Shi'arat
: wall graffiti

Shi'ia
: the followers of Ali; the minority sect in Islam

Sumud
: steadfastness

Sunna/h
: Sayings and actions of the Prophet

Sunni
: the followers of Sunnah who accepted the caliphate of Abu Bakr who was chosen by consensus; the majority sect in Islam

Tabligh
: education

Tafjirat intihariyya
: suicide operation

Tahdiya
: ceasefire

Ulama
: scholars or people trained in the religious sciences

Umma
: the Muslim community

Waqf
: a religious endowment

Notes

1 Introductory remarks

1. Notable exceptions to this are, of course, Mohammed Hafez's work that looks at all three levels of analysis and Assaf Moghadam's work that looks at the individual and organizational levels. However, both of these works have their limitations as will be outlined in Chapter 2. See Hafez (2006a, 2006b); Moghadam (2003).
2. Lewis (1967); Hodgson (1955); Bartlett (2001).
3. Salisbury (2004).
4. Hill (2005).
5. Ohnuki-Tierney (2002); Axell and Kase (2002); Naito (1989); Inoguchi and Nakajima (1960).
6. Benedict (1946).
7. See for example Kramer (1990); Jaber (1997); Saad-Ghorayeb (2002); Harik (2005).
8. For more on the contagion effects of suicide bombing see Crenshaw (1990b).
9. In attempting to avoid a normative stance where possible this work eschews the pejorative term 'suicide terrorism' in favour of suicide bombing(s)/attack(s)/operation(s). Occasionally, the term 'martyrdom operation' is also used in this work to describe these attacks, especially when approaching the phenomenon from a specifically Palestinian perspective. Using the expression 'martyrdom operation' in lieu of 'suicide operation' deliberately acknowledges and references the deep cultural resonance of both the term and the act in Palestinian society.
10. Schweitzer (2001).
11. Ganor (2001: 134).
12. Pape (2006).
13. International Crisis Group (2 April 2003).

Rationality, nationalism and political Islam

1. T.E. Lawrence (1929) 'Guerrilla', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 14th edn.
2. See for example Pape (2006); Shay (2004); Hoffmann and McCormick (2004); Moghadam (2003); Pape (2003).
3. See for instance Berko and Erez (2005); Atran (2003).
4. Bloom (2005, 2004a); Moghadam (2003); Pape (2003).

5. See for example Bloom (2005); Moghadam (2003); Ganor (2001); Kimhi and Even (2004); Post *et al*. (2003).
6. See for example Argo (2004, 2006).
7. Personal interview with Dr H. Ahmad, Head of the An-Najah National University Center for Opinion Polls and Survey Studies, 19 January 2005, Nablus, The West Bank.
8. See for example Hafez (2006a); Khosrokhavar (2005); Argo (2004); Krueger and Maleckova (2002).
9. Hafez (2006a: 76).
10. Hafez states this as an explicit aim of his work. Argo and Khosrokhavar while not stating it so obviously also focus very clearly on symbolic dimensions that they treat as unrelated to the instrumental goals of the organization.
11. Hafez (2006a: 60).
12. Hafez, for instance, sees recent innovations in the rational actor model that incorporate non-material, normative ends as unconvincing and unable to provide an explanation for why an individual would accept the role of a martyr. However, while he underscores the importance of individual faith and cultural moorings in his analysis he is not only unable to delink the *political use of religion* from *religion,* but also unable to see that the goal of 'altruistic martyrdom' can, in fact, *extend* well beyond the material desire of financial rewards. In other words, an altruistic martyr can willingly give up his/her life for the survival of his/her nation and community – a goal that provides legitimate grounds for waging a jihad where death would be martyrdom. Given that the goals of altruistic martyrdom extend beyond material gains, Hafez's categories of the 'duped rational martyr' and the 'subconscious rational martyr' also emerge as unconvincing and problematic. See Hafez (2006a).
13. While multi-causal and multi-level approaches have been adopted previously these works still inevitably tend to privilege one level over the other. Hafez, for instance, associates organizational motivation with instrumental rationality and individual motivations with symbolic/expressive rationality alone.
14. Keen (1997: 68). See also Keen (2002).
15. Blok (2001: 104).
16. Blok notes that as long as violence is the domain of the state it is never studied in rational-irrational terms – all state violence is rational because the state corresponds to rationality and order. However, the moment violence is practised by a non-state or sub-state actor not only does the question of rationality and irrationality arise but also the notion of imminent disorder.
17. Blok (2001); Indermaur (1996).
18. Pfhol (1985).

19. Schröder and Schmidt (2001: 3).
20. Schröder and Schmidt (2001). See also Addison (2002).
21. Blok (2001: 30). See also Indermaur (1996); Schröder and Schmidt (2001).
22. See Durkheim (1990).
23. See Durkheim's concept of ‘collective effervescence’ in Durkheim (1990).
24. Ruggiero (2006: 54).
25. Bauman (2007) especially ‘Utopia in the Age of Uncertainty’.
26. Ruggiero (2006: 109); Mead (1959, 1967).
27. Ruggiero (2006: 110).
28. Personal interview with Dr R. Malki, General Director of Panorama (The Palestinian Center for the Dissemination of Democracy and Community Development), Ramallah, 1 January 2005; Personal ‘off-the-record’ interview with Israeli psychologist and former Shayetet naval commando, 9 January 2005.
29. Reuter (2004); Atran (2003).
30. Hoffman and McCormick (2004).
31. Pape (2003).
32. Mishal and Sela (2000, 2002).
33. Kydd and Walter (2002).
34. Figueiredo and Weingast (2001).
35. Bloom (2004a, 2005).
36. Bloom (2005: 19).
37. Portugali (1993: 36).
38. Portugali (1993).
39. Smith (1991: 14).
40. Schulz (1999: 6).
41. Carr (2001).
42. Eriksen (1993).
43. Schulz (1999: 6). See also Anderson (1991); Smith (1979); Smith and Hutchinson (1994).
44. This work conceptualizes actor identity not as pre-given but developed, sustained or transformed in processes of interaction. The term itself refers to ‘images of individuality and distinctiveness (“selfhood”) held and projected by an actor and formed (and modified over time) through relations with significant “others”. Thus the term (by convention) references mutually constructed and evolving images of self and other.’ Nations both construct and project collective identities. Identities have two basic forms, i.e. they can be ‘intrinsic to an actor (at least relative to a given social structure) and/or relationally defined within a social structure’. Identities that are intrinsic to an actor are constituted exogenously

to interaction even though they can be transformed, developed or sustained by the process of interaction. However, identities that are relationally defined (also referred to as roles) are specially constructed by interaction. What is significant is that identity is a prescriptive representation of actors *themselves* as well as an account of their relationships with each other. As such identity serves to regulate actor behaviour, motivation and character (Jepperson *et al.* 1996: 56). See also Wendt (1992, 1994, 1996, 1999).

45. Bauman (1995).
46. Smith (1989). See also Smith (1986).
47. See Balibar (1990); Billig (1995); Brubaker (1996, 1998).
48. There is debate whether only full statehood engenders political sovereignty or if there are exceptions. E. Gellner suggests the former in *Nations and Nationalisms* (Gellner 1983), while David Miller is a proponent of the latter as evidenced in *On Nationality* (Miller 1995). This work aligns itself with Miller's views.
49. Schulz (1999: 2); Khalidi (1997: 145).
50. See for example Peter (1984); Porath (1974).
51. See for example Khalidi (1971); Frangi (1983); Muslih (1988); Kayyali (1978).
52. This is the same stance as Schulz (1999).
53. Khalidi (1971) especially Chapter 7; Schulz (1999).
54. Schulz (1999: 4–9). Despite the existence of multiple nationalisms Schulz also identifies homogenization as the primary aim of nationalism as this generates a common collective identity. Hence the attempt to create a common identity remains a constant aim of nationalism irrespective of temporal and spatial locations of the same. Concurrently, the process of homogenization requires a dominant political elite, which serves to implement it and which may change over time. These political elite must be legitimized by the population and as such the ideology which is used by these political elite to integrate a population must be acceptable to a majority of the same. Hence, Schulz combines Gellner's conception of the ‘homogenization of culture’ with Paul R. Brass's ‘instrumentalism’. See Gellner (1983) and Brass (1991). See also Özkirimli (2000).
55. Quandt *et al*. (1973: 14).
56. The *a'yan* came into being in the nineteenth century and remained dominant until about the 1930s (Johnson 1982: 9).
57. The British rule over Palestine was established in 1918 and initially commenced as a military administration over the area east and west of the River Jordan. In 1922, and after the Middle East was divided between France and Great Britain at the San Remo Conference of 1920, Palestine became a British Mandate. When the British Mandate was formally approved in 1922, the area east of the River Jordan was separated from it and established as

Trans-Jordan (Khalidi 1992b).

58. Khalidi (1988).
59. Quandt *et al*. (1973: 14, 17).
60. Schulz (1999: 26).
61. The *shabab* were young men 'who in the social context of land dispossession, Jewish immigration, British rule and incorporation into the world economy took on the connotation of men who were no longer bound by family and clan ties' (Schulz 1999: 27).
62. Swedenberg (1988).
63. Literally: a warrior struggling or fighting on the path of God's holy war (jihad).
64. See Schulz (1999: 29); Kimmerling and Migdal (1993: 123).
65. For a powerful account of the Palestinian dispersal experience see Sayigh (1979).
66. Sayigh (1997: 35).
67. The term *fida'i* over time has come to refer to the guerrilla or combatant and its 'root carries the semantic content of "redemption" or "self-sacrifice" in a cause'. See Johnson (1982: 85).
68. The defeat in the 1967 war resulted in the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem. See Rubenberg (2003).
69. Norms describe 'collective expectations' for proper behaviour of actors with a given identity. In some situations norms operate like rules that define the identity of an actor this having 'constitutive effects' that specify what actions will cause relevant others to recognize a particular identity. In other situations norms operate as standards that specify the proper enactment of an already defined identity. In such instances norms have 'regulative' effects that specify standards of proper behaviour. Norms thus either define (or constitute) identities or prescribe (or regulate) behaviour, or they do both. Norms can also be evaluative, in that they place emphasis upon questions of morality, or practical, in that they focus on 'commonly accepted notions of "best solutions" ' for any given situation. Because militant heroic martyrdom operates simultaneously as a constitutive, regulatory, evaluative and practical norm, it wields enormous power in the development and transformation of Palestinian social reality. This is in line with the view that norms can be placed on a continuum of strength, running between weak and strong, in terms of their causal effects. See Katzenstein (1996: 5, 54) and Jepperson *et al*. (1996: 55).
70. Rubenberg (2003: 23).
71. Rubenberg (2003: 24).
72. For discussions of Islamism versus Muslim politics and other terminology see for example Takeyh and Gvosdev (2004); Tibi (1998); Beinin and Stork (1997).
73. Shadid (2001).

74. A considerable rift has developed within the Islamist movement between the revolutionaries and the 'neo-fundamentalist' over this idea of the Muslim duty to 'excommunicate' *(takfir)* apostate sovereigns and adopt violent action (revolution and 'terrorism'). See Roy (1996: 36).
75. Esposito (1999). See also Esposito and Burgat (2003); Tibi (1983); Dessouki (1982).
76. Milton-Edwards (1996: 4).
77. Milton-Edwards (1996: 4).
78. Milton-Edwards (1996: 22).
79. Milton-Edwards (1996: 22).
80. Milton-Edwards (1996).
81. Milton-Edwards (1996: 117).
82. Zaman (2002).
83. It must be noted that there are a multitude of other disagreements *within* each sect as well. While this work acknowledges these debates, it is beyond its scope to address them in any depth.
84. Zatawi (2001: 110).
85. For a full delineation of Shi'ia and Sunni conceptions of *dar al-islam* and *dar al-harb* see for example Kelsay (1993) and Bonney (2004).
86. Kelsay (1993: 34).
87. Hashmi (2002: 205).
88. See for example Khadduri (1955).
89. Esposito (1999: 39).
90. The categorizations may be understood as follows. The classical view is represented by the Qur'an, Sunna, *hadith* and texts of the medieval scholars and jurists. In contemporary times, the conformists, better known as the modernists, represent the traditional Muslim establishment of the *ulama* often accused of practising an obscure and passive Islam. There are also reformers in the *ulama* who may be credited for various reinterpretations including the development of the concept of a purely defensive jihad. In contrast the political Islamists, also referred to as fundamentalists in contemporary literature, follow a more militant interpretation of the Qur'an and see themselves in opposition to the status quo powers. They consider themselves to be vanguards of the righteous and as preparing the way for the establishment of a just Islamic order by the elimination of *jahili* values in their societies. The revolutionary branch of political Islam believes that Islamization is possible through the seizure of power, legally or violently. The reformist branch of political Islam, referred to as neo-fundamentalism, believes that the Islamic state can only be achieved through a long-term, incremental process of Islamization via social action and education.

See for example Hashmi (2002); Takeyh and Gvosdev (2004); Kelsay (1993); Roy (1996).

91. Hashmi (2002: 208).
92. As mentioned earlier Hamas sees the short-term objective of any Palestinian state in West Bank and Gaza in purely pragmatic terms, i.e. as nothing more than a pause in its long-term jihad of establishing a Palestinian Islamic state in all of *historic* Palestine. This state would effectively replace Israel and regain all territories of the Islamic *waqf* of Palestine for future Muslim generations.
93. Hashmi (2002: 210).

3 A brief political history of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict

1. Baja was a 14-year-old girl under house arrest in her home in the West Bank at the time this statement was made and was shortly to be imprisoned for 14 months for throwing stones at an Israeli bus. As quoted by MacDonald (1991: 87).
2. Quigley (2005: 3).
3. Bergman (2003: 7).
4. Bergman (2003: 7). Bergman identifies five *aliyot:* the first from 1882–1903; the second from 1904–1914; the third from 1919–1923; the fourth from 1924–1926; and the fifth from 1932–1939.
5. See for example Mandel (1976); Hadawi (1988); Sayigh (1979).
6. Quigley (2005: 4).
7. Khalidi (1988: 214, 216–17).
8. Avneri (1982: 110–14).
9. Quigley (2005: 6).
10. See for example Reinharz (1992).
11. Bergman (2003: 16–18).
12. See for example Beinin and Hajjar (2006).
13. Sayigh (1997: 1–2). See also Masalha (1992); Morris (2003); Beinin (2005).
14. Sayigh (1997: 2).
15. Quigley (2005: 27). For a comprehensive study on the state of Arab resistance and leadership in the decade after the Great Revolt see Khalaf (1991).
16. Sayigh (1997: 3). See also Bell (1979).
17. See for example Flapan (1987: 32); Smith (2004) especially Chapter 5.
18. Beinin and Hajjar (2006: 5).
19. Sayigh (1997: 3). See also Cohen (1982); Tamari (1999); Khalidi (1992a).
20. Sayigh (1997: 3).

21. Smith (1997: 196–200); Sayigh (1997: 3–4).
22. Quigley (2005: 103–10); Bergman (2003: 70–3).
23. Sayigh (1997: 25).
24. Beinin and Hajjar (2006: 6).
25. Quigley (2005: 154).
26. Beinin and Hajjar (2006: 6).
27. Parker (1992: 178).
28. See for example Quigley (2005); Parker (1992); Gera (1992); Kutulus (2007); Gat (2004).
29. Hadawi (1989: 245).
30. See for example Yaniv (1988); Peretz (1988).
31. Smith (2004: 298–9).
32. For a comprehensive summary of the October 1973 war see Dupuy (1978).
33. Beinin and Hajjar (2006: 9).
34. Hadawi (1989: 279).
35. Smith (2004: 370). For a comprehensive account of the massacres see al-Hout (2004).
36. Also referred to in some texts as the Unified National Command (UNC).
37. Rubenberg (2003: 32). See also Stein (1991); Abu-Lughod (1990).
38. Also note that the PFLP was established in 1967 but did not join the PLO until 1970. It was for a long time the second largest group in the PLO and posed a direct challenge to Fatah. However, the biggest issue with the PFLP was infighting. DFLP was formed as one of its offshoots in 1969. PFLP's main ideology involved the depiction of Palestine as part of Arab unity. DFLP on the other hand was more territorial in its conception of Palestine.
39. Beinin and Hajjar (2006: 9).
40. O'Neil (1991: 37).
41. See for example Sayigh (1997: 607–38).
42. While it is beyond the scope of this work to trace in detail the impact that the fall of the Soviet Union and the emergence of a unipolar world had on the Middle East peace process, suffice it to state that the absence of Soviet power and interest is clearly seen in the expanded influence of the United States in the region.
43. Quandt (2005a); Markovsky (2003).
44. Beinin (1999).
45. Beinin (1999); Cook (2003); Hanieh and Cook (2003).
46. Beinin (1999).
47. Hanieh and Cook (2003).
48. Beinin and Hajjar (2006: 11); Beinin (2000).
49. Hammami and Tamari (2000).

50. Johnson and Kuttab (2001: 24).
51. Esposito (2005); Usher (2003).
52. Sayigh (1997: 71); Cobban (1984).
53. See for example Hourani (1991); Sela (1998).
54. Sayigh (1997: 87–91).
55. Alexander (2003: 1). See also Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe (2002).
56. Kurz (2005: 35–7).
57. Sayigh (1997: 110–39).
58. Sayigh (1992: 245).
59. Sayigh (1992).
60. Rubenberg (2003: 164–7). See also Sharabi (1970).
61. Kurz (2005: 55); Amos (1980: 56–60). See also Wallach and Wallach (1990).
62. Sayigh (1997: 207).
63. Kurz (2005: 59).
64. Alexander (2003: 2).
65. Alexander (2003). See also Yodfat and Arnon-Ohanna (1981).
66. Sayigh (1997: 323).
67. See for example Gresh (1988: 141).
68. Kurz (2005: 85–91).
69. Alexander (2003: 3).
70. The United National Command (UNC) is identified as the national camp of the uprising as opposed to the religious camp associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, its offshoots Hamas and the Islamic Jihad. The other group in the Islamist camp, i.e. the Islamic Liberation Party, remained completely inactive.
71. See for example Abu-Amr (1993); International Crisis Group (26 January 2004); Mishal and Sela (2000); Ya'ari (1993).
72. Mishal (2003: 575).
73. See for example Gresh (1988); Frangi (1983); Sayigh (1997).
74. For a detailed treatment of the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamic movements in the West Bank and Gaza see for example Milton-Edwards (1996); El-Awaisi (1998); Abu-Amr (1994); Barghouti (1996).
75. For details on differences in the development of the Muslim Brotherhood in the West Bank and Gaza see for example Hroub (2000); Milton-Edwards (1996); Abu-Amr (1994).
76. Interestingly, while these revolutionaries were declared martyrs who would gain paradise, they were always referred to as *fedayeen* (revolutionaries) and never, as during the intifadas, as *mujahidin* (fighters on the path of jihad – i.e. a holy war). This is a significant indicator

of how the Islamic rhetoric evolved over time in the Palestinian territories and reflects the importance of religious motifs and concurrently of political Islam in the Palestinian political landscape. For more details on the history of political Islam and jihad in the Palestinian context see Chapters 2 and 6.

77. For details on the Mujamma' see for example Milton-Edwards (1996) and Mishal and Sela (2000).
78. Sayigh (1997: 630).
79. International Crisis Group (26 January 2004: 6).
80. Mishal and Sela (2000: 14).
81. Mishal (2003: 575).
82. Sayigh (1997: 208).
83. Personal interview, Sheikh H. Yusuf, political spokesperson for Hamas in the West Bank, Ramallah, West Bank, 3 January 2005.
84. Mishal and Rosenthal (2005).
85. Mishal and Rosenthal (2005).
86. Mishal and Rosenthal (2005).
87. Personal interview, Yusuf op. cit. It is also worth noting that Hamas's decision-making structure remains remarkably unclear to date as does the degree of contact which exists between its political, military and social leaders and units. Potential differences also exist between West Bank and Gaza and of course the 'inside' leadership as represented by Ismail Haniya, sworn in as the Prime Minister in March 2006, since Hamas's takeover of Gaza and the 'outside' leadership, most ostensibly headed by Khaled Mishal out of Damascus, Syria.

4 Rationality and the convergence of expressive and instrumental violence

1. The last will of Muhammad Hazza al-Ghoul who was involved in a suicide operation in Jerusalem on 18 June 2002, as quoted in Hafez (2006b: 90).
2. As explained previously, Fatah has consistently represented the dominant faction in the PLO/PA. As such Hamas's policy towards Fatah at any given point also applies to the PLO/PA and vice versa in this analysis.
3. Ma'oz (2004).
4. This notion of suicide missions reflecting a strategy of outbidding was first introduced by M. Bloom in *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (Bloom 2005) and 'Palestinian Suicide Bombings: Public Support, Market Share and Outbidding' (Bloom 2004a). Other scholars worked on the idea of political competition and survival much before the concept

of outbidding was introduced in Bloom's work. See for example Mishal and Sela (2000, 2002).

5. The strategies of controlled violence and negotiated co-existence are introduced and outlined in detail in Mishal and Sela (2000).
6. Mishal and Sela's analysis of the first 30 leaflets issued show that violent directives comprised 30.5 per cent of the total, i.e. violent and non-violent, instruction leaflets 1–10. This figure rose to 40 per cent in leaflets 11–20, and remained at 39.7 per cent in leaflets 21–30 (Mishal and Sela 2000: 61).
7. International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) (2005) (accessed April 2005).
8. The aspect of jihad against the state of Israel is treated in depth in Chapter 6.
9. International Crisis Group (26 January 2004) (accessed 25 October 2005).
10. Yassin's arrest prompted the visit of Hamas activists from the USA, led by Musa Abu Marzuq, who introduced a strict hierarchy into the organization. The WBG was divided into seven and five sub-districts respectively each led by a separate headquarter which coordinated four activities – i.e. security, *da'wa*, political activity, and coordination. The West Bank and Gaza were linked by a coordinating committee composed of three committees – political, military and *da'wa*. However, the Israeli crackdown showed a failure of this horizontal compartmentalization and separation of the military and civilian apparatuses (Mishal and Sela 2000: 58, 64).
11. See for example International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) (2005); Kurz and Tal (1997); Alexander (2002).
12. See Ahmad (1994); Smith (2004); Sayigh (1997).
13. Kydd and Walter (2002).
14. A total of nine other attacks occurred in this period – seven shootings and two knife attacks.
15. Gresh (1988: 446).
16. International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) (2005).
17. Mishal and Sela (2000).
18. Kydd and Walter (2002).
19. See Mishal and Sela (2000).
20. Kydd and Walter (2002: 284).
21. International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) (2005).
22. International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) (2005).
23. International Crisis Group (26 January 2004: 10).
24. Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research (CPRS) (29–31 March 1996) (accessed January 2006).
25. Netanyahu (2001).

26. Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre (JMCC) (March 1996) Public Opinion Poll 14 (accessed April 2006). Also see Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre (JMCC) (August, November and December 1996) Public Opinion Polls 15–18.
27. International Crisis Group (26 January 2004:10).
28. International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) (2005); Mishal and Sela (2000: 79).
29. Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research (CPRS) (8–10 October 1998) Public Opinion Poll 36 (accessed January 2006).
30. Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research (CPRS) (12–14 November 1998) Public Opinion Poll 37 (accessed January 2006).
31. Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research (CPRS) (3–5 June 1999) Public Opinion Poll 41 (accessed January 2006). See also Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre (JMCC) (August 1999) Public Opinion Poll 32 (accessed April 2006).
32. For the full text of Article 242 see United Nations (22 November 1967) (accessed 16 January 2007).
33. Hilal (2006).
34. International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) (2005).
35. The Tanzim is Fatah's armed militia and consists of Fatah's street cadre and elements of the PA's Preventive Security Force. It has undertaken a number of military operations.
36. Hilal (2006). Personal interview with E. Schecter, Worldpress, Tel Aviv: Israel, 15 January 2005.
37. For the full text of the Mitchell Report see BBC News (29 November 2001) (accessed 12 January 2010).
38. Personal interview with R. Malki, General Director of Panorama (The Palestinian Centre for the Dissemination of Democracy and Community Development), Ramallah: West Bank, 1 January 2005.
39. Guardian Unlimited (6 December 2001) (accessed May 2006).
40. Sayigh (2002–2003).
41. Sharon (8 April 2002) (accessed May 2006).
42. Mishal and Sela (2000).
43. See for example Kafala (12 April 2002) (accessed May 2006); BT' Salem (2006) (accessed June 2006).
44. Smith (2004: 505).
45. Smith (2004: 505).
46. See for example Mishal and Sela (2000); Sayigh (2002–2003); Hroub (2004).
47. For details of Hamas's organizational structure see for example Mishal and Rosenthal

(2005).

48. Personal interview with R. Malki, op. cit. and Y. A. Shalabi, Associate Researcher, The Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS), Ramallah: West Bank, 2 January 2005.
49. See Berman (10 December 2006) (accessed June 2006); Malka (2005).
50. Daraghmeh (2004).
51. Malka (2005: 41).
52. The term martyrdom is used in Palestine today to refer to all suicide missions. It derives from the Islamic term '*shuhada*' (the martyrs) who achieve '*shahadat*' (martyrdom) when fighting for his/her country – not necessarily by suicide. There are clear religious connotations to the use of this term and it carries considerable cultural weight in the Palestinian context. It must be pointed out that *shahadat* since the first intifada is much more loosely used and virtually any persons killed by the Israeli Defence Forces now qualify as *shuhada*, even those not actively involved in fighting, such as bystanders caught and killed in cross-fire. Informal discussion with Abu Ali (pseudonym), Ramallah: West Bank, 10 January 2005.
53. In over 50 interviews and discussions that I conducted between December 2004 and January 2005, not one individual criticized suicide bombers. Even the 'pacifists' I spoke to tended to criticize the organizational use of suicide operations because they felt that these attacks negatively impacted the revolution and national struggle. However, suicide bombers tended to be consistently referred to as martyrs and respected for their willingness to sacrifice themselves for Palestinian liberation. In most cases interviewees justified the individual's decision by placing the onus on the conditions of 'Israeli occupation'. More details on the socio-cultural-religious moorings of the narrative of martyrdom and sacrifice are provided in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively.
54. Informal discussion with a group of street level activists of various affiliations, Nablus: West Bank, 19 January 2005.
55. Atran (2003).
56. See for example International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) (2005).
57. Moghadam (2003).
58. Hassan (2001: 38).
59. Informal discussion with Hamas supporter (name withheld), Nablus: West Bank, 16 January 2005. He explained that this assessment of training sessions in the Al-Aqsa intifada was based upon his interactions and conversations with various Hamas members/activist in neighbouring refugee camps.
60. Reuter (2004: 87). See also Argo (2004, 2006) and personal interviews with Y.A. Shalabi,

op. cit. and Prof. H.A. Ahmad, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Birzeit University, Ramallah: West Bank, 30 December 2004.

61. Another Hamas supporter I spoke to in Nablus suggested that an additional reason behind this shortened time lapse between picking the bomber who would execute the mission and the mission itself might be a direct response to the harsh Israeli crackdown that began with the Al-Aqsa intifada.
62. Sharkansky (2003).
63. As quoted in Ahmad (2003: 133).
64. Bloom (2005: 87). This difference between Sarraj and Argo might be based on the inherent differences that exist between a densely populated and pressured Gaza, where Sarraj is based, and the West Bank where the images from the north, especially Nablus and Jenin, have made a huge impact on the population.
65. Argo (2004: 12).
66. Argo (2004: 12). It must be noted that Argo states very clearly that this candidate was not recruited but had volunteered for the mission.
67. Argo (2004: 11).
68. Hafez (2006b: 48).
69. Reuter (2004: 91).
70. See for example Ahmad (2003).
71. For the full text of the will see Hafez (2006b: 90).
72. Argo (2004: 11).
73. Argo (2004: 11).
74. An analysis of available data suggests that at least some of parents are unhappy with their children's choice to participate in a martyrdom operation. However, as Reuter points out, to not support their children's decision would be a double betrayal – of both the children as well as the community for which they sacrificed their lives. As such they remain silent or make a show of pride and support. However, there are also those who wholeheartedly encourage and support the choice of martyrdom.
75. Hafez (2006b: 49).
76. Chehab (2007: 86–7).
77. Argo (2004: 12).
78. N. Hassan, as quoted in Kydd and Walter (2002: 263).
79. Bloom (2005: 90).
80. Bloom (2004a: 74).
81. Ricolfi (2005).
82. Bloom (2004a: 74).

83. See for example: Reuter (2004); Ricolfi (2005); Personal interviews with: A. Kurz, Jaffee Center of Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv: Israel, 27 December 2004; A. Hass, Ramallah: West Bank, 3 January 2005; Ahmad, op. cit.; Y.A. Shalabi, op. cit.
84. Chehab (2007: 88).
85. Chebab (2007: 91–3).
86. Informal discussion with Hamas supporter (name withheld), Nablus: West Bank, 16 January 2005. It must be noted that he had never volunteered for an operation. He also explained how someone he knew had volunteered for a mission but had been rejected because he did not have a criminal record. According to him this meant that Hamas could use him for other military activities or even other aspects of a suicide operation without attracting too much attention from the authorities. However he then almost immediately contradicted himself by stating how this individual would be an ideal bombing candidate as in the absence of a police record he could penetrate far into Israeli territory without being recognized. This is why, he continued to explain, he himself was also a good candidate for a suicide bombing.
87. Ahmad (2003: 126).
88. Informal discussions with students and members of youth movements (Hamas and Fatah) in Nablus, Birzeit and Bethlehem_ West Bank, December 2004-January 2005.
89. Said (2000).
90. Ricolfi (2005).
91. Informal discussion with Abu Ali (2005).
92. Reuter (2004: 108).
93. Krueger and Maleckova (2002).
94. See also Ricolfi (2005); Levitt (2006).
95. Reuter (2004: 108).
96. International Crisis Group interview with Abu Shanab, 5 August 2003, quoted in International Crisis Group (2004).
97. International Crisis Group interview, former Israeli security official, December 2003 (International Crisis Group 2004).
98. International Crisis Group interview, former senior Israeli intelligence official, Ramat Gan: Israel, 5 November 2003 (International Crisis Group 2004).
99. International Crisis Group interview, Ismail Habbash, Palestinian film-maker, Ramallah: West Bank, 4 December 2003 (International Crisis Group 2004).
100. International Crisis Group (2004).

5 Palestinian nationalism, identity and the norm of militant heroic martyrdom

1. As quoted in Oliver and Steinberg (2005: 92).
2. Norms, as explained in Chapter 2, describe 'collective expectations' for proper behaviour of actors with a given identity. In some situations norms operate like rules that define the identity of an actor this having 'constitutive effects' that specify what actions will cause relevant others to recognize a particular identity. In other situations norms operate as standards that specify the proper enactment of an already defined identity. In such instances norms have 'regulative' effects that specify standards of proper behaviour. Norms thus either define (or constitute) identities or prescribe (or regulate) behaviour, or they do both. See Katzenstein (1996: 5, 54) and Jepperson *et al*. (1996: 55).
3. Relevant others in this case are represented by both the Israeli state as well as other (passive) members of the Palestinian collective.
4. The existence of a shared identity implicitly points towards the existence of others or outsiders. These can be positive or negative others. An important relationship exists between identities, negative others and the construction of threats. While this is not to say that those with a shared identity will either define threats in the same way, treat given others outside the group as threats or concur on the means to confront the threat, this does suggest that those with a shared identity are more likely to 'generate a shared definition of the threat'. The fact that there are such differences within shared identities also points implicitly towards both *conflicts* within given identity groups and the existence of *levels* of identities, with multiple processes of interaction *between* levels. In our case, the overarching collective identity would be that of 'Palestinianism', i.e. of being Palestinian. However, within this overarching collective, multiple levels of identity would co-exist and interact. For instance, the identity based in belonging to the West Bank instead of Gaza; the city instead of a refugee camp; of being Muslim; a Hamas supporter and so on. See Barnett (1996: 408). See also Blok's treatment of the 'Narcissism of Minor Differences' (Blok 2001).
5. Sennett (2003: 55).
6. Hamas Leaflet No. 13 dated 7 April 1988 in Mishal and Aharoni (1994).
7. Hamas Leaflet No. 32 dated 25 November 1988 in Mishal and Aharoni (1994).
8. The exceptions to this rule are calls for prayer and fasting when commemorating the death anniversaries of martyrs and for marking important dates on the Islamic calendar.
9. Hamas Leaflet No. 45 dated 27 October 1989 in Mishal and Aharoni (1994).
10. Hamas Leaflet No. 39 dated 5 April 1989 in Mishal and Aharoni (1994).
11. Oliver and Steinberg (2005: 26).
12. See for example Hamas Leaflet No. 2 dated January 1988 in Mishal and Aharoni (1994).
13. Hamas Communiqué dated 1 August 2001 in Alexander (2002). This is a clear reference to the 'three circles' that Hamas believes need to be involved in the liberation of Palestine –

the Palestinians, the Arabs and the Muslims. For details on these three spheres see Article 14 of the Hamas Charter in Hroub (2000).

14. Hamas Leaflet No. 4 dated February 1988 in Mishal and Aharoni (1994).
15. This is in direct contrast to the 'external' leadership of the Fatah. See for example Sayigh (1997) and Khalidi (1997).
16. Za'tar is a popular herb grown in the Palestinian territories and is most commonly consumed with yogurt.
17. Oliver and Steinberg (2005).
18. Davis (2003: 105).
19. Personal interview with Assam (last name withheld), An-Najah University, Nablus: West Bank, 17 January 2005.
20. Personal interview with female student (name withheld), age 21 years, Nablus: West Bank, 17 January 2005.
21. Davis (2003).
22. Leaflet No. 2 dated January 1988 in Mishal and Aharoni (1994).
23. Military Communiqué issued by the Qassam Brigades dated 16 February 2002 in Alexander (2002).
24. Leaflet No. 7 dated 4 March 1988 in Mishal and Aharoni (1994).
25. Reuter (2004: 90).
26. For details on the strategy of *sumud* and its failures see Tamari (1991).
27. Yasser Arafat identified *sumud* as a key element in the Palestinian programme. He stated: 'The most important element in the Palestinian programme is holding on to the land … and not warfare alone. Warfare comes at a different level … The important thing is that you hold on to the land and afterward – combat'. Arafat on *sumud* as quoted in Mishal and Aharoni (1994: 13).
28. Informal discussion with Abu Ali (pseudonym), Ramallah: West Bank, 1 January 2005.
29. Oliver and Steinberg (2005: 74).
30. See Alexander (2002) and Mishal and Aharoni (1994).
31. See for example Military Communiqué issued by the Qassam Brigades dated 4 June 2001 in Alexander (2002).
32. See for example Hamas Political Communiqué dated 24 October 2001 in Alexander (2002).
33. Hamas Leaflet No. 45 dated 21 July 1989 in Mishal and Aharoni (1994).
34. Hamas Leaflet No. 8 dated 13 March 1988 in Mishal and Aharoni (1994).
35. Leaflet No. 14 dated 15 April 1988 in Mishal and Aharoni (1994).
36. Military Communiqué issued by the Qassam Brigades dated 22 March 2001 in Alexander (2002).

37. Hamas Political Communiqué dated 24 October 2001 in Alexander (2002).
38. Hamas Leaflet No. 1 dated January 1988 in Mishal and Aharoni (1994).
39. Hamas Leaflet No. 11 dated 1 April 1988 in Mishal and Aharoni (1994).
40. Hamas Leaflet No. 7 dated 4 March 1988 in Mishal and Aharoni (1994).
41. Oliver and Steinberg (2005: 76).
42. For details on the participation of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1948 and 1967 see for example Sayigh (1997); El-Awaisi (1998); Mishal and Sela (2000).
43. Hamas Leaflet No. 1 dated January 1988 in Mishal and Aharoni (1994).
44. For details see Chapter 3.
45. For details on Hamas's deliberate Islamization of Palestinian nationalism see Chapter 6.
46. Oliver and Steinberg (2005: 91–2).
47. Oliver and Steinberg (2005).
48. Oliver and Steinberg (2005: 59). The lines from song no. 2, side 1 of *Call of Jihad*.
49. Oliver and Steinberg (2005: 93). A *mawwal* (chanted introduction) from a Hamas anthem.
50. Oliver and Steinberg (2005: 105). These words are spoken by Sheikh Hamid al-Beitawi, a Hamas cleric in a video that first depicts Palestinian before calling for martyrdom.
51. Oliver and Steinberg (2005: 98). A line from a song in the Hamas-produced audiocassette, *Islamic Zajel 3*.
52. Schulz (1999: 65).
53. Oliver and Steinberg (2005: 59).
54. Hamas Leaflet No. 1 in Mishal and Aharoni (1994).
55. Hamas Leaflet No. 2 in Mishal and Aharoni (1994).
56. Oliver and Steinberg (2005: 59).
57. Hamas Leaflet No. 1 in Mishal and Aharoni (1994).
58. It must be noted that the successful ejection of Israeli and American forces from Lebanon as a result of the suicide bombings campaign of the 1980s is widely regarded as proof of the effectiveness of this tactic. Within the Palestinian territories Fathi alShiqaqi, the founding leader of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), advocated the use of this tactic against Israel's military superiority as early as the mid-1980s though the first suicide attack did not take place until 1993 and then by the Hamas operative, Tamam Nablusi. Personal interview, A. Kurz, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv: Israel, 27 December 2004.
59. The first Palestinian suicide bombing is believed to have been attempted in August 1988 by the PFLP-GC. See Ricolfi (2005).
60. Personal interview with Y. Schweitzer, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies (JCSS), Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv: Israel, 23 December 2004. For a more theoretical approach on the contagion effects of suicide bombing see for example Crenshaw (1990b); Bloom (2004b,

2005).

61. For more on the contagion characteristics of terrorism see Crenshaw (1990b).
62. Levitt (2006). These are the lyrics of a song from the Hamas audiocassette, 'The Pearl of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs', as quoted in Levitt (2006: 137).
63. Personal interview with M. Litvak, The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv: Israel, 26 December 2004. Personal interview with Prof. M. Hassassian, Executive Vice President and Middle East and International Relations Specialist, Bethlehem University, Bethlehem_ West Bank, 4 January 2005.
64. Ibid. p. 125.
65. Ibid. p. 133.
66. While a number of writers profess this view some well-known ones include for example Atran (2003, 2004b) and Merari (2002).
67. See for example Argo (2004); Hafez (2006a).
68. All interview figures from Argo (2004).
69. Argo (2004: 9).
70. Ricolfi (2005).
71. Argo (2004: 11).
72. Argo (2004: 11).
73. See Bandura (1990).
74. As quoted in Davis (2003: 123).
75. As quoted in Ahmad (2003: 133).
76. Informal discussion with Ala (last name withheld), Nablus: West Bank, 18 January 2005.
77. Discussion with journalist Erik Schechter, Tel Aviv: Israel, 15 January 2005. See also Schechter (2004).
78. Argo (2004: 11).
79. Un-named Palestinian youth quoted in Ahmad (2003: 129).
80. Ahmad (2003).
81. Informal discussion with Ala, op. cit.
82. See leaflets in Mishal and Aharoni (1994).
83. See for example Oliver and Steinberg (2005: 32).
84. I would like to thank Dr Michelle Pace, University of Birmingham, for introducing me to the concept of the positive other in the context of suicide bombings in the Palestinian territories.
85. Davis (2003: 131).
86. Cohen (2005); Khosrokhavar (2005).

87. Zehfuss (2002: 92).
88. This is in line with Wendt's conception that actors already have ‘private, domestically rooted beliefs’. See Wendt (1999: 141).
89. This is not to suggest that modes of non-violent protest in the Palestinian context are devoid of all power. Instead on a spectrum it seems that the Palestinians exercise more power when adopting violent means. This holds for both self-perception and external observation.

6 Political Islam and rhetoric of jihad and martyrdom

1. Mishal and Sela (2000: 29).
2. For a detailed overview of Hasan al-Banna's thoughts see for example Shadid (2001); El-Awaisi (1998).
3. Shadid (2001: 58).
4. Wiktorowicz (2005: 79). In the Egyptian context this implied members of the Muslim community who were then categorized as apostates.
5. Qutb also legitimized this call for jihad by stressing that as rulers in the Muslim world were apostates, and therefore a part of the modern *jahiliyya,* they could be overthrown by having a jihad declared against them. This modern jihad was interpreted as an eternal armed struggle against ‘every obstacle that came … into the way of worshipping God and the implementation of the divine authority on earth, *hakimiya*, and [involved] returning this authority to God [by] taking it away from the rebellious usurpers (Qutb 2005).
6. Of course, one must underscore Hamas's pragmatic tilt which it has demonstrated, time and time, again. Hence, its uncompromising stance regarding negotiations with Israel as part of the peace process is no more than rhetoric used to bolster its overall image. However, when faced with the reality of political negotiations and settlements Hamas has proved that it is as able, and willing, to use the option as its secular Palestinian counterparts, albeit simultaneously using the language of political Islam to explain its decision to do so.
7. Milton-Edwards (1996: 1S1).
8. It must be underscored that these concerns build upon the categories outlined by Milton-Edwards in her analysis of Islamic solutions to the Palestinian situation (Milton-Edwards 1996). Her categories include: the crisis within the Palestinian Muslim community; the Jews as foes; the strategy of holy war; the marriage of Palestinian nationalism and Islam; the creating of an Islamic state; and the challenge posed by the opposition.
9. See for example Litvak (2005); Milton-Edwards (2006a).
10. Litvak (2005).
11. Undated Hamas leaflet from the first intifada in Mishal (1989).

12. Excerpts from The Hamas Charter, Article 2S, August 19SS. For a reproduction of the Charter see Hroub (2000) or Mishal and Sela (2000).
13. Hamas Leaflet No. 16 dated 3 May 1988 in Mishal and Aharoni (1994).
14. Excerpts from The Hamas Charter, Article 22. See Hroub (2000) or Mishal and Sela (2000).
15. See for example Litvak (1996); Nusse (199S); Hroub (2000); Milton-Edwards (1996).
16. Excerpts from The Hamas Charter, Article 6. See Hroub (2000) or Mishal and Sela (2000).
17. Hamas Communiqué dated 1S September 2QQ1 in Alexander (2002).
18. Excerpts from The Hamas Charter, Article 27. See Hroub (2000) or Mishal and Sela (2000).
19. Hamas Communiqué No. 4 dated 1 October 2000 in Alexander (2002).
20. Litvak (2005).
21. Litvak (1996).
22. Excerpts from The Hamas Charter, Article 11. See Hroub (2000) or Mishal and Sela (2000).
23. Excerpts from The Hamas Charter, Article 14. See Hroub (2000) or Mishal and Sela (2000).
24. Hamas Communiqué dated 1 August 2001 in Alexander (2002).
25. Excerpts from The Hamas Charter, Article 12 and 13. See Hroub (2000) or Mishal and Sela (2000).
26. Excerpts from The Hamas Charter, Article 12. See Hroub (2000) or Mishal and Sela (2000).
27. The title of Hamas Leaflet No. 28 dated 18 August 1988. For the full text see Mishal and Aharoni (1994).
28. Excerpts from The Hamas Charter, Articles 13 and 7. See Hroub (2000) or Mishal and Sela (2000).
29. Excerpts from The Hamas Charter, Article 12. See Hroub (2000) or Mishal and Sela (2000).
30. Excerpts from The Hamas Charter, Articles 15 and 3Q. See Hroub (2000) or Mishal and Sela (2000).
31. The Hamas Charter, Article S. See Hroub (2000) or Mishal and Sela (2000).
32. See for example Reuter (2004); Palazzi (20?1); Paz (2001).
33. *Al-Hayat* interview with Rantisi conducted on 25 April 2001 as cited in Reuter (2004: 123).
34. Reuter (2004: 117).
35. All verses as quoted in Alexander (2002) and Mishal and Aharoni (1994).
36. First Hamas Communiqué dated 14 December 1987 in Hroub (2000).
37. Hamas leaflet No. 74 dated 3 May 1991 in Mishal and Aharoni (1994). It is also worth noting the deliberate references to the themes of Palestinian selfhood that were delineated in the previous chapter as well as the references made to the *mujahid* people, steadfastness and sacrifice.
38. Hamas Communiqué dated 24 November 2001 in Alexander (2002).
39. Military Communiqué issued by the Qassam Brigades dated 12 November 2001 in

Alexander (2002).

40. Military Communiqué issued by the Qassam Brigades dated 26 October 2001 in Alexander (2002).
41. Military Communiqué issued by the Qassam Brigades dated 12 November 2001 in Alexander (2002).
42. Milton-Edwards (2006a: 146).
43. Hamas Communiqué dated 21 December 2001 in Alexander (2002).
44. Once again, note the reference to the imagery detailed in Chapter 5 where Palestine is framed as the bride of the martyr.
45. For the full text of the will see Hafez (2006b: 91–2).
46. Hafez (2006b: 90–1).
47. Hafez (2006a: 71).
48. Hafez (2006b: 43).
49. Litvak (2005).
50. Reuter (2004: 91).
51. Hafez (2006a: 73).
52. Hafez (2006a: 71).
53. Hafez (2006a: 73).
54. Hafez (2006b: 44).
55. For the full text of the will see Hafez (2006b: 90).
56. Hafez (2006b: 45).
57. Sharkansky (2003: 58).
58. As an example of the differences between official and private wills and last statements see Hafez (2006b).
59. Israeli Arabic language media prefer the term *amaliyya intihariyya*, i.e. a suicide operation.
60. Reuter (2004: 122).
61. Milton-Edwards (2006a: 145).
62. Mishal and Sela (2000: 76, 211).
63. Reuter (2004: 124).
64. Milton-Edwards (2006a: 145).
65. Reuter (2004: 123).
66. Milton-Edwards (1996: 186).

7 Concluding remarks

1. From the will of suicide bomber, Shadi Sleyman al-Nabaheen, in Hafez (2006b: 90).

2. See for example: International Crisis Group (18 January 2006) (accessed 23 April 2010).
3. The March 2005 Cairo Declaration was signed by both the Palestinian leadership and the representatives of 13 other political organizations, including Hamas. The declaration, which resulted from several months of negotiation mediated by Egypt, committed multiple factions and their armed wings, amongst other things, to observe a *tahdiya*, i.e. a period of unilateral ceasefire, through the end of 2005. It also required the PA to conduct local and municipal elections without any delays. For the full text of the declaration see Palestine Media Center (19 March 2005) (accessed 23 April 2010).
4. Palestine Media Center (19 March 2005) (accessed 23 April 2010).
5. Palestine Media Center (19 March 2005) (accessed 23 April 2010).
6. Palestine Media Center (19 March 2005: 6) (accessed 23 April 2010). It is worth noting that the number of suicide attacks conducted by Hamas dropped sharply in 2005. Therefore, though Hamas conducted five attacks in 2004 it only carried out one in 2005 and the last suicide attack in late 2006.
7. BBC (16 February 2006) (accessed 23 April 2010).
8. See also Singh (2009).
9. Hovdenak (2009).
10. International Crisis Group (28 February 2007) (accessed 3 April 2010).
11. International Crisis Group (13 June 2006) (accessed 3 April 2010).
12. International Crisis Group (28 February 2007: 1).
13. International Crisis Group (28 February 2007).
14. International Crisis Group (25 July 2006) (accessed 3 April 2010). It is worth noting that despite the unilateral ceasefire announced by Palestinian factions in March 2005 Israel had refused to negotiate a reciprocal cessation of hostilities with the result that armed conflict never really came to a stop. Both the PA and Hamas had failed to take effective measures to stop rocket fire into Israel by other Palestinian factions. The *tahdiya* was also rejected by the Popular Resistance Committees, a militia based in the southern Gaza Strip, and PIJ also steadily violated the terms of the ceasefire. As a result, by mid-2006 mutual attacks were an almost daily occurrence, with rockets fired from the Gaza Strip into Israel and the Israelis bombarding Gaza and conducting targeted assassinations in the West Bank. Hamas, which took office in March 2006, was conspicuously absent from this battlefield until mid-June 2006 despite Israel's refusal to release funds into a Hamas-governed WBG. Under pressure and unable to govern, it rejoined the fray when the Israelis killed a senior Hamas leader in Gaza in June that year and progressively stepped up attacks on Israel in the months that followed.
15. International Crisis Group (28 February 2007: 13).

16. International Crisis Group (2 August 2007) (accessed 10 April 2010).
17. BBC (16 June 2007) (accessed 10 January 2010).
18. International Crisis Group (2 August 2007); Brown (2008).
19. International Crisis Group (19 March 2008: 3) (accessed 10 January 2010).
20. International Crisis Group (19 March 2008).
21. International Crisis Group (19 March 2008: 1).
22. International Crisis Group (20 December 2007) (accessed 10 January 2010).
23. BBC (15 August 2009) (accessed 17 August 2009).
24. International Crisis Group (20 December 2007).
25. International Crisis Group (19 March 2008).
26. Malley (2008) (accessed 25 April 2010).
27. International Crisis Group (19 March 2008: 9). See also Milton-Edwards (2008a).
28. Milton-Edwards (2008a: 10).
29. Milton-Edwards (2008a: 9).
30. International Crisis Group (20 December 2007).
31. International Crisis Group (20 December 2007). See also International Crisis Group (11 September 2008) (accessed 24 October 2009).
32. Al Arabiya (2009) (accessed 17 August 2009); Reuters (2008) (accessed 17 August 2009).
33. Avi Issacharoff and Amos Harel (2010) (accessed 25 April 2010).
34. McCarthy (2010) (accessed 23 April 2010).
35. International Crisis Group (5 January 2009) (accessed 24 October 2009); Zuhur (2009).
36. For a comprehensive overview of the sanction-fuelled humanitarian crisis in Gaza see Myers (2009).
37. Al Jazeera (2009) (accessed 24 October 2009).
38. International Crisis Group (19 March 2008: 16–20).
39. International Crisis Group (19 March 2008).
40. International Crisis Group (19 March 2008).
41. Cunningham (2009) (accessed 24 October 2009).
42. McCarthy (2010).
43. Sharp (2009) (accessed 17 June 2009).
44. Kadlec (2Q1Q) (accessed 26 April 2Q1Q).
45. Kadlec (2Q1Q) (accessed 26 April 2Q1Q).
46. Milton-Edwards (200Sb: 1592).

Appendix B: suicide bombings conducted by Hamas, 1993–2006

1. Ricolfi (2005).
2. See Appendix A, Palestinian Suicide Bombings Since 1993, in Hafez (2006b).

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