

**The London School of Economics and Political
Science**

*Conceptualising Suicide Bombings and Rethinking
International Relations Theory: The Case of Hamas,
1987-2006*

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A thesis submitted to the Department of
International Relations of the London School of
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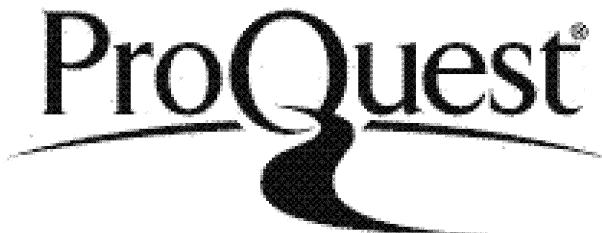


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Battles

“They'll wake up in the morning And they will fight. That which you saw last night was my dream The other will answer: no, it was my dream They will gently retrieve two pistols From the sides of the same pillow And at the same moment They will fire”

- Salvos of Mercy
From a selection of poems by Ibrahim Nasrallah
Translated by Ibrahim Muhamwi

Declaration

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Abstract

This thesis analyses the phenomenon of suicide bombings as manifested in the Palestinian landscape of conflict and attempts to construct a theoretical framework of analysis to study the phenomenon. It investigates Hamas, and most specifically its resort to suicide bombings, from the time of its inception in 1988 to its electoral victory in 2006. In focussing on a particular organisation this work rejects the notion of a monolithic Islamist global threat perpetrated by individuals that are irrational and propelled solely by religion and the call to *jihad*, irrespective of their organisational affiliation and geographical location. Instead such categorisations are rebuffed by using tools provided by International Relations theory and examples of Hamas that illustrate why and how suicide operations are adopted in a particular socio-political setting. Hence, at its core, this thesis probes how concepts and methods in contemporary International Relations can assist in explaining and understanding the phenomenon of suicide bombings using the specific empirical case of the Hamas.

Three broad theoretical methodologies/approaches are utilised in the constructed theoretical framework of analysis, namely Rational Choice Theory, Social Constructivism and the Just War thesis. Each of these is believed to grant equally crucial insights into specific aspects of suicide operations, which when amalgamated provide a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Within this given theoretical structure the thesis demonstrates how Palestinian suicide operations are, first and foremost, a complex combination of instrumental and expressive violence which are adopted by rational actors to assert power, achieve political and/or societal survival and enable retaliation and competition. Second, this work reveals how suicide operations perform an important role in the formation and consolidation of Palestinian national identity and also demonstrates how such acts are used as a mechanism to delineate both organisational and individual space. Finally, this thesis probes how political Islam is employed to facilitate the articulation, justification and legitimisation of suicide operations as a modern-day *jihad* to Palestinian society through the means of modern interpretations and *fatwas*.

In its endeavours to formulate a more holistic understanding of suicide operations in the Israeli – Palestinian conflict this work consciously uses both positivist and post-positivist concepts as part of its theoretical framework. However, while it employs neo-utilitarian choice-theoretic assumptions as a methodological tool to illustrate one facet of suicide bombings it is, both ontologically and epistemologically, more closely aligned with post-positivist approaches. As such it challenges basic rationalist assumptions that claim value neutrality and treat actors as possessing identities and interests that are autogenous and pre-social. Finally, the methodological structure of this thesis is based on qualitative research which utilises not only primary and secondary source literature but also interview-based field data collected in both Israel and the Palestinian territories from December 2004 to January 2005.

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Rashmi Singh,
London, February 2008

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ACRONYMS

AQ	Al-Qaeda
BSO	Black September Organisation
DFLP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
IDF	Israel Defence Forces
IRM	Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)
DOP	Declaration of Principles
HAMAS	Harakat al-Muqawma al-Islamiya or the IRM
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MB	Muslim Brotherhood
MHM	Militant Heroic Martyrdom
PA	Palestinian Authority
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PIJ	Palestinian Islamic Jihad
PLA	Palestine Liberation Army
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organisation
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

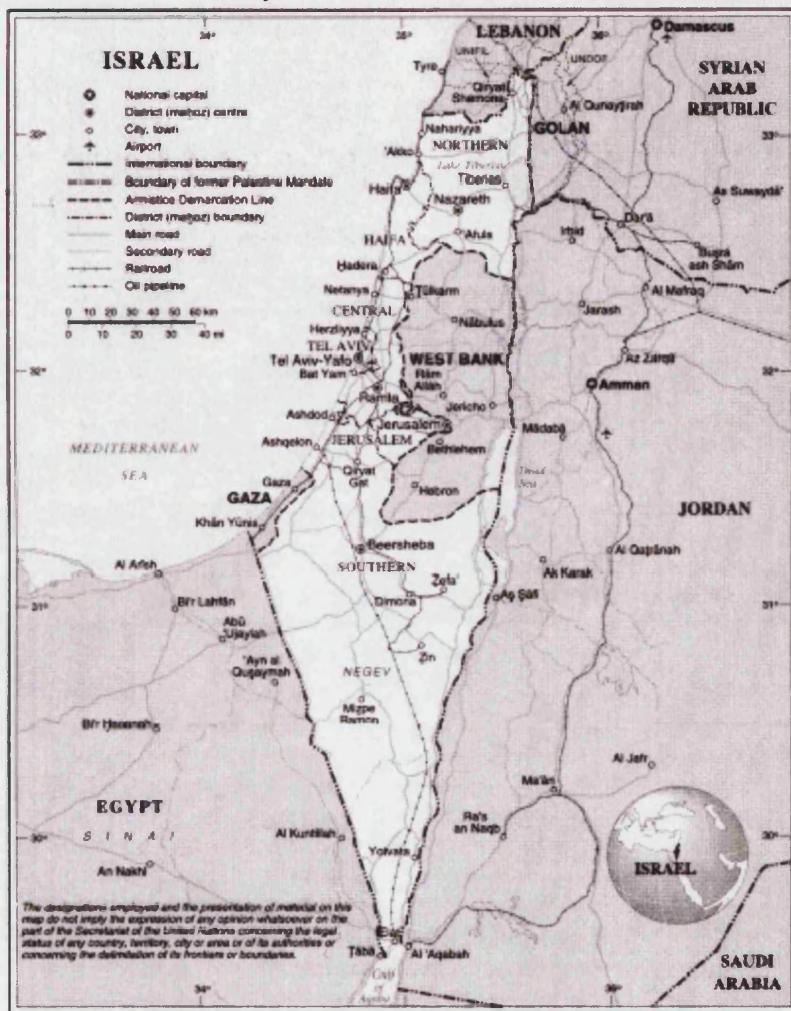
GLOSSARY OF ARABIC AND ISLAMIC TERMS

<i>Al-Isra' wal-Miraj</i>	the site of the Prophet Muhammad's ascension to heaven, i.e. the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem
<i>Al-Quds</i>	Jerusalem
<i>Al-sawa' id al-ramiya</i>	Hamas' strike groups; literally translates as "shooting arms"
<i>Amaliyat ishtish'hadiyya</i>	martyrdom operation
<i>A'yan</i>	city notables of the early twentieth century
<i>Al-Bayanāt</i>	leaflets and communiqués
<i>Caliph(ate)</i>	a successor to the Prophet Muhammed (the institution of Islamic government after Muhammed)
<i>Dar al-harb</i>	realm or abode of war
<i>Dar al-Islam</i>	realm or abode of peace
<i>Da'wa</i>	call to Islam; preaching
<i>Fard Ayn</i>	individual obligation
<i>Fard Kifaya</i>	collective obligation
<i>Fatwa</i>	a religious decree issued by a religious scholar
<i>Fellah/ Fellahin</i>	peasant/ peasantry
<i>Fida'i</i>	the revolutionary
<i>Fedayeen</i>	revolutionary guerrilla groups based on the ideology of self-sacrifice
<i>Hadith</i>	commentary on Prophet Muhammad's dictums
<i>Halal</i>	allowed by Qur'anic law; sanctified
<i>Haram</i>	forbidden by Qur'anic law
<i>Hashishiyun</i>	a 11 th and 12 th century Persian Shi'a sect who were renowned assassins (also known as Ismaili-Nazaris)
<i>Hijra</i>	the emigration of the Prophet and his followers from Mecca to Medina following persecution
<i>Hudna</i>	unilateral ceasefire
<i>Ijtihad</i>	the tradition of interpreting Islamic religious texts
<i>Ikhwan</i>	brethren
<i>Intihar</i>	suicide, which is haram
<i>Isra</i>	the night journey of the Prophet
<i>Istish'had/istish'hadiyyin</i>	martyrdom/martyrs who sacrifice their lives in jihad, generally refers to suicide bombers/bombings in contemporary terminology

<i>Jahiliyya</i>	originally referred to the darkness and unrest of total pagan ignorance in the pre-Islamic era. In modern times it is used to characterise all societies which are not genuinely Islamic
<i>Jihad</i>	traditionally defined as both a holy and just war; literally internal striving on the path of God
<i>Kata'ib 'izz al-din al-qassam</i>	Battalions of 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam, Hamas' formal military wing
<i>Qibla</i>	the direction to face during prayer
<i>Mahr</i>	bride-price
<i>Mawwal</i>	the chanted introduction to a song/anthem
<i>Miraj</i>	the heavens; the Prophet's ascent to the heavens
<i>Mithaq</i>	covenant (in this work Hamas's Covenant)
<i>Mufti</i>	Muslim legislator
<i>Mullah</i>	a local religious leader
<i>Mujahidah</i>	struggle for the sake of the Lord
<i>Mujahid/Mujahidin(un)</i>	a warrior on the path of God; fighter(s) of the jihad
<i>Murabit(un)</i>	Muslim settler(s) of the frontier
<i>(al-)Nakba</i>	the defeat; literally 'the catastrophe', a term which refers to the 1948-49 war and large-scale expulsion of the Palestinians
<i>(al-)Naksa</i>	literally 'the setback'; the term refers to the defeat of 1967
<i>Sabr</i>	patience
<i>Shabb/Shabab</i>	literally 'young men' or 'guys'; the term historically signifies uprooted peasants and poorer urban strata who participated in resistance activity
<i>Shahada</i>	the affirmation of the faith
<i>Shahadat</i>	martyrdom
<i>Shahid/shuhada</i>	martyr, often a non-combatant or civilian casualty in contemporary terminology and used as a counterpoint to <i>istish'had</i>
<i>Shari'a</i>	Islamic law
<i>Shatat</i>	the dispersal of the Palestinian population following the 1948 establishment of the Israeli state and the First Arab-Israeli War
<i>Shi'arat</i>	wall graffiti
<i>Shi'ia</i>	the followers of Ali; the minority sect in Islam

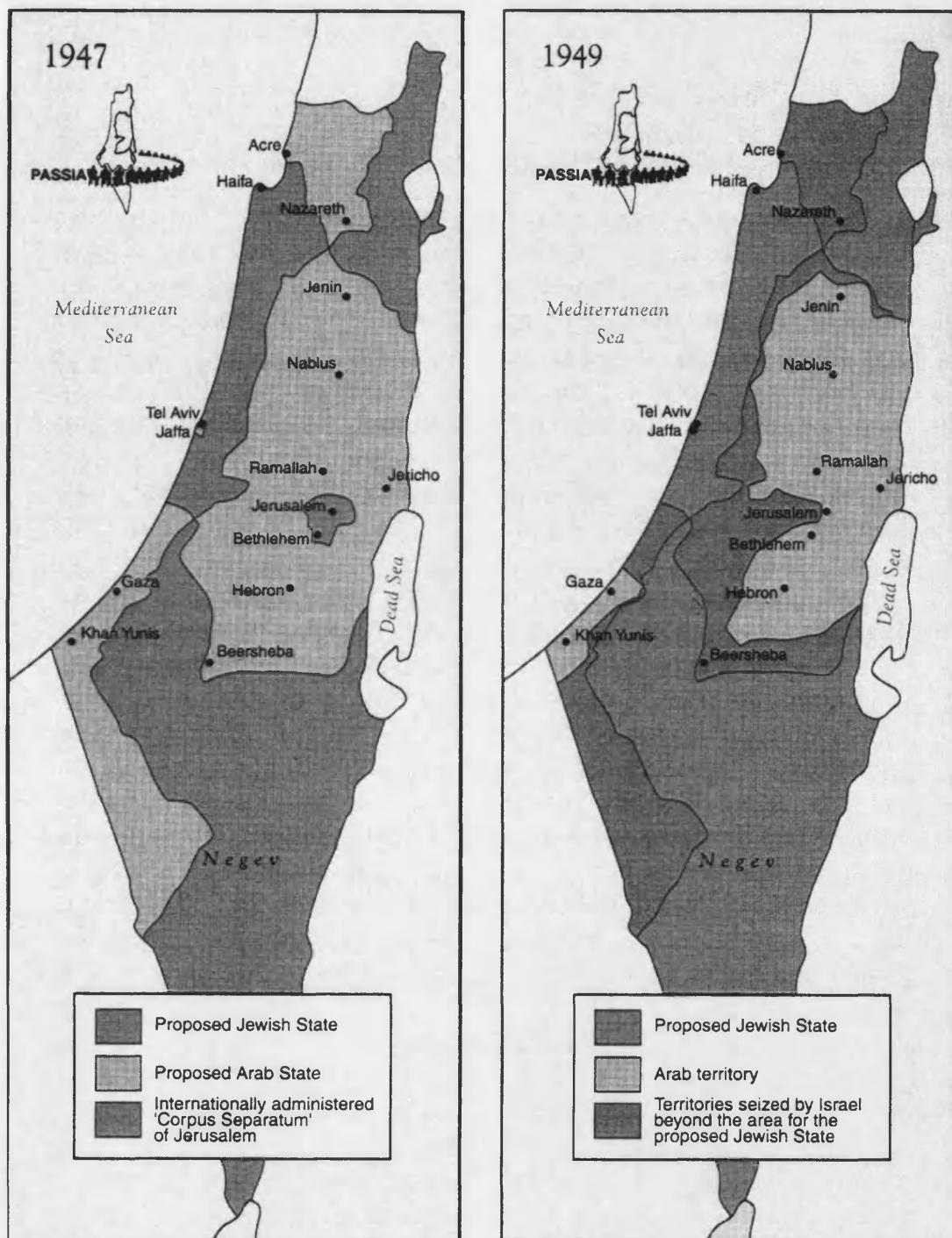
<i>Sumud</i>	steadfastness
<i>Sunna/h</i>	Sayings and actions of the Prophet
<i>Sunni</i>	the followers of sunnah who accepted the caliphate of Abu Bakr who was chosen by consensus; the majority sect in Islam
<i>Tabligh</i>	education
<i>Tajfirat intihariyya</i>	suicide operation
<i>Tahdiya</i>	cease-fire
<i>Ulama</i>	scholars or people trained in the religious sciences
<i>Umma</i>	the Muslim community
<i>Waqf</i>	a religious endowment

Israel and the Occupied Territories of West Bank and Gaza



As reproduced in Mohammed M. Hafez, *Manufacturing Human Bombs: The Making of Palestinian Suicide Bombers*, Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2006.

UN Resolution 181 Partition Map (1947) and the Rhodes Armistice Lines (1949) Showing Territory Conquered by Israel Beyond Resolution 181 Allocations



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The Oslo II Agreement (1995) Showing Areas A, B, and C



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Chapter I: Introduction

“...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. Lawrence¹

I. Rationale and Argument

On April 16, 1993 twenty-two 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 Israelis². 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, fourteen years later, there no longer exists such hesitation in identifying these increasingly common attacks as suicide bombings.

Suicide as a mode of political protest is by no means a recent phenomenon nor has it been practiced 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 persecution³. The early Persian Ismailis – Nizaris, 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

¹ T.E. Lawrence, ‘Guerrilla’ (1929)

² Amanda Ripley, ‘Why Suicide Bombing is Now All the Rage’, *Time in Partnership with CNN* (07 April 2002), available at: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,227546-1,00.html>. Date Accessed: 18 February 2007.

³ Joyce E. Salisbury, *Blood of Martyrs: Unintended Consequences of Ancient Violence* (New York: Routledge, 2004)

impossible and characteristically murdered their targets before sometimes killing themselves with the same dagger⁴. The *hashishiyun* were so effective that they came to be feared and demonised 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 pre-meditated political-military phenomenon was during the Second World War when over three thousand Japanese army and navy pilots died attempting to crash their planes into Allied ships and aircraft carriers⁵. 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 U.S. naval vessels and killed over twelve thousand American servicemen⁶. 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 war⁷.

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 two hundred and forty one US soldiers and fifty eight French troops. After this initial attack Hizballah continued to target U.S., French and Israeli troops in Lebanon

⁴ Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Order of the Assassins: The Struggle of the Early Nizari Ismailis Against the Islamic World* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1955); W.B. Bartlett, *The Assassins: The Story of Medieval Islam's Secret Sect* (Stroud, England: Sutton, 2001)

⁵ Peter Hill, 'Kamikaze, 1943-5' in Diego Gambetta (ed.), *Making Sense of Suicide Missions* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁶ See also: Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Kamikaze, Cherry Blossoms and Nationalisms* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002); Albert Axell and Hideaki Kase, *Kamikaze: Japan's Suicide Gods* (London: Longmans, 2002); Hatsuhiko Naito, *Thunder Gods: The Kamikaze Pilots Tell Their Story* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1989); and Rikihei Inoguchi and Tadashi Nakajima, *The Divine Wind* (New York: Bantam Books, 1960)

⁷ Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Riverside Press, 1946)

conducting a total of thirty-six suicide attacks in the 1980s and successfully evicting these forces from Lebanon⁸.

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 organisation which has successfully assassinated two heads of state in suicide missions, including the former Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi. 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, Hezbollah'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 as a "copy-cat phenomenon"⁹. Either way, it seems that the strategic use of suicide missions has slowly become entrenched in the Palestinian consciousness and hence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Incidents of suicide attacks have also increased dramatically in various other parts of the globe since the mid-1990 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.

⁸ See for example: Martin Kramer, 'The Moral Logic of Hezbollah', in Walter Reich (ed.), *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind* (Cambridge and New York: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and Cambridge University Press, 1990); Hala Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hezbollah: Politics and Religion* (London: Pluto Press, 2002); Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005)

⁹ Personal interview with Yoram Schweitzer, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies (JCSS), Tel Aviv University, 23 December 2004. For a more theoretical approach on the contagion effects of suicide bombing see for example: Martha Crenshaw, 'The Logic of Terrorism: Terrorist Behaviour as a Product of Strategic Choice', in Walter Reich (ed.), *Origins of Terrorism*, opt. cit.

Robert Pape points out that the 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 time¹⁰. Suicide attacks have therefore emerged as an *operational tactic* applied to achieve different political and military ends in vastly different conflicts and circumstances. As such each conflict must be studied individually to understand what prompts, enables and legitimises the resort to suicide attacks in each specific context. The point of entry into this research then is, first and foremost, the rejection of the monolithic Islamist global threat so evident in popular literature today in favour of an in-depth examination of a specific case study, i.e. Hamas' use of suicide missions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from 1993 to 2006. It is believed that only a detailed analysis can equip one to trace the trajectory of violence in this conflict and thus identify *why* and *how* suicidal violence emerged and was adopted as a mechanism of engagement on both an individual and organisational level in this specific landscape of conflict. Analysing the Israeli-Palestinian case in the *longue durée* also enables one to develop a clearer understanding of why suicidal violence emerged and escalated at a given point in time in this conflict.

This thesis does not propose to provide solutions or policy recommendations – though its findings can contribute to both. Instead it constructs a theoretical framework of analysis based on empirical evidence and a qualitative methodology. In doing so, this work not only attempts to address the ‘theoretical paucity of terrorism literature’¹¹ but also simultaneously seeks to question if concepts and methods in contemporary IR theory can explain and understand the phenomenon of suicidal violence. It argues that the emergence of suicidal violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is based on three interrelated factors:

¹⁰ Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (London: Gibson Square, 2006)

¹¹ See for example: Martha Crenshaw, ‘Current Research on Terrorism: The Academic Perspective’, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (1992); Magnus Ranstorp, ‘Introduction: Mapping Terrorism Research - Challenges and Priorities’, in Magnus Ranstorp (ed.), *Mapping Terrorism Research: State of the Art, Gaps and Future Direction* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Andrew Silke, ‘The Devil You Know: Continuing Problems with Research on Terrorism’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Winter 2001)

- (i) The expressive and instrumental rationality of suicide missions, which explains *why* suicidal violence *emerged* and is *used* as a mechanism of engagement with the Israeli state;
- (ii) The struggle for a national identity and the culturally entrenched norm of militant heroic martyrdom, which explains *how* suicidal violence *evolved* specifically within the Palestinian socio-political setting; and
- (iii) The ideological framework of jihad as reinterpreted by political Islam, which explains *how* suicidal violence is *justified, legitimised and enacted* within the Palestinian milieu.

Having identified these three factors this work then locates them within what are three very different theoretical approaches in international relations in order to arrive at a framework of analysis which may be applied to accurately study suicidal violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The three broad theoretical methodologies/approaches utilised in this endeavour are the Rational Actor Model (which is rooted in Rational Choice Theory), Social Constructivism and the Just War thesis. This work stresses that despite their differences each of these grant equally crucial insights into specific aspects of suicide operations, and *only when amalgamated* enable a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon in the Israeli Palestinian conflict. In its endeavours to formulate a more holistic understanding of suicide operations in the Israeli – Palestinian conflict this work thus consciously uses both positivist and post-positivist concepts as part of its theoretical framework. However, while it employs neo-utilitarian choice-theoretic assumptions as a methodological tool to illustrate one facet of suicide bombings it is, both ontologically and epistemologically, more closely aligned with post-positivists approaches. As such it challenges basic rationalist assumptions that claim value neutrality and treat actors as possessing identities and interests that are autogenous and pre-social. At the same time this work also acknowledges the merit of utilising specific positivist concepts in order to facilitate a deeper understanding of suicidal violence in the Palestinian territories.

II. Definitional Parameters, Terminology and Theoretical Framework

It must be noted that while the focus of this research perforce locates it within the broader sphere of terrorism literature, this work consciously eschews, when possible, the term ‘suicide terrorism’ in favour of ‘suicide bombing(s)/attack(s)/operation(s)/or suicidal violence’. This is not only in an effort to avoid any normative implications implicit in the term ‘terrorism’ but also because the term has, in contemporary times, been extended to cover “what used to be called guerrilla warfare, separatism, civil war, armed resistance and all other forms of political violence,”¹². Consequently the term is now often used indiscriminately by parties intending to de-legitimise any armed resistance challenging an established authority in order to enhance political mobilisation in favour of the status quo. As such the terms specified above are used not only for their tactical specificity but also in an attempt to reassert what were previously much more delineated spaces in studies of asymmetrical and non-conventional warfare. Occasionally, in attempting to contextualise the use of suicide attacks and thereby approaching the phenomenon from a specifically Palestinian perspective, the term ‘martyrdom operation’ is also used in this work to describe these attacks – with the full knowledge that it is both heavily normative and culturally resonant.

A suicide attack is defined in very specific terms in this thesis. Thus for the purpose of this work a suicide attack is “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”¹³. Thus a suicide attack is 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”¹⁴. The precondition of death is what differentiates a suicide attack from other types of high-risk attacks where the possibility of death may exist but is not a 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

¹² Daniel Heradstveit and David C. Pugh, ‘The Rhetoric of Hegemony: How the Extended Definition of Terrorism Redefines International Relations’, *NUPI Paper 649* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute for International Affairs, 2003), p. 1

¹³ Yoram Schweitzer, ‘Suicide Terrorism: Development and Main Characteristics’ in *Countering Suicide Terrorism* (Herzliya, Israel: (ICT) The International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism, 2001)

¹⁴ Boaz Ganor, ‘Suicide Attacks in Israel’, in *Countering Suicide Terrorism*, *opt. cit.*, p. 134

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)¹⁵. For this work a failed suicide mission is defined as one in which the attack fails as a direct result of either errors made by the bomber at the time of executing the mission or if he/she is intercepted by counter-terror forces before completing the mission. Additionally, bystander/civilian intervention, if it is a direct cause of complete mission failure, is also included in this category. Thus in each case, irrespective of why the mission failed, the operative once again consciously intended to kill him/herself from the very onset as part of the attack.

The theoretical framework incorporates a number of key concepts in IR. The overarching framework for this thesis is provided by nationalism and national identity formation which grant the overall context for the study and are used to explain *how* suicide bombing evolved in the Palestinian territories in Chapter IV. Other key concepts used include: the notion of expressive and instrumental violence, which is used primarily in Chapter III to highlight *why* suicidal violence is used on both an organisational and individual level; and political Islam, which is used mainly in Chapter V to once again illustrate *how* suicide bombings are legitimised and enacted as the religious duty of a jihad specifically within the Palestinian socio-political cultural milieu.

(i) Nationalism and National Identity Formation:

Nationalism and the attempt to establish a nation-state are considered by this work to be the key reasons behind the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Juval Portugali states that: “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”¹⁶.

¹⁵ It is on the basis of this definition that this work rejects the assertion that the first ‘suicide’ attack in the Israeli-Palestinian context was conducted at the Lod Airport in 1972 by the Japanese Red Army (JRA) on behalf of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). This attack bore only superficial similarity to what are identified as contemporary suicide missions. Of the three Japanese Marxists who conducted the operation, one was killed by his own companion when he ran out of ammunition, the other killed himself with a grenade when faced with capture and the third was severely injured but captured when trying to flee the terminal. Instead, on the basis of the above definition of a suicide mission, the Lod airport attack would be a good example of a high-risk mission instead. See for example, ‘What Happened at Lod Airport in 1972?’ http://www.palestinefacts.org/pf_1967to1991_lod_1972.php. Date Accessed: 19th November 2005.

¹⁶ Juval Portugali, *Implicate Relations: Society and Space in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Boston and Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993), p. 36

However, this work in trying to identify mainly the *internal* impetuses for the emergence of suicidal violence focuses primarily on Palestinian nationalism, though Zionism and the Israeli state are also acknowledged as playing a role in Palestinian identity formation.

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”¹⁷. Elements of “territory, place and environment (i.e. spatial entities) in relation to people and their collective memories (i.e. temporal entities)”¹⁸ are its fundamental components. Territorial and statehood claims are legitimised 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 telling¹⁹. 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’²⁰. In other words, fundamentally embedded in the construction of history are relations of power.

Nationalism is therefore tied to a specific geographical space, a ‘homeland’, which is imbued with meaning and subject to history-creating and myths and romanticised in art and literature. It is an “ideology of *boundedness*”²¹. Nationalism is also a homogenisation project, i.e. it attempts to carve out a common identity 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 with norms; about “being like others and doing (sic) what others do”²². Language, religion, tradition are all vehicles of facilitating homogenisation

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 37

¹⁸ Helena Lindholm Schulz, *The Reconstruction of Palestinian Nationalism: Between Revolution and Statehood* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 6

¹⁹ E.H.Carr, *What is History?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001, 40th anniversary edition).

²⁰ Thomas H. Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (London and Boulder, Colorado: Pluto Press, 1993)

²¹ Schulz, *opt. cit.*, p. 6; See also: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991); Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1979); Anthony D. Smith and John Hutchinson, *Nationalism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994)

²² Zygmunt Bauman, *Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Morality* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995)

and thereby ‘creating’ the nation. Nations are thus socially and culturally constructed; in other words they are *imagined* through language, religion, norms and traditions.

Palestinian nationalism and the process of national identity formation therefore explain *how* a given socio-political, cultural reality impacts the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and facilitates the emergence of suicidal violence. This work focuses on how inter-subjective practices between actors in the Israeli-Palestinian setting results in the formation of Palestinian identities and interests in the process of interaction. At the same time, it takes into account Palestinian identities and interests as they existed *prior* to the period of study, i.e. before 1987. This work recognises the role that violence plays in Palestinian identity formation and consolidation and, in recognising the trajectory of protest and violence in the Israeli-Palestinian interaction over the past fifty years, it contextualises the adoption of suicide bombings as a mode of violent protest from the period commencing in the early 1990s. Consequently multiple factors that would otherwise be ignored are taken into consideration in attempting to formulate a deeper understanding of how this phenomenon emerged specifically in the early 1990s and was adopted as the dominant form of protest by the second Intifada.

This background and contextualising not only enables the formulation of this understanding on both the organisational and individual levels but also allows one to comprehend how the act of suicide bombing serves multiple functions for different levels in Palestinian society. The adoption and support of suicide bombings can thus be understood as the assertion of power in a situation of powerlessness as well as the assertion of an identity. This assertion of power and identity operates simultaneously on three different levels, i.e. at the level of the organisation, that of the individual bomber and finally at the level of Palestinian society, which constantly interact and influence each other. The increasing support for the use of this tool by Palestinian society can also explain why suicide bombings were adopted as a strategy by secular Fatah and even the left wing PFLP. It is also interesting to note how the act of suicide bombing is used as a mechanism to delineate both organisational and individual space. Therefore, suicide bombings are a mechanism whereby the organisations/individuals can not only stand apart from the society as proactive and powerful actors but also simultaneously a mechanism utilised, by all levels, to reintegrate with this society and identify with its

grievances. The success and survival of all levels is consequently 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 organisation and the individual be consistently perceived to be representative of broader societal sentiments and also be perceived as furthering a common cause -in this case that of independence from Israeli occupation.

(ii) Political Islam

Often referred to as Islamism or Fundamentalism, political Islam refers to movements and ideologies which draw upon Islamic terms, symbols and events in order to articulate a distinctly modern, political agenda²³. 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. 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 focus²⁴. The resurgence of political Islam is believed to have resulted from 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 is believed to be significantly different in that it has been profoundly impacted by the region's colonial experience.

²³ For discussions of Islamism versus Muslim politics and other terminology see for example: Ray Takeyh and Nikolas K. Gvosdev, *The Receding Shadow of the Prophet: The Rise and Fall of Radical Political Islam* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 2004); Bassam Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder* (Berkley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1998); Joel Beinin and Joe Stork (eds.), *Political Islam: Essays from Middle East Report* (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997)

²⁴ John Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); See also John L. Esposito and François Burgat (ed.), *Modernizing Islam: Religion in the Public Sphere in the Middle East and Europe* (London: Hurst, 2003); Bassam Tibi, 'The Renewed Role of Islam in the Political and Social Development of the Middle East', *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Summer 1983); Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, *Islamic Resurgence in the Arab World* (New York: Praeger, 1982)

European colonialism introduced into the Middle East, alongside capitalist exploitation and numerous artificially created states, a host of Western ideologies including socialism, communism and free-market capitalism, all of which wrought far-reaching changes in the region. The modernisation and industrialisation that was brought about as a result of colonisation increased literacy levels and side-lined traditional Islamic-based learning. The corresponding urban migration also led to the decline of traditional agrarian modes of production. All these factors combined to create conditions in which Arab identity was strongly challenged by notions of Western social order. Even when colonial rule ended in the region, its legacy, in the shape of Western systems of government and policies that encouraged economic and social modernisation, continued to be practiced by Arab regimes. While this created ideal conditions for the resurgence of political Islam, it was the 1967 war which represented a benchmark in this resurgence. The humiliating Arab defeat not only marked the decline of pan-Arabism but also an increasing alienation of Arab masses from political rulers and systems along with a disenchantment with Western-inspired approaches to politics and power in the Middle East. In other words, it is from 1967 onwards that Arab masses began moving away from secular political ideologies and looked instead towards Islam to provide them with a sense of identity.

In the Palestinian territories political Islam has also witnessed a remarkable revival, though organisations like Hamas are not dedicated to attaining political power for Islamic reasons alone. After the 1967 war the Palestinian national struggle was led by secular forces like Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). The Islamic movement remained relatively weak in comparison in this period and gained momentum only after the defeat of the PLO in Lebanon in 1982²⁵. Hamas gained ground as a highly-politicised Islamic, anti-occupation force in the Palestinian territories during the first intifada. Even so, it must be emphasised 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 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

²⁵ Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1996), p. 8

and ideologies, has adapted to address contemporary international realities and co-opted the Palestinian nationalist agenda.

Hamas therefore uses the language of political Islam to specifically construct a narrative of jihad against the Israeli state as part of the Palestinian national struggle. It is political Islam which 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 provides Hamas with the tools to legitimise the use of suicidal violence to the Palestinian public as a modern day jihad fought against a disproportionately powerful enemy with the only tools available – suicide bombers. Therefore, this work asserts that political Islam facilitates the expansion of the traditional concept of jihad (which is by definition a just and limited war) to include the concept of total war (which is by definition fought without restraints). This convergence of these evidently opposing concepts under the broad rubric of jihad is what is crucial to explaining how suicidal violence is successfully justified and legitimised as jihad in Palestinian society. In illustrating the role of political Islam in suicide operations conducted specifically by Hamas in the Israeli-Palestinian arena of conflict, this work contributes to the debate on the relationship between violence, Islam and the contemporary world and demonstrates that Hamas' use of religious rhetoric to justify violence, in fact, facilitates a distinctly modern political agenda. Hamas' political ambitions are identified as specifically state-oriented and the political language of religion, in this case of political Islam, is seen to be used to specifically grant legitimacy to the movement. This work locates jihad and consequently martyrdom operations as central themes in the political Islamic rhetoric adopted by Hamas arguing that Hamas' ability to resort to suicide operations is rooted in a radical interpretation of jihad and martyrdom. In short, this work demonstrates how the build up of political Islamic rhetoric in the territories has increasingly facilitated the legitimisation of suicidal violence against the Israeli state.

(iii) Political Violence

The study of violence continues to be a highly problematic area within the social sciences. Charles Tilly identifies three broadly competing views of violence which serves to

categorise the widespread debate to a large extent. The first categorises violence as propensity-driven and locates the cause of violence “within the actor, calling attention to genetic, emotional, or cognitive peculiarities that incline a particular individual, group, or category of persons to damaging behaviour more than others”²⁶. The second view sees violence as instrumental interaction and portrays violence as a means to a specific end (power, wealth, prestige etc.). Finally the last view categorises violence as a cultural form and argues that “the ready availability of certain ideas, practices, models and beliefs itself promotes violent action”²⁷. In all cases, the very term ‘violence’ carries with it an inherently negative connotation and by categorising any phenomenon as violent one serves to condemn it.

Political violence, as a specific category of collective violence, may be defined as violence that is motivated by political conditions. The use of political violence as a potential strategy for social and national liberation movements suggests that violence is used to create and consolidate identity – a factor that has already been discussed vis-à-vis Palestinian identity formation above²⁸. Approaching violence from this specific perspective fits into Tilly’s second categorisation which sees violence as instrumental²⁹. However, such an approach inadvertently ignores the symbolic dimension of violence, i.e. what the practice of violence says. The symbolic or expressive dimension of violence is significant in that it affords us crucial insights into *how* violence transforms a social environment and enables us to identify the ideological message that is conveyed to multiple audiences by the act³⁰. Violence therefore conveys cultural meanings, most importantly ideas of legitimacy. Max Weber states that the concept of legitimacy entails that a social order is accepted as valid either due to its historicity, its emotional value or its instrumental reasoning. “The legitimacy of violence can be based upon each (and usually all) of the three aspects; it presents itself as recreating ideas and behavioural models from the past; it appeals to strong

²⁶ Charles Tilly, ‘Violent and Non-Violent Trajectories in Contentious Politics’ in Kenton Worcester, Sally A. Bermanzohn and Mark Ungar (eds.), *Violence and Politics: Globalization’s Paradox* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002)

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Jeffrey Murer, ‘The Clash Within: Intrapsychically Created Enemies and Their Roles in Ethnonationalist Conflict’, in Kenton Worcester, Sally A. Bermanzohn and Mark Ungar (eds.), *Violence and Politics*, *opt. cit.*

²⁹ For a comprehensive view of violence as instrumental action see: Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (London: Allen Lane, 1970)

³⁰ David Riche, ‘The Phenomenon of Violence’, in David Riche (ed.), *The Anthropology of Violence* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 8

feelings of social closure based on the experience of either superiority or suffering, as generated by this very tradition of confrontation; and it offers itself as the most direct route to asserting the interests of those collectivities established by the above two mechanisms”³¹. Violence is therefore a performative act and the symbolism of violence encompasses narratives and inscriptions of violence.

Najib Ghadbian in his study of linkages between political Islam and violence in the Middle East identifies four types of politically motivated violence that has existed for at least the last two decades in the region³². The first type is armed struggle and counter-violence that emerges in direct response to extreme repression by a regime, as seen in Iraq, Syria and Libya. The second type of political violence has taken the form of conflict between governments and radical Islamists as seen in Algeria and Egypt. The third type of political violence is motivated by nationalist goals of liberation and can be located in both the Islamist and National Resistance Movement in South Lebanon and the Palestinian struggle for statehood. The final type of political violence Ghadbian identifies is the attacks conducted by supporters and branches of Al-Qaeda (AQ)³³. In all cases, Islamic movements in the Middle East can be seen as employing violence to achieve specific goals. This work categorise Hamas’ use of violence, and suicide bombings, as violence directed towards the goal of national liberation. Furthermore, Hamas’ political use of violence is also the link between Palestinian national identity formation and political Islam in the occupied territories.

This work sees suicide attacks as a volatile and complex combination of instrumental and expressive violence. In other words, they are both acts of expediency and practical reason as well as acts that are simultaneously symbolic, ritualistic and communicative. This combination implicitly reflects a division between the leaders of these movements and the individuals who actually commit these acts. Hence, suicidal violence is definitely a case of strategic choice for the organisers where the operatives are merely a tool or a weapon

³¹ Ingo W. Schröder and Bettina E. Schmidt, ‘Introduction: Violent Imaginaries and Violent Practices’ in Ingo W. Schröder and Bettina E. Schmidt (eds.), *Anthropology of Violence and Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2001)

³² Najib Ghadbian, ‘Political Islam: Inclusion or Violence?’ in Kenton Worcester, Sally A. Bermanzohn and Mark Ungar (eds.), *Violence and Politics*, *opt. cit.*

³³ In this case, the geographical area of study is more ambiguous as are the goals of the many branches and associated organisations of AQ.

of war. However, the act is presented to and subsequently internalised by the suicide bomber as one with religious and ritual significance. The distinction between the organisation and its leaders on the one hand and the bombers on the other can also be used to explain the choice of suicidal violence as a 'rational choice' for both parties involved. For the leaders it is a rational choice because it is economical, flexible and has a powerful impact both psychologically and strategically. It is, in other words, the epitome of the 'smart bomb'. For the bombers it is a rational choice because no matter how they interpret their personal 'jihad' - the cost of sacrificing the mortal life is much less than the benefits they accrue in doing so. This implicit but vital division between those that are willing to die and those that are willing to kill is crucial to understand the phenomenon.

Given this background this work links these three concepts to three theoretical approaches/methodologies in international relations, namely: Social Constructivism, the Just War thesis and the Rational Actor Model, in order to construct a theoretical framework for analysis. However, the model is constructed on a 'why' and 'how' basis. In other words, the rational actor model is first used to explain *why* suicide attacks, as acts of instrumental and expressive violence, are adopted in the Palestinian setting. The model then uses social constructivism to account for the 'box' of Palestinian nationalism and national identity formation and explains *how* suicide bombings emerged in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Finally, the revised understanding of the just war thesis is applied to enable the reader to comprehend *how* political Islam facilitates the use of suicidal violence in the occupied territories. The thesis contends that it is only through a simultaneous application of these three approaches in tandem that the phenomenon of suicidal violence in the Palestinian milieu can be fully understood, analysed and explained.

III. Literature and its Limitations

This section outlines the key theories forwarded on the causes of suicide attacks and highlights some of the limitations inherent in the same. In doing so, it not only locates this work within the existing literature but simultaneously attempts to disrupt traditional readings of suicidal violence thereby suggesting potential avenues of revising and/or expanding this research. It must be noted that this survey by no means professes to be

exhaustive but aims instead to outline only the main approaches in the study of suicide attacks.

In international relations analyses of the causes of suicidal violence emerge from the arena of security studies - and even more specifically from the literature on terrorism studies and studies in non-conventional and asymmetrical warfare. In fact, studies on suicidal violence can be seen as a subset of the broader field of terrorism studies. Till recently the bulk of the terrorism literature was produced in the 1970s and 1980s in response to the emergence of various left-wing movements in Europe, nationalist movements in South America and of religious (primarily Islamic) movements in the Middle East³⁴. The research was conducted by a handful of dedicated social scientists and military experts who formed a committed, albeit small, community of specialists in the field. Yet given the Cold War context and the concurrent theoretical focus on neorealist theories of interstate conflict, terrorism literature, despite being extensive and academically diverse, remained mostly in the periphery. Most of the work also tended to address definitional and conceptual problems and empirically tested findings on the long-term patterns and causes of terrorism remained limited. Even more importantly, terrorism research, fettered by the paucity of systematic data and the political sensitivity inherent to the topic, remained mostly unrelated to research in international relations and mostly addressed a 'policy' audience.

In the post-Cold War era, neo-liberal and constructivist understandings challenged the neorealist conception of an anarchical world in unrelenting competition for security. Yet both critiques remained, with a few exceptions³⁵, largely focussed on patterns of behaviour in interstate relations effectively relegating to the side-line any focus on the activities of violent sub-state or non-state actors. Thus a clear disjunct has existed between work in terrorism studies and international relations with the former developing more or less independently of the research on international relations³⁶. Research on the even more

³⁴ Walter Laqueur, *The Age of Terrorism* (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1989, reprint)

³⁵ See for example: Peter J. Katzenstein and Yutaka Tsujinaka, *Defending the Japanese State: Structures, Norms and the Political Response to Terrorism and Violence Social Protest in the 1970s and 1980s* (Ithaca, New York: East Asia Programme, Cornell University, 1991); See also David Leheny, 'Symbols, Strategies, and Choices for International Relations Scholarship after September 11', *Dialog-IO* (Spring 2002)

³⁶ As David Leheny points out specialists looked towards fields other than political science for theoretical guidance in the 1980s and made forays into organisational theory and criminology. Indeed by the late 1980s the political context was so removed from terrorism studies that doyen Martha Crenshaw organised a

specific area of ‘suicide terrorism’ has been even further limited and emerged mostly in the post-Hizballah context of the 1980s. The successive appearance of suicide bombing campaigns in the Sri Lankan and Israeli- Palestinian context, in the late 1980s and early 1990s respectively, triggered more systematic area-specific work on suicide attacks in specific research communities – yet even so, the field remained comparatively small and somewhat removed from the concerns of international relations theory.

Since the September 11, 2001 attacks however, the situation has altered rather dramatically for both terrorism research and especially for research on suicidal violence. The 9/11 suicide attacks have served to catapult terrorism studies from the relative periphery of academic interest and policy concern onto centre-stage³⁷, resulting in an absolute profusion of literature on this topic in the past few years. This situation is even further bolstered by the increasing use of suicide attacks in the Iraqi, Afghani and Pakistani sectors and the resumption of attacks in Sri Lanka. Yet the bulk of the work which is emerging in terrorism studies continues, like earlier research, to be ideologically biased and fragmented and remains “narrative, condemnatory and prescriptive”³⁸. The masses of popular articles that have been published since September 11th are repetitive and rarely demonstrate an in-depth understanding or analyses of the phenomenon. Furthermore, the long-standing issue of definition remains unresolved, as does the “inability to build a cohesive integrated cumulative theory”³⁹. Much of the research also continues to be “event driven”⁴⁰. Expert Martha Crenshaw’s assertion that the field of terrorism studies is “theoretically impoverished and stands to gain in theoretical scope, precision, and cumulativeness of findings”⁴¹ also remains valid; and while scholars such as David Leheny have in the recent past attempted to link back their work to social movement theories such theoretically grounded research still remains in its preliminary stages⁴². The same set of charges can be levied against literature focussing on suicidal violence.

conference titled ‘Terrorism in Context’ in order to emphasise the political context in which terrorist campaigns emerged and occurred. See David Leheny, ‘Symbols, Strategies and Choices’, *Ibid.*

³⁷ Magnus Ranstorp, ‘Introduction: Mapping Terrorism Research’, opt. cit., p. 3

³⁸ Alex P. Schmid and Albert J. Jongman, *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories and Literature* (Amsterdam and Oxford: North-Holland, 1988, 2nd edition)

³⁹ Magnus Ranstorp, ‘Introduction: Mapping Terrorism Research’, opt. cit., p. 4; See also: Andrew Silke, ‘The Devil You Know’, opt. cit.

⁴⁰ Martha Crenshaw, ‘The Psychology of Terrorism: An Agenda for the 21st Century’, *Political Psychology* Vol. 21, No. 2 (2000), p. 405

⁴¹ Martha Crenshaw, ‘Current Research on Terrorism’, opt. cit., p. 1

⁴² See David Leheny, ‘Symbols, Strategies, and Choices’, opt. cit.

This author believes that the paucity of international relations theory with regard to literature on suicidal violence emerges primarily because the approaches which were traditionally used in terrorism studies have been transplanted and applied with little or no modification to the analyses of suicide attacks. As a result analyses of suicidal violence suffer from the same set of drawbacks and limitations as traditional terrorism studies. The remainder of this section will therefore briefly outline the key traditional approaches in terrorism studies before providing an overview of how these have been applied to the phenomenon of suicide attacks in the recent past.

Most terrorism studies use one or more of three very different levels of analysis⁴³. At the individual and group level of analysis, on which much of the work is focussed, the spotlight is generally upon psychological and tactical explanations (terrorism as a product of individual pathology⁴⁴, relative deprivation⁴⁵, the contagion effect⁴⁶, etc.). Hence questions such as why individuals opt to become operatives, what keeps them there, and determinants of group dynamics are addressed by studies pitched at this level of analysis. The societal or national level of explanation are characterised by attempts to identify causal links between attacks and specific historical, cultural and socio-political characteristics of the society under study (terrorism as a result of economic inequality⁴⁷, political regime⁴⁸, societal

⁴³ See for example: Brynjar Lia and Katja Skjølberg, *Why Terrorism Occurs – A Survey of Theories and Hypotheses on the Causes of Terrorism*, Report 2000/02769 (Kjeller, Norway: The Norwegian Defense Research Establishment, 2000). While these levels of analysis have been used by various studies the detailed categories forwarded in this summary are those outlined by Lia and Skjølberg.

⁴⁴ See for example: Jerrold M. Post, 'Terrorist Psycho-Logic: Terrorist Behaviour as a Product of Psychological Forces' in Walter Reich (ed.), *Origins of Terrorism*, *opt. cit.*; Martha Crenshaw, 'The Causes of Terrorism', *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (July 1981); Paul Wilkinson, 'The Sources of Terrorism: Terrorist's Ideologies and Beliefs' in Charles W. Kegley Jr. (ed.), *International Terrorism: Characteristics, Causes, Controls* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1990); Ehud Sprinzak, 'Right-Wing Terrorism in a Comparative Perspective: The Case of Split Delegitimization', in Tore Bjørgo (ed.), *Terror From the Extreme Right* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1995)

⁴⁵ Johan Galtung, 'A Structural Theory of Aggression', *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1964); Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970); Adam Przeworski, *Sustainable Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

⁴⁶ Martha Crenshaw (ed.), *Terrorism, Legitimacy and Power: The Consequences of Political Violence* (Middleton, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1981) and 'Causes of Terrorism' in Charles W. Kegley Jr. (ed.), *International Terrorism*, *opt. cit.*

⁴⁷ Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism and the Liberal State* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986, 2nd edition)

⁴⁸ Kumar Rupesinghe (ed.), *Internal Conflict and Governance* (New York: St. Martin's Press in association with the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo, 1992); Dennis A. Pluchinsky, 'Terrorism in the Former Soviet Union: A Primer, a Puzzle, a Prognosis', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (1998)

norms⁴⁹, etc.). Finally, the systemic or international level of analysis attempts to understand the causal relationship between the international state system and politics and occurrence of attacks on an international level (the impact of weak or collapsed states, hegemony and the rise of a unipolar world order⁵⁰, etc.). In each case, the approaches utilise psychological explanations, societal explanations or structural explanations in isolation or in combination with one or more level of analysis. Exactly the same trend is visible in the study of suicidal violence in which, once again, the bulk of the work speaks to the first two levels of analyses.

In addition, three broad strands can be observed in the study of suicidal violence: first, studies that approach it from a tactical, rational perspective; second, those that use religion as an entry point into the research; and third, those that use a range of social factors to understand the motivations behind suicide attacks. A significant number of these studies either focus exclusively upon suicide attacks in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or in the very least refer to these attacks as one of their many examples. Either way, it is clearly evident from the existing literature that the high propensity for suicidal violence in the Palestinian territories combined with the Israeli focus on counter-terrorism makes the area nearly impossible to ignore by those writing in the field.

Given this situation it is perhaps not surprising that most of the work focussing on suicidal violence falls into the first category and is deeply impacted by rational choice theory. In other words, it is impacted by the belief that groups and individual which employ or participate in suicide attacks “calculate costs and benefits of different courses of action, act with purpose, adapt to incentives and opportunities, and pursue means that are logically connected to their ends”⁵¹. This holds true for the large amount of work available on the Palestinian case as well. Therefore various strands of this research, whether focussed on the Palestinian case or on suicidal violence more generally, strive to illustrate how suicidal attacks are adopted because tactically the benefits outweigh the costs. Most of this literature

⁴⁹ Martha Crenshaw, ‘Causes of Terrorism’ in Charles W. Kegley Jr. (ed.), *International Terrorism*, opt. cit.; Dennis A. Pluchinsky, ‘Terrorism in the Former Soviet Union’, opt. cit.

⁵⁰ Thomas J. Volgy, Lawrence E. Imwalle and Jeff J. Corntassel, ‘Structural Determinants of International Terrorism: The Effects of Hegemony and Polarity on Terrorist Activity’, *International Interactions*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (1997)

⁵¹ Mohammed M. Hafez, ‘Rationality, Culture, and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers: A Preliminary Theoretical Synthesis and Illustrative Case Study’, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (2006), p. 167

also addresses the first level of analysis, i.e. groups and individuals, and focuses specifically upon the *instrumental* significance a suicide attack holds for both levels. For these studies then all other factors, i.e. psychological, economic, religious, political, social, etc., are peripheral to and feed into the instrumental aims of the suicide attacks perpetrated by the individuals and/or groups under study.

Ehud Sprinzak⁵² and Boaz Ganor⁵³, both Israeli counter-terrorism experts who have written extensively on the use of suicidal violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, explain how suicide bombing is a rational choice as bombers are a low-cost option for the organisation deploying them. This is because while they are easy to recruit and train they inflict high levels of damage, are near impossible to deter, do not require escape plans and simultaneously attract enormous media attention. Martha Crenshaw⁵⁴, Rohan Gunaratna⁵⁵ and Mia Bloom⁵⁶ speak of the contagion effect of suicide bombing and explain that as suicide campaigns are seen to be effective against 'an enemy' bombers emulate one another and groups share technology. Bloom, who has also worked specifically on the Palestinian case, further asserts that in the occupied territories suicide attacks are a public good which possess the ability to increase in direct proportion to rising popular support for the tactic as rival groups use it in an attempt to 'outbid' the other. Robert Pape⁵⁷ believes that suicide attacks are particularly effective against democracies which traditionally abhor high casualty rates; as such for Pape suicidal violence is tactically used to pressure democratic governments into altering specific policies, such as withdrawing troops from territories that the attackers consider to be their homeland. Scott Atran⁵⁸ and Nasra Hassan⁵⁹ believe that suicide bombers are not necessarily poor, depressed or uneducated;

⁵² Ehud Sprinzak, 'Rational Fanatics', *Foreign Policy* 120 (September- October 2000)

⁵³ Boaz Ganor, 'Suicide Attacks in Israel' in *Countering Suicide Terrorism*, opt. cit.; Personal interview with Boaz Ganor, 20 January 2005, Herzliya, Israel

⁵⁴ Martha Crenshaw, "'Suicide" Terrorism in Comparative Perspective' in *Countering Suicide Terrorism*, opt. cit. and 'The Logic of Terrorism: Terrorist Behaviour as a Product of Strategic Choice', in Walter Reich (ed.), *Origins of Terrorism*, opt. cit.

⁵⁵ Rohan Gunaratna, 'The LTTE and Suicide Terrorism', *Frontline*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (February 05-08, 2000), <http://www.flonnet.com/f11703/17031060.htm>

⁵⁶ Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005) and 'Palestinian Suicide Bombings: Public Support, Market Share and Outbidding', *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 119, No. 1 (2004)

⁵⁷ Robert Pape, 'The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism' *American Political Science Review* 97 (2003) and *Dying to Win*, opt. cit.

⁵⁸ Scott Atran, 'Genesis of Suicide Terrorism', *Science Magazine* 299 (March 2003) and 'Mishandling Suicide Terrorism', *The Washington Quarterly*, 27 (2004)

⁵⁹ Nasra Hassan, 'An Arsenal of Believers: Talking to Human Bombs', *The New Yorker* (19 November 2001)

though Atran believes that the upsurge in suicide attacks may be linked to the increasing disjunction between rising expectations and lack of opportunities. Hassan, who interviewed nearly 250 Palestinian recruiters, trainers, failed suicide bombers and relatives of deceased bombers between 1996 and 1999, further asserts that while suicide bombers are “deeply religious” they are also politically aware individuals and thus equally driven by military considerations. Atran and Crenshaw both explain that suicide attacks are rational in that they enable the group using them to push targeted governments towards harsher retaliation policies which in turn allows them to garner greater societal support at home. Bruce Hoffman and Gordon McCormick⁶⁰, who use Hamas’ suicide bombing campaigns as one of their case studies, believe that suicide attacks are signalling tactics that convey to the targeted opposition the group’s determination to continue an armed struggle and compete in a given political landscape.

A second approach towards the study of suicidal violence uses religion as the entry point into understanding suicide violence. There are two main strands of thinking in this approach. The first believes that religion, Islam in particular, is the key ideational correlate to this phenomenon. Thus suicidal violence is seen as a weapon in the confrontation between fundamentalist Islam and its adversaries⁶¹. In privileging the role of religion this strand of thinking tends to depict suicidal violence as devoid of rationality. The second points out how suicidal violence can also be located in non-Muslim societies where it is carried out by non-Islamic groups citing examples such as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka, the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) in Turkey and the Kamikaze in Japan. However, these authors tend to revert back to the strategic and rational argument as the core behind the use of suicidal violence and at the most credit religion with providing an ideological cover for strategic goals. Reuven Paz, for example, writes how the greatest success of Islamist movements to date has been their ability to present their doctrines as ‘true Islam’⁶² – a feat which enables them to accomplish their strategic goals behind the facade of religious rhetoric and ideology. Another strand that has recently

⁶⁰ Bruce Hoffman and Gordon McCormick, ‘Terrorism, Signalling and Suicide Attacks’, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (2004)

⁶¹ See for example: Harvey W. Kushner, ‘Suicide Bombers: Business as Usual’, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (1996); Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2000); Raphael Israeli, *Islamikaze: Manifestations of Islamic Martyrology* (Portland, Oregon and London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003)

⁶² Reuven Paz, ‘The Islamic Legitimacy of Suicide Terrorism’ in *Countering Suicide Terrorism*, *opt. cit.*

emerged acknowledges the social significance of religious motivations and locates suicidal violence as a cultural phenomenon, with religion representing a primary component of culture. Mohammed Hafez is a key proponent of this view and he believes that “religious notions of martyrdom and self-sacrifice have inspired violent campaigns in all religious traditions and can promote extreme violence”⁶³. Hafez concludes his study of suicidal violence in the Palestinian territories by asserting that religion plays a key role for the individual as suicide attacks encompass a redemptive logic for the suicide bombers but a more strategic logic for organisations. Hence, for Hafez suicidal violence holds symbolic, rather than instrumental, logic for the individual.

Another explanation for suicide bombings locates their source in a range of social experiences, including psychological trauma and profiling. On this basis authors like David Lester, Bijou Yang and Mark Lindsay⁶⁴ research individual motivations behind suicidal violence and conclude that the psychological profiling of suicide bombers is feasible because bombers tend to share authoritarian personality traits. In direct contrast researchers, such as Ariel Merari⁶⁵, who has collected data on bombers from both Palestinian intifadas as well as from Lebanon, hold that psychological profiling is impossible as bombers do not show any type of psychopathology and point instead towards national humiliation rather than religion, culture or revenge a motivating factor behind their attacks. Merari further identifies suicidal violence as a group phenomenon rather than an individual one and stresses the role of the organisation in ‘creating’ a bomber⁶⁶. The fact that suicide bombers recruited by organisations reflect a wide range of personalities furthers bolsters his position that individual profiling is difficult. The idea that humiliation is a key factor behind both individuals as well as the societies in which a ‘culture’ of suicide bombing exists is most

⁶³ Mohammed M. Hafez, ‘Rationality, Culture, and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers, *opt. cit.*, p. 169. Also see by the same author: ‘Dying to be Martyrs: The Symbolic Dimensions of Suicide Terrorism’, in Ami Pedahzur (ed.), *Root Causes of Suicide Terrorism: The Globalization of Martyrdom* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2006) and *Manufacturing Human Bombs* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2006)

⁶⁴ David Lester, Bijou Yang and Mark Lindsay, ‘Suicide Bombers: Are Psychological Profiles Possible?’, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (2004)

⁶⁵ Ariel Merari, ‘The Readiness to Kill and Die: Suicidal Terrorism in the Middle East’, in Walter Reich (ed.), *Origins of Terrorism*, *opt. cit.*, and ‘Suicide Terrorism’ in Robert I. Yufit and David Lester (eds.), *Assessment, Treatment and Prevention of Suicidal Behaviour* (New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2005).

⁶⁶ It is worth noting that Merari has changed his position regarding suicide attacks. In his earlier work he had identified suicide as an individual rather than a group phenomenon stressing that the organisation merely provided a foil and avenue for individuals who already had suicidal personalities.

powerfully articulated by Palestinian psychiatrist Dr. Eyad El-Sarraj⁶⁷. Sarraj, who is also the founder and director of the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme, explains how those volunteering for suicide operations in the Al-Aqsa intifada are products of the first intifada who opt to kill themselves due to personal experiences of loss, hopelessness and humiliation. Hence these individuals identify so closely with national humiliation and defeat that they are willing to die to restore both individual and national honour. A recent study by Judy Kuriansky also identifies and focuses some key psychosocial issues including revenge, humiliation, imbalance of power, and search for identity in Palestinian groups⁶⁸.

Nichole Argo⁶⁹ further develops the social approach to suicidal violence by stressing that it is important to understand the social groups (family, peer, ethnic, and national) that the bombers belong to. This is because suicide bombers and suicide bombings tend to emerge in societies where self-sacrifice has a high symbolic significance. From her study of fifteen pre-empted Palestinian bombers she concludes the individual's decision to volunteer for a bombing is made "within the rational/emotional parameters of the communal/relational world"⁷⁰ and facilitated by an internalised social identity, exposure to asymmetrical conflict and of course the organisation which recruits the bomber.

To date very few studies of suicidal violence adopt a multi-level, multi-causal approach. One notable exception is Assaf Moghadam's study of Palestinian suicide attacks in the second intifada⁷¹. Moghadam focuses on both the individual and the organisation and in doing so attempts to construct an analytical framework for "understanding the processes and factors that underlie the development of the suicide bomber and the execution of the

⁶⁷ Eyad El Sarraj, 'Wounds and Madness: Why We've Become Suicide Bombers', *PeaceWork Magazine* (May 2002), <http://www.peaceworkmagazine.org/pwork/0205/020506a.htm>; Linda Butler, 'Suicide Bombers: Dignity, Despair and the Need for Hope – An Interview with Eyad El Sarraj', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXXI, No. 4 (Summer 2002)

⁶⁸ Judy Kuriansky, *Terror in the Holy Land: Inside the Anguish of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2006)

⁶⁹ Nichole Argo, 'Understanding and Defusing Human Bombs: The Palestinian Case and the Pursuit of a Martyrdom Complex', paper presented at the annual meeting of the *International Studies Association (ISA)*, Montreal, 20 March 2004 and 'Human Bombs: Rethinking Religion and Terror', *Audit of the Conventional Wisdom* (MIT Centre for International Studies, April 2006)

⁷⁰ Nichole Argo, 'Understanding and Defusing Human Bombs', *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Assaf Moghadam, 'Palestinian Suicide Terrorism in the Second Intifada: Motivations and Organizational Aspects', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 26 (March-April 2003)

suicide bombing attack”⁷². He identifies various factors motivating individuals to volunteer for suicide missions, including religious, economic, social, nationalist and personal. However, his analysis of organisational motives remains under-developed and limited primarily to the goal of group survival.

This work in contrast, attempting to construct as holistic and accurate an analytical framework as possible, adopts a multi-level, multi-causal approach and not only focuses on the role of both the organisation and the individual but also refers to the socio-political cultural context from which both emerge. In doing so equal weight is given to the role played by the individual and the organisation. While Palestinian society is not a key focus for this thesis it is often referred to as this author believes that it provides the broader socio-cultural context from which both Hamas and its individual operative emerge. Palestinian society also propels the use of suicidal violence by constantly interacting with, influencing and, in turn, being influenced by both the organisation and the individual. As stated before in constructing a theoretical framework of analysis, this thesis also strives to address the theoretical gap which exists in terrorism studies while simultaneously providing an in-depth analysis of a single case. In doing so it not only seeks to incorporate theoretical analysis to a field that has been accused of being ‘theoretically impoverished’ but also to include the phenomenon of suicide bombings into the range of contemporary theoretical discourses in international relations.

IV. Methodology and Sources

Methodologically this work applies aspects of constructivist grounded theory to an empirical, single-case study, i.e. to Hamas and its use of suicidal violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Grounded theory research specifically aims to move theory away from highly abstract conceptual levels and instead ground it in data and so construct “explanatory frameworks that specify relationships among concepts”⁷³. As a creative, systematic qualitative research approach it begins with an area of study and allows theory

⁷² Ibid, p. 66

⁷³ Kathy Charmaz, ‘Grounded Theory: Objectivist and Constructivist Methods’, in Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (London, New Delhi and Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc., 2000, 2nd edition), p. 510; See also: Nick Pidgeon and Karen Henwood, ‘Grounded Theory’, in Melissa Hardy and Alan Bryman (eds.), *Handbook of Data Analysis*, (London, New Delhi and Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc., 2006)

to emerge rather than fitting empirical data into a preconceived theoretical framework. Hence it actively seeks to bridge the gap between theory and empirical research and either “generates theory in areas where little is known, or ... provides a fresh slant on existing knowledge about a particular social phenomenon”⁷⁴. For this particular methodological approach then research, data collection, analysis and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. Constructivist grounded theory takes a step further by recognising the interactive nature of both data collection and analysis. In other words, constructivist grounded theory is fully cognisant of the fact that the “categories, concepts, and theoretical levels of an analysis emerge from the researcher’s interaction within the field and questions about the data”⁷⁵. This research thus uses a single-case study to which it applies aspects of constructivist grounded theory to generate both the research question as well as the hypotheses.

The case study methodology that is used in this work incorporates aspects of both an intrinsic case study (which is aimed at formulating a better understanding of a particular case) and an instrumental case study (in which a “particular case is examined... to provide insights into an issue or to redraw a generalisation”)⁷⁶. The rationale behind using the method of a single-case study was to enable a ‘thick description’ of suicide operations conducted by Hamas and its operatives for two key reasons. First, it was hoped that a detailed account of the phenomenon would be able to generate from the data a more holistic framework of analysis. Second, it was believed that “the essential task of theory building... is not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick descriptions possible, not to generalise across cases but to generalise within them”⁷⁷. Thus a ‘thick description’ of suicide operations conducted by Hamas and its operatives successfully revealed three interconnected factors during the course of this research: the ideology of political Islam and jihad, a historically constructed cultural norm of militant heroic martyrdom in the service of Palestinian nationalism, and the rationally driven symbolic and instrumental imperatives of

⁷⁴ Christina Goulding, ‘Grounded Theory: Some Reflections on Paradigm, Procedures and Misconceptions’, in Kate Gilbert (ed.), *The Working Paper Series*, The Management Research Centre, University of Wolverhampton (June 1999), p. 6; available on: http://www.wlv.ac.uk/PDF/uwbs_WP006-99%20Goulding.pdf, Date Accessed: 03 January 2008

⁷⁵ Kathy Charmaz, ‘Grounded Theory’, *opt. cit.*, p. 522;

⁷⁶ Robert E Stake, ‘Case Studies’ in Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, *opt. it.*, p. 437

⁷⁷ Clifford Geertz, ‘Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture’, in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 26

suicidal violence. These three factors were then, in turn, linked back to established theoretical approaches in international relations and became the building blocks of the proposed framework of analysis. The research concluded that the phenomenon of suicidal violence in the Palestinian territories as practiced by Hamas could not be understood comprehensively until all three theoretical understandings were applied simultaneously to the data available.

The empirical research methodology utilised was also multi-layered. First and foremost, both primary and secondary sources were examined and analysed without attempting to use these texts to verify any existing theory. This enabled the author to formulate the general research context at the outset of the study and approach primary and secondary data collection without forcing a preconceived framework on it. The sources used included relevant books, articles (from academic journals, newspapers and magazines), government/group documents, academic and policy conference papers, reports from think-tank, international security organisations as well as those produced by human rights groups. Secondly, extensive field research was undertaken to provide a contextualised, practical and holistic understanding of the case. Since the research focused on Hamas, field work was undertaken in Israel and the Palestinian territories from December 2004 to end-January 2005. Here again the methodology was based on utilizing databases hitherto unused and also conducting extensive interviews with both Israeli and Palestinian individuals and groups⁷⁸. The findings from the interviews and databases were first compared and meshed with the initial textual research and the resultant theoretical framework was then further developed and refined. In the latter stages aspects of content analysis were also applied⁷⁹. This is especially true for Hamas' political and military leaflets as well as for statements made by individual bombers, their families and other Palestinians.

The interviews conducted were mostly of a semi-structured type with single respondents (the depth interview) or a group of respondents (the focus group). As semi-structured

⁷⁸ See Appendix I for a list of 'on-the-record' interviews

⁷⁹ Content analysis is "a technique for making inferences from a focal text to its social context in an objectifiable manner ... and often involves statistical treatment of text units". See for example: Martin W. Bauer, 'Classical Content Analysis: A Review', in Martin W. Bauer and George Gaskell (eds.), *Qualitative Researching with Text, Image and Sound* (London, New Delhi and Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc., 2000)

interviews the author did not “lead the inquiry with a full set of predetermined questions as in a survey or questionnaire”⁸⁰. Instead the interviews had a fairly open framework which 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 (i.e. Hamas and the phenomenon of suicidal violence). Trust was also a key issue with both Palestinian depth interviews and focus groups. Consequently, a semi-structured framework allowed the author the flexibility to probe for details relevant to the research only once a rapport had been built with the respondents. The author was also fully aware of the ethical issues involved in conducting fieldwork in a conflict zone, including issues of informed consent, respondent privacy, confidentiality, anonymity, and no harm⁸¹. Every effort was made to ensure that these were strictly observed and respondents were always given the option of both terminating the interview at any point if they so wished and maintaining the confidentiality of their views. With regard to maintaining confidentiality respondents occasionally chose to have their views documented as ‘off-the-record’, in which case the information divulged and/or the respondent’s identity may not be disclosed. Additionally, respondents were also given the right to refuse to answer any of the questions asked⁸². They were also given the right to refuse having their interviews taped or recorded in any other manner.

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 research. The interviews were targeted towards 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. Informal

⁸⁰ George Gaskell, ‘Individual and Group Interviewing’, in Martin W. Bauer and George Gaskell (eds.), *Qualitative Researching*, *opt. cit.*, p. 38

⁸¹ Andrea Fontana and James H. Frey, ‘The Interview: From Structured Questions to Negotiated Text’ in Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, *opt. cit.*

⁸² Maurice Punch, ‘The Politics and Ethics of Fieldwork’, *Qualitative Research Method Series*, Vol. 3 (London, New Delhi and Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc., 1986)

discussions were also undertaken with university students, student activists, journalists, Israeli military and police personnel and local civilian populations in both Israel and the Palestinian territories.

V. Outline of the Thesis

In order to enable a holistic and contextualised understanding of the emergence of suicidal violence in the Palestinian territories, and its use by Hamas and its operatives against the Israeli state, it is imperative to begin with understanding the historical roots of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To this end Chapter II provides a brief political history of the conflict and locates the evolution and role of two key political players in the Palestinian setting, i.e. Fatah and Hamas. In case of Fatah, its development and history are closely linked first to the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) and then the Palestinian Authority (PA). As such Chapter II attempts to make these relations clearer and briefly illustrates how Fatah's dominance over the PLO/PA has 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 the context the next three chapters examine the key components that are seen to motivate suicidal violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Chapter III traces the expressive and instrumental rationality of suicide missions on both the individual and organisational level. The first part of this chapter outlines prominent literature on suicidal violence which uses choice-theoretic modelling. It then identifies gaps in this literature suggesting that current literature largely ignores the non-material, expressive rationality that suicidal violence holds for individuals. In doing so, the chapter argues that both the organisational and individual resort to suicidal violence may be conflated along three lines: survival, competition and retaliation. Part II of this chapter demonstrates the *dialectic* which exists between Hamas and its operatives asserting that this dialectic must be considered in order to appreciate the long-term existence and the simultaneously strategic and symbolic use of suicidal violence within the Palestinian setting.

Chapter IV 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 suicidal violence. As such suicide bombings are seen as the final step in an escalating trajectory of violent struggle which is aimed specifically at establishing a Palestinian state. This chapter first illustrates how militant heroic martyrdom is a crucial component of Palestinian selfhood and how it is a key component of Palestinian national identity. Part II of this chapter illustrates how Hamas has inserted itself into a pre-established Palestinian culture of militant heroic martyrdom which it has then successfully appropriated, reinterpreted and articulated as suicide missions.

Chapter V outlines the ideological reasoning behind suicidal violence and illustrates how political Islam is employed to facilitate the articulation, justification and legitimisation of suicidal violence as a modern-day *jihad* to Palestinian society through the means of modern interpretations and *fatwas*. This chapter illustrates how political Islam plays a crucial role in the Palestinian territories in that it supplies the ideological language, symbols and codes which legitimise the use of suicide operations against Israel. Part II of this chapter traces this religious rhetoric in Hamas literature and in the statements made by its operatives, their families and its supporters.

Finally, Chapter VI concludes by amalgamating the findings of the three core chapters to construct the proposed theoretical framework of analysis and brings together the main arguments and findings of the previous chapters. Finally this chapter also highlights the limitations of the thesis and suggests avenues for future research.

Chapter II: A Brief Political History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

*“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-Sayih¹

I. Tracing the Roots of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The roots of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be traced back to the late 19th 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 Palestine². 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 area³. The latter were mostly Orthodox Jews who survived largely on the charitable offerings of the European Jewry and lived in Palestine to study, pray, hoping eventually to die and be buried in the holy land. However, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries Jews from Europe began arriving in Palestine in successive waves of immigration that were known as *aliyot* (sing. *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

¹ Bana was a fourteen 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 fourteen months for throwing stones at an Israeli bus. As quoted by Eileen MacDonald, ‘Women of the West Bank’ in *Shoot the Women First* (London: Fourth Estate, 1991), p. 87

² John Quigley, *The Case for Palestine: An International Law Perspective* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005, revised and expanded version), p. 3

³ Ahron Bergman, *A History of Israel* (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 7

⁴ Ahron Bergman, *A History of Israel*, opt. cit., p. 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

establishing a contiguous chain of Jewish villages⁵. 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 19th century Ottoman implementation of a land registration system which had enabled wealthy absenteeees 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 case⁷. 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 Zionism⁸. By the time World War I 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 lands⁹.

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 Nations¹¹. More

⁵ See for example: Neville J. Mandel, *The Arabs and Zionism Before World War I* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1976); Sami Hadawi, *Palestinian Rights and Losses in 1948: A Comprehensive Study* (London: Saqi, 1988); Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries: A People's History* (London: Zed Press, 1979)

⁶ John Quigley, *The Case for Palestine*, opt. cit., p. 4

⁷ Rashid Khalidi, ‘Palestinian Peasant Resistance to Zionism before World War I’ in Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens (eds.), *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question* (London: Verso, 1987), pp. 214, 216-217.

⁸ Arieh L. Avneri, *The Claim of Dispossession: Jewish Land-Settlement and the Arabs 1878 – 1948* (New York: Herzl Press, 1982), pp. 110-114

⁹ John Quigley, *The Case for Palestine*, opt. cit., p. 6

¹⁰ See for example: Jehuda Reinharz, ‘The Balfour Declaration and Its Maker: A Reassessment’, *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 64, No. 3 (September 1992)

¹¹ Ahron Bergman, *A History of Israel*, opt. cit., pp. 16-18

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 territory¹². 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 1920-21 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 which eventually encompassed all of Palestine. The Great Revolt of 1936 -39 began in urban centres and spread rapidly into rural areas¹⁴. 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

¹² See for example: Joel Beinin and Lisa Hajjar, 'Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict- A Primer', *Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP)*, http://www.merip.org/palestine-israel_primer/toc-pal-isr-primer.html, Date Accessed: 23 June 2006

¹³ Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement 1949-1993* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 1-2. See also: Nur Masalha, *The Expulsion of the Palestinians : The Concept of Transfer in Zionist Thought, 1882- 1948* (Washington: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992); Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 2nd edition); Joel Beinin, 'Forgetfulness for Memory: The Limits of the New Israeli History', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 2 (Winter 2005)

¹⁴ Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, *opt. cit.*, p. 2

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 Palestine¹⁵.

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 organisations, 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 which formally ended the British Mandate and voted to partition Palestine into two states, one Arab and the other Jewish. The Zionists leadership while publicly accepting this partition plan hoped to expand the borders allotted to the Jewish state¹⁷. 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 Palestine¹⁸.

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 organised, 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 areas¹⁹. Britain formally evacuated Palestine on 15 May 1948 and Zionist

¹⁵ John Quigley, *The Case for Palestine*, *opt. cit.*, p. 27; For a comprehensive study on the state of Arab resistance and leadership in the decade after the Great Revolt see: Issa Khalaf, *Politics in Palestine: Arab Factionalism and Social Disintegration, 1939-1948* (Albany: State University of New York, 1991)

¹⁶ Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, *opt. cit.*, p. 3. See also J. Bowyer Bell, *Terror out of Zion: The Fight for Israeli Independence 1929-1949: Irgun Zvai Leumi, LEHI and the Palestine Underground* (Dublin: Academy Press, 1979)

¹⁷ See for example: Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987, 1st edition), p. 32; Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents* (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004, 5th edition), especially chapter 5.

¹⁸ Joel Beinin and Lisa Hajjar, 'Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict- A Primer', *opt. cit.*, p. 5

¹⁹ Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, *opt. cit.*, p. 3; See also: Michael J. Cohen, *Palestine and the Great Powers, 1945-1948* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982); Salim Tamari (ed.), *Jerusalem 1948: The Arab Neighbourhoods and Their Fate in the War* (Jerusalem: Institute of Jerusalem Studies, Badil Resource Centre for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, 1999); Walid

leaders immediately proclaimed the independent state of Israel. The governments of neighbouring Arab states which 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 percent 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 Jordan²¹. 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 percent 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 1947-48 war was characterised 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 which enabled Jewish settlers to legally acquire abandoned Arab property²². 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

Khalidi (ed.), *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992)

²⁰ Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, *opt. cit.*, p. 3

²¹ Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, *opt. cit.*, pp. 196-200; Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, *opt. cit.*, pp. 3-4

²² John Quigley, *The Case for Palestine*, *opt. cit.*, pp. 103-110; Ahron Bergman, *A History of Israel*, *opt. cit.*, pp. 70-73

with the military or political apparatus of the Israeli state. The Middle East in turn the aftermath of the Second World War was characterised 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 which 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 Egypt²⁵. 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 nationalisation 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 pressure²⁶.

Disputes in the demilitarised 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 border²⁷. 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 mobilised its troops on 14th 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

²³ Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, opt. cit., p. 25

²⁴ Joel Beinin and Lisa Hajjar, ‘Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict- A Primer’, opt. cit., p. 6

²⁵ John Quigley, *The Case for Palestine*, opt. cit., p. 154

²⁶ Joel Beinin and Lisa Hajjar, ‘Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict- A Primer’, opt. cit., p. 6

²⁷ Richard B. Parker, ‘The June 1967 War: Some Mysteries Explored’, *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Spring 1992), p. 178

war Israel captured the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the Golan Heights from Syria and the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) from Jordan²⁸.

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 recognised political boundaries²⁹. 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 region³⁰. Syria refused to sign the resolution and reverted to encouraging Palestinian raids across its borders into Israel³¹. 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 till 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 recognise 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 Kippur³². Peace was brokered by the USA which 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.

²⁸ See for example: John Quigley, *The Case for Palestine*, opt. cit.; Richard B. Parker, 'The June 1967 War'; Gideon Gera, 'Israel and the June 1967 War: 25 Years Later', *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (Spring 1992); Ersun N. Kutulus, 'The Notion of a "Pre-emptive War": The Six Day War Revisited', *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (Spring 2007); Moshe Gat, 'Britain and Israel Before and After the Six Day War, June 1967: From Support to Hostility', *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Spring 2004)

²⁹ Sami Hadawi, *Bitter Harvest: A Modern History of Palestine* (Essex: Scorpion Publishing Ltd., 1989), p. 245

³⁰ See for example: Avner Yaniv, 'Israeli Foreign Policy since the Six Day War' and Don Peretz, 'Israeli Policies Towards the Arab States and the Palestinians Since 1967', both in Yehuda Lukacs and Abdalla M. Battah (eds.), *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Two Decades of Change* (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1988)

³¹ Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, opt. cit., pp. 298-299

³² For a comprehensive summary of the October 1973 war see: Trevor Nevitt Dupuy, *Elusive Victory: The Arab-Israeli Wars, 1947-1974* (London: Macdonald and Jane's, 1978)

In 1978 Sadat, the Israeli Prime Minister 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 neither an independent Palestinian state nor 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 Organisation (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 September 16th -19th 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 Palestinians³⁵.

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

³³ Joel Beinin and Lisa Hajjar, ‘Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict- A Primer’, opt. cit., p. 9

³⁴ Sami Hadawi, *Bitter Harvest*, opt. cit., p. 279

³⁵ Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, opt. cit., p. 370. For a comprehensive account of the massacres see: Bayan Nuwayhed al-Hout, *Sabra and Shatila: September 1982* (London and Ann Arbor, Michigan: Pluto, 2004)

spread to encompass the West Bank. The logical culmination of twenty years of frustration with Israeli occupation and over a century of upheaval and disruption it was a spontaneous, grassroots movement which had mass social participation and drew upon the organisations and institutions which had emerged under conditions of occupation. Often compared to the 1936-39 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 movement³⁷. 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 one thousand Palestinians, including 200 under the age of sixteen, between 1987 and 1991³⁹.

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

³⁶ Also referred to in some texts as the Unified National Command (UNC)

³⁷ Cheryl A. Rubenberg, *The Palestinians: In Search of a Just Peace* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynn Rienner Publishers Inc., 2003), p. 32; See also Kenneth W. Stein, 'The Intifada and the Uprising of 1936-1939: A Comparison of Arab Communities' in Robert O. Freedman (ed.), *The Intifada: Its Impact on Israel, the Arab World, and the Superpowers* (Miami: Florida International University Press, 1991) and Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, 'Introduction: On Achieving Independence', in Jamal R. Nasser and Roger Heacock (eds.), *Intifada: Palestine at the Crossroads* (London, New York and Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1990)

³⁸ Also note that the PFLP was established in 1967 but did not join the PLO till 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 Joel Beinin and Lisa Hajjar, 'Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict- A Primer', opt. cit., p. 9

lowest point and in decline by 1987⁴⁰. 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, recognised Israel in November-December 1988 and also declared an independent state of Palestine in the West Bank and Gaza⁴¹.

In 1991, after the Gulf War, President George Bush made serious efforts to stabilise 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 of 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 delegation⁴². Negotiations dragged on with little progress till Yitzhak Rabin was assumed office in June 1992 and he promised a speedy conclusion of the on-going negotiations. The Israeli and Palestinian fatigue with the on-going 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) which was signed in Washington in September 1993⁴³.

The Oslo DOP established a negotiating process which was supposed to take place over a five year interim period during which Israel was to withdraw first from Gaza and Jericho

⁴⁰ Bard E. O'Neil, 'The Intifada in the Context of Armed Struggle' in Robert O. Freedman (ed.), *The Intifada*, opt. cit. p. 37

⁴¹ See for example: Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*, opt. cit. pp. 607-638

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 William B. Quandt, 'Israeli-Palestinian Peace Talks' in Tamara Cofman Wittes (ed.), *How Israelis and Palestinians Negotiate: A Cross Cultural Analysis of the Oslo Peace Process* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2005); David Markovsky, 'Taba Mythchief', *The National Interest* (Spring 2003)

and then from other unspecified areas of the West Bank. The PLO on its part made its principal commitments by recognising the state of Israel and promising to cooperate in dismantling the ‘terrorist’ network in the occupied territories. Israel’s principle 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 percent 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 May 4, 1999. The Taba Agreement (Oslo II), signed in September 1995, divided the West Bank into three areas. Israel withdrew completely from Area A which covered the main cities of the West Bank, i.e. Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarem, Qalqilya, Ramallah, Bethlehem and by January 1997 also from 80 percent of Hebron. This comprised a total of 3 percent of the West Bank. The Palestinian Authority was responsible for specific municipal functions in Area B, comprising about 23 percent of the territory, while joint Israeli-Palestinian patrols maintained internal security. Israel retained full control over Area C, which covered about 74 percent 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 discussed⁴⁵. In October 1988 the Wye Accords outlined an Israeli withdrawal from an additional 13.1 percent of the West Bank but Israel unilaterally suspended implementation of these terms after withdrawing only from an additional 2 percent of the territory. In addition, between 1992 and 1996 Jewish settlement blocs in the West Bank and East Jerusalem expanded by about 37 percent⁴⁶ and were connected, to each other and to Israeli cities, through an expansive network of bypass roads which 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 process⁴⁷. Furthermore, Israel’s reluctance to relinquish control over territory combined

⁴⁴ Joel Beinin, ‘The Demise of the Oslo Process’, *Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP)*, 26 March 1999, <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero032699.html>, Date Accessed: 20 October 2007

⁴⁵ Ibid; Catherine Cook, ‘Why There’s No Peace in Palestine’, *Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP)*, September 2003, http://www.merip.org/newspaper_opeds/oped_cook092403.html, Date Accessed: 20 October 2007; Adam Hanieh and Catherine Cook, ‘A Road Map to the Oslo Cul-de-Sac’, *Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP)*, 15 May 2003,

<http://www.merip.org/mero/mero051503.html>, Date Accessed: 20 October 2007

⁴⁶ Joel Beinin, ‘The Demise of the Oslo Process’, opt. cit.

⁴⁷ Adam Hanieh and Catherine Cook, ‘A Road Map to the Oslo Cul-de-Sac’, opt. cit.

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 percent of the West Bank and 65 percent 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 percent 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 recognise an independent Palestinians 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 which characterised 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 a thousand 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 which resulted in the killing of six unarmed Palestinian protesters. This triggered the riots which mark the beginning of the bloody Al-Aqsa intifada⁴⁹. During the first intifada the space of clash and conflict was the Palestinian street, neighbourhoods and homes. The second intifada

⁴⁸ Joel Beinin and Lisa Hajjar, 'Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict- A Primer', *opt. cit.*, p. 11; Joel Beinin, 'Camp David II', *Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP)*, 26 July 2000, <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero072600.html>, Date Accessed: 20 November 2007

⁴⁹ Rema Hammami and Salim Tamari, 'Anatomy of Another Rebellion', *Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP)*, http://www.merip.org/mer/mer217/217_hammami-tamari.html, Date Accessed: 27 November 2007

however was characterised by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) withdrawing to the borders of cities and towns and being thus concentrated around checkpoints and borders within 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 which 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 which had created approximately 40,000 armed and trained Palestinians in the occupied territories⁵⁰. 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 2006⁵¹.

II. 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 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 through armed struggle. In many ways Fatah has been crucial to the articulation of the

⁵⁰ Penny Johnson and Eileen Kuttab, 'Where Have All the Women (and Men) Gone? Reflections on Gender and the Second Palestinian Intifada', *Feminist Review* 69 (Winter 2001), p. 24.

⁵¹ Michele K. Esposito, 'The Al-Aqsa Intifada: Military Operations, Suicide Attacks, Assassinations, and Losses in the First Four Years', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 2 (Winter 2005); Graham Usher, 'Facing Defeat: The Intifada Two Years On', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXXII, No. 2 (Winter 2003)

⁵² Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*, *opt. cit.*, p. 71; Helena Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organisation: People, Power and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984)

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 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 mobilising support for various Arab regimes in the region⁵³. 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 states⁵⁴. It therefore adopted a very measured stance vis-à-vis the PLO which 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 ambitions⁵⁵. 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 which 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

⁵³ See for example: Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1991); Avraham Sela, *The Decline of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: Middle East Politics and the Quest for Regional Order* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998)

⁵⁴ Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*, *opt. cit.*, pp. 87- 91

⁵⁵ Yonah Alexander, *Palestinian Secular Terrorism: Profiles of Fatah, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine- General Command and Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine* (Ardsley, New York: Transnational Publishers, 2003), p.1. See also: Beverly Milton-Edwards and Peter Hinchcliffe, *Conflicts in the Middle East Since 1945* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002, second edition)

the PLO represented a challenge for Fatah which was forced to initiate its armed struggle sooner than planned and thereby end its years as an underground movement⁵⁶.

Fatah's thus 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 eroded this political credibility and strengthened Fatah's position. Fatah in turn faced considerable difficulty in both mounting military operations against Israel and surviving 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 which allowed it to sharply increase in 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. Therefore, various Palestinian groups actively participated in the Six Day War that erupted in mid-1967⁵⁷.

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 interests of Arab states in the region. At the same time, Fatah recognised, in this 1967 defeat, a rare opportunity to break away from the control exerted by Arab governments and consolidate popular support for active resistance. In late June

⁵⁶ Anat N. Kurz, *Fatah and the Politics of Violence: The Institutionalization of a Popular Struggle* (Brighton and Portland, Oregon: Sussex Academic Press, 2005), pp. 35-37

⁵⁷ Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*, opt. cit., pp. 110-139

1967, Fatah claimed that it had transferred its leadership to the occupied territories⁵⁸. 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 August 28th marked the ‘second launch’ of Fatah’s armed struggle. The Israelis responded with an intensive campaign which 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 organisations resisting occupation *in* the territories⁵⁹.

Fatah’s military activity also won it support from various Arab regimes in the aftermath of the 1967 War which 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 which had initiated a punitive raid targeting the bases located in the town⁶⁰. 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 which culminated in its take over of the PLO as marked by Arafat’s election as PLO chairman in February 1969.

A wave of volunteers enlisted with the organisation within days after Karamah enabling both an expansion of guerrilla units and an escalation of military activity against Israel⁶¹. Guerrilla attacks were carried on simultaneously from the Jordanian, Lebanese and Syrian fronts. At the same time there was a distinct shift in the political philosophy of Fatah whose bases in the occupied territories had been dismantled by Israeli action. Fatah now believed that it was necessary to “acquire a secure base on the East Bank” and the slogan now

⁵⁸ Yezid Sayigh, ‘Turning Defeat into Opportunity: The Palestinian Guerrillas after the June 1967 War’, *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (Spring 1992), p. 245

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 258

⁶⁰ Cheryl A. Rubenberg, *The Palestinians*, *opt. cit.*, pp. 164-167; See also Hisham Bashir Sharabi, *Palestinian Guerrillas: Their Credibility and Effectiveness* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1970);

⁶¹ Anat N. Kurz, *Fatah and the Politics of Violence*, *opt. cit.*, p. 55; John W. Amos, *Palestinian Resistance: Organisation of a Nationalist Movement* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1980), pp. 56-60; See also: Janet Wallach and John Wallach, *Arafat: In the Eyes of the Beholder* (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1990)

became “there is no difference between the Inside and Outside”⁶². However, the Jordanian government, wary of an organised Palestinian power in the country, were already trying to curb their 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 pushed the resistance organisations towards setting up civilian militias in Palestinian refugee camps thereby setting the stage for the evolution of the Palestinian “state within a state” inside Jordan⁶³. 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 Lebanon⁶⁴.

Fatah was also increasingly concerned about challenges posed by other guerrilla groups to its position in the PLO. Of the various groups 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 Organisation (BSO) which 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 1972⁶⁵. 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 the “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 (sic) dominant Maronite Christian community and the Muslims majority to crisis points in (sic) 1973”⁶⁶. Alliances between the Palestinian resistance organisations and the Lebanese Muslim

⁶² Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*, opt. cit., p. 207

⁶³ Anat N. Kurz, *Fatah and the Politics of Violence*, opt. cit., p. 59

⁶⁴ Yonah Alexander, *Palestinian Secular Terrorism*, opt. cit., p. 2

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 3; See also: Aryeh Y. Yodfat and Yuval Arnon-Ohanna, *PLO Strategy and Politics* (London: Croom Helm, 1981)

⁶⁶ Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*, opt. cit., p. 323

opposition made this situation even more explosive while the October 1973 war further exacerbated the situation⁶⁷.

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 focussing 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 Israel⁶⁸. The Israeli's 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 till 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 Gaza⁶⁹. 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 institutionalised 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 secular nationalist PLO/PA and they now moved swiftly to fill the vacuum that was being left by the PA.

⁶⁷ See for example: Alain Gresh, *The PLO - The Struggle Within: Towards an Independent Palestinian State* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd, 1988), p. 141

⁶⁸ Anat N. Kurz, *Fatah and the Politics of Violence*, opt. cit., pp. 85-91

⁶⁹ Yonah Alexander, *Palestinian Secular Terrorism*, opt. cit., p. 3

III. 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 organisation 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 secular nationalistic position on Palestinian statehood. Open political competition with other more established political players was thus inevitable and began most obviously with Hamas' 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 resistance⁷⁰. Thus, while on the one hand, the Hamas' 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 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' alislami*) in the Gaza Strip. The Mujamma' was formally legalised 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 in turn was formed directly as a result of the decision by the Muslim Brotherhood, its parent organisation, to become more actively involved in the resistance upon the spontaneous outburst of the intifada in 1987. A number

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 offshoot 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: Ziad Abu-Amr, 'Hamas: A Historical and Political Background', *Journal of Palestine Studies* XXII.4 (Summer 1993); 'Dealing With Hamas', *International Crisis Group Middle East Report* No. 21 (Amman/Brussels: ICG, 26 January 2004); Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Ehud Ya'ari, 'The Metamorphosis of Hamas', *The Jerusalem Report* (14 January 1993);

⁷² Shaul Mishal, 'The Pragmatic Dimension of the Palestinian Hamas: A Network Perspective', *Armed Forces & Society* Vol. 29, No. 4 (Summer 2003), p. 575

of other factors also played a role, including the growing Palestinian despair with both the PLO and the prospects of 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 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 1945⁷⁴. By 1947 there were about twenty-five 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.

⁷³ See for example: Alain Gresh, *The PLO: The Struggle Within*, opt. cit.; Abdallah Frangi, *The PLO and Palestine* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1983); Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*, opt. cit.

⁷⁴ For a detailed treatment of the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamic movements in the West Bank and Gaza see for example: Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine* (London and New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 1996); Abd Al-Fattah Muhammad El-Awaisi, *The Muslim Brothers and the Palestine Question 1928 – 1947* (London and New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998); Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994); Iyad Barghouti, 'Islamic Movements in Historical Palestine', in Abdel Salam Sidahmed and Anoushiravan Ehteshami (eds.), *Islamic Fundamentalism* (Oxford and Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996)

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 Gaza, while under Egyptian administration the Muslim Brothers managed to maintain their Palestinian character, their fortunes were closely tied to the centre in Egypt and they also 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 Brother's tended to place a greater emphasis on the Palestinian cause and focussed on resisting refugee settlements and the internationalisation 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 which 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 the lack of unity, exacerbated by the divergent political experiences of the Brotherhood, permeated the organisation 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 which 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 but it soon became obvious that its leaders were unable to articulate or sustain a comprehensive Islamic response to the occupation, its authorities and 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

1967⁷⁵. 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 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 recognised the strength of the Palestinian national movement and realised that it would need to reconsider its public image and political agenda in response to the realities of occupation and the rise of the secularised 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 paralyse 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 to not 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' 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 PLA. These

⁷⁵ For details on differences in the development of the Muslim Brotherhood in the West Bank and Gaza see for example: Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2000); Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine*, opt. cit.; Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza*, opt. cit.

fedayeen fighters were modern revolutionaries who as secularists or socialists fought for national liberation rather than religious salvation⁷⁶. The Israeli crackdown ensured that this *fedayeen* movement was brutally crushed. The debilitated and targeted national movement was unable to fulfill the comprehensive role assigned to it by the local population and a political vacuum emerged as a result in the Gaza Strip. While the national movement was able to keep its legitimacy intact, the consistent Israeli pressure frustrated 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 discernable 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 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 non-interference. The Brotherhood established the Islamic Center, *al-Mujamma' al-Islami*, as a voluntary organisation in 1973 and it was formally legalised in 1978⁷⁷. The *Mujamma'* was a critical step in institutionalising the Ikhwan in Gaza and under Sheikh Yassin the 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 secularised nationalism as a means to liberation from Israeli occupation. It did so by denouncing the nationalists as traitors to the Muslim faith and

⁷⁶ Interestingly, while these revolutionaries were declared martyrs who would gain paradise, they were always referred to as *fedayeen* (revolutionaries) and never, like 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 developed over time and reflected the strength, or lack thereof, of religious motifs and concurrently political Islam in the Palestinian political landscape. For more details on political Islam and jihad see chapter V

⁷⁷ For details on the *Mujamma'* see for example: Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine*, opt. cit.; Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas*, opt. cit.

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 resultant 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 Islamic Jihad emerged as an organisation distinct from the Brotherhood as a result of its emphasis upon resistance rather than Islamisation through preaching and education. By 1987 the Islamic impact was palpable in the politics of the Gaza Strip and the re-Islamisation of Gazan society ensured that the Mujamma' could rival a national movement that was increasingly corrupt, factionalised and weakened.

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 secularised 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 the massacres of Sabra and Shatila. These developments 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 this volatile mix of internal and external determinants 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 which began the intifada and the Ikhwan once again perceptively recognised 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 institutionalised 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 organisation 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, end⁷⁸. However, as an organisation 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, its ‘local’ base also enabled it to operate without having to constantly reconcile its actions and interest with those of host Arab states or diaspora communities⁷⁹. 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 borders⁸⁰. 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 identity⁸¹.

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

⁷⁸ Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*, opt. cit., p. 630

⁷⁹ ‘Dealing With Hamas’, opt. cit., p. 6

⁸⁰ Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas*, opt. cit., p. 14

⁸¹ See also Appendix D for Hamas’ top leadership over the past twenty years

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' attempts to survive and create a distinct identity in the 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 organisation. Hamas was thus in fact meant to complement the existing structure and not to replace the social activities traditionally associated with the Mujamma⁸². 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 organisation.

Hamas' claim of an indigenous leadership base placed it in a position of being able to engage with issues most relevant for its constituency. Indeed, its grassroots base enabled it to empathise with and address the daily needs of the Palestinians as well as concurrently addressing their long term political aspirations. However, Hamas from its point of genesis was forced to manoeuvre politically between established players, most significantly: the PLO on the one hand, and Israel and the international community on the other. As such, Hamas has had to consistently balance its own agenda and goals with the political reality of survival in an internal arena initially dominated by the PLO with Yasser Arafat's Fatah as its dominant faction (*fasa'il*) and an external arena where impetus is determined by 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 and Fatah or vice versa.

Hamas' structural organisation deserves a mention primarily because it is representative of how the group, as a relatively new organisation in the Palestinian political landscape, has had the advantage of learning from the mistakes made by earlier organisations – a factor that no doubt has contributed to its military and political success. The Israeli crackdown on

⁸² Shaul Mishal, 'The Pragmatic Dimension of the Palestinian Hamas' opt. cit., p. 575

Fatah in the early 1970s for example was successful primarily because of its weak organisational 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 organisational roots that Hamas' possess⁸³. 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 only⁸⁴. Shaul Mishal and Maoz Rosenthal use four basic criteria to identify the typology of "terrorist" organisations which include: "the communication structure within the organisation; the level of specialisation and division of labour; the chain of command and control, and; the organisation's time definitions regarding the implementation of planned actions"⁸⁵. They believe that these four elements are also impacted by the conditions in which an organisation operates, i.e. availability of local contracts, resources and so on and as external conditions vary does the design of the organisation.

Based on these criteria, Mishal and Rosenthal identify Hamas as a combination of a network chain type and network hub type of organisation. A network-chain organisation is characterised as one which lacks a strict command and control structure but "retains a specific sequence of communication"⁸⁶. Hamas may be categorised as a network-chain type organisation primarily because its political, social and military units are sharply compartmentalised. 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 organisation. The network-hub type of organisation is characterised as one which "lacks a strict chain of command and control throughout the organisation, yet one player is responsible for the monitoring and directing the organisation's activities"⁸⁷ - as such this player operates as the 'hub' in the organisation's structure. Until his arrest in 1989, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin represented the hub

⁸³ Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*, *opt. cit.*, p. 208

⁸⁴ Personal interview, Sheikh Hasan Yusuf, political spokesperson for Hamas in the West Bank, Ramallah, West Bank, 03 January 2005

⁸⁵ Shaul Mishal and Maoz Rosenthal, 'Al-Qaeda as a Dune Organisation: Towards a Typology of Islamic Terrorist Organisations' in *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 28 (2005)

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p. 286

⁸⁷ *Ibid*

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 compartmentalised, network-chain organisation with perhaps only a few top-level leaders holding information about how the various units are connected⁸⁸.

Finally, Hamas also adamantly refuses to be associated with any other organisation or government – perhaps another lesson it has learnt from Fatah's historic experience with interference on behalf of various Arab states. Some specialists like Dore Gold, Israel's former ambassador to the UN and the head of the Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs, believe otherwise. In a recent interview regarding the recent Hamas electoral victory, Gold stated:

"I take Hamas' ideology very seriously, even if most Israelis view it as not so different from Fatah. They are an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, which has produced so many different kinds of offshoots including Khaled Sheikh Muhammad, Ayman al-Zuwahiri and the worst one of all, Abdullah al-Azzam, who was Osama bin Laden's mentor. There's a supermarket of Islamism out there, but I'm most concerned with the extremist ones." He also stated that "in 2003, the Israel Defense Forces raided a Hamas training school in Gaza and found training materials that included texts from Wahhabist clerics"⁸⁹.

For Gold, Hamas' electoral victory means that it could become a bridgehead for al-Qaeda right on Israel's borders. Having said that, there is also consistent evidence of the rift that exists between the Hamas and al-Qaeda. Hamas, despite its Islamic identity, is a pragmatic organisation which believes in the tactical use of both religion and democratic institutions

⁸⁸ Personal interview, Sheikh Hasan Yusuf, political spokesperson for Hamas in the West Bank, *opt. cit.* It is also worth noting that Hamas' decision making structure remains remarkably unclear till 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' take-over of Gaza and the 'outside' leadership, most ostensibly headed by Khaled Mishal out of Damascus, Syria. See Appendix D for details.

⁸⁹ Helena Cobban 'Who is the Real Hamas?'. *Salon.com*, (2 March 2006).

<http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2006/03/02/hamas/index.html>, Date Accessed: 02 March 2006.

to strengthen its position within the Palestinian society. Its professed aims cease at the acquisition of a Palestinian state. Hamas has never declared an all-out ‘jihad’ against the West like the al-Qaeda and fissures between political leaderships for both groups can be detected from statements made by al-Zawahiri, often referred to as ‘al-Qaeda’s number two’, which take the Hamas to task for compromising pan-Muslim solidarity⁹⁰. Statements by various Hamas leaders also show their irritation at any association with al-Qaeda⁹¹.

IV. Conclusion

This chapter 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 Chapter III). This chapter 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 till 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 compartmentalised organisational structure it has adopted. As a direct corollary, it has also consistently recognised 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 IV and V). This has not only enabled it to

⁹⁰ See: Stephen Ulph, Al-Zawahiri Take Hamas to Task’, *Terrorism Focus* 3.9 (7 March 2006), <http://jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369916>. Date Accessed: 04 March 2006

⁹¹ See personal interview with Sheikh Hasan Yusuf, spokesperson for the Hamas, Ramallah (8th Jan. 2005). See also Khaled Mishal, Hamas political leader, on BBCNews, ‘Hamas Rejects al-Qaeda’s Support’ (5 March 2006), www.bbc.co.uk. Date Accessed: 05 March 2006.

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 categorised as yet another organisation 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 with 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. To this end the next three chapters will address specific aspects of this phenomenon. Chapter III begins this endeavour by attempting to address *why* suicidal violence was used to resist the Israeli state.

Chapter III: Suicide Operations as the Convergence of Expressive and Instrumental Violence with Multiple Rationalities

*"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 'Izz al-din al-Qassam Militias"*
- Martyr Muhammad Hazza al-Ghoul¹

Part I

I. Introduction

This chapter seeks to explain why suicide attacks emerged in the Israeli-Palestinian landscape of conflict in 1993 and why they continued to escalate and become a sustained means of engagement with the Israeli state in the period of study. The first part of this chapter outlines recent literature and its limitations before establishing specific parameters for analysing the phenomenon. The rest of the chapter seeks to demonstrate the strategic logic of both the organisation and the individual who use suicide attacks. This chapter illustrates that both the organisational 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 recognising the equal importance of both levels of analysis, i.e. recognising that while strong organisational support is necessary for suicide bombings to exist as a protracted political phenomenon, individual motivations play an equally important role in promulgating such attacks. This chapter thus seeks to demonstrate the *dialectic* which exists between Hamas and its operatives as this is crucial in understanding the long-term existence and use of suicide violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Locating this dialectic enables this chapter to demonstrate how suicide missions are the converging point of instrumental (i.e. functional or strategic) and expressive (i.e. symbolic) violence for both Hamas and its operatives.

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 Mohammed M. Hafez, *Manufacturing the Human Bombs: The Making of Palestinian Suicide Bombers* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2006), p. 90

II. Establishing the Parameters of Analysis

A number of recent studies which study the phenomenon of suicide bombings focus on its strategic aspects, providing detailed analyses of why organisations prefer this particular tactic as opposed to any other method in a given space and time. These studies tend to explain suicide bombings as a political and military strategy for organisations, 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 on². In identifying and exploring the strategic logic of suicide bombings for the organisation, this recent scholarship represents a refreshing break from traditional theses which purported that suicide attacks were absolutely devoid of rationality. Nonetheless a significant amount of this new scholarship still tends to focus almost entirely upon the organisation's role and its cost and benefit calculations, and in this unmitigated focus 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 seems to be more unclear and difficult to pin down and their motivations obviously much more diverse. How can human beings strap explosives around themselves with the clear intention of entering a crowded place in order to kill and maim as many people as possible with their own deaths? Studies that attempt to answer such questions, and focus on individual motivations, tend to rely on the psychology and personal characteristics of individual bombers. Ariel Merari, a leading scholar in the field for example, pointed out in his original thesis how 'terrorist suicide' is an individual rather than group phenomenon in that "it is done by people who wish to die for personal reasons and (sic) the terrorist framework offers the excuse rather than the real drive"³. Yet since then he has significantly altered his stance and believes suicide attacks are an organisational phenomenon instead. In his revised work Merari shifts the focus away from individual motivations and instead identifies the

² See for example: Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005); Shaul Shay, *The Shahids: Islam and Suicide Attacks* (Somerset, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2004); Bruce Hoffmann and Gordon McCormick, 'Terrorism, Signalling and Suicide Attacks', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27.4 (July-August 2004); Assaf Moghadam, 'Palestinian Suicide Terrorism in the Second Intifada: Motivations and Organizational Aspects', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 26 (March-April 2003); Robert Pape, 'The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism' *American Political Science Review* 97 (2003)

³ Ariel Merari, 'The Readiness to Kill and Die: Suicidal Terrorism in the Middle East', in Walter Reich (ed.), *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind* (New York: Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars and Cambridge University Press, 1990); and 'Suicide Terrorism' in Robert I. Yufit and David Lester (eds.), *Assessment, Treatment and Prevention of Suicidal Behaviour* (New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2005).

organisation as playing a crucial role in coercing and brainwashing individuals into a “production line at the end of which is the ready suicide”⁴. Scholars such as Scott Atran, Anat Berko and Edna Erez who also focus on individual motives similarly point out that processes of recruitment, dehumanisation and indoctrination are crucial factors in propelling the “suicide industry” and frame bombers as ‘victims’ of these processes⁵. In each case, even when the work’s focus is supposedly upon the individual, the organisational aspect is believed to play a much more important role in suicide bombing campaigns than individual motivations⁶.

Some recent works have tried to adopt a more balanced approach and take into consideration the role of both the individual and the organisation⁷. These studies point to the multiplicity of individual motivations and illustrate how these motivations include aspects of revenge, commitment to a political group, the desire to achieve immortality and capture material good for the family, or deep individual belief in nationalism or religion⁸. While these works certainly supply some answers, they still tend to locate the impetus of the bombing in organisational or group behaviour rather than with the bombers themselves. Thus, they subordinate individual motives and rationality to organisational goals. In all cases the individual’s choice is seen to be based in a burst of emotion and the *rationality of individual self-sacrifice* is ignored and/or subordinated to the instrumental rationality of the organisation. Organisations are in turn consistently depicted as strategically manipulating, encouraging and exploiting individual motivations – varied and/or altruistic though they may be - in order to achieve group-level instrumental goals.

⁴ Assaf Moghadam, ‘Fletcher Hosts Ariel Merari, Israeli Expert on Suicide Terrorism’, *Fletcher Ledger*, Vol. 3, No. 8 (4 February 2002), available on: <http://www.fletcherledger.com/archive>

⁵ Anat Berko and Edna Erez, ‘Ordinary People and Death Work: Palestinian Suicide Bombers as Victimizers and Victims’, in *Violence and Victims* 20.6 (December 2005); Scott Atran, ‘Genesis of Suicide Terrorism’, *Science Magazine* 299 (March 2003)

⁶ One might say that this bias is rooted in the general tendency in IR to focus on states while largely ignoring sub-state and non-state actors. In our case the focus on Hamas may be a testimony to the fact that IR scholarship ‘sees’ Hamas more as a state-like/proto-state actor in the Palestinian setting.

⁷ Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005) and ‘Palestinian Suicide Bombings: Public Support, Market Share and Outbidding’, *Political Science Quarterly* 119.1 (2004); Assaf Moghadam, ‘Palestinian Suicide Terrorism in the Second Intifada’, *opt. cit.*; Robert Pape, ‘The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism’, *opt. cit.*

⁸ See for example: Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, *opt. cit.*; Assaf Moghadam, ‘Palestinian Suicide Terrorism in the Second Intifada’, *opt. cit.*; Boaz Ganor, ‘Suicide Attacks in Israel’ in *Countering Suicide Terrorism* (Herzliya, Israel: (ICT) The International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism, 2002); Shaul Kimhi and Shemuel Even, ‘Who are the Palestinian Suicide Bombers?’ in *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16.4 (Winter 2004); Jerrold M. Post, Ehud Sprinzak and Laura M. Denny, ‘The Terrorists in Their Own Words: Interviews with 35 Incarcerated Middle Eastern Terrorists’, in *Terrorism and Political Violence* 15.1 (Spring 2003)

Thus, recent works, while marking a clean break with first generation scholarship in suicide bombings, still tends to focus purely upon the instrumental aspects of suicide bombings and inevitably ignore its symbolic dimensions. In addition, by either ignoring individual rationality or subordinating it to group rationality, these works tacitly assert that individual motivations for suicide violence either lack a rational logic altogether or this logic, if it exists, is not as significant and ‘means-ends’ driven as that of the organisation. In other words, this academic literature purports that suicide bombings cannot exist without organisational impetus and manipulation. While this may be true to a certain extent, such a hypothesis provides only a partial analysis of the phenomenon because it cannot explain why bombers in the Israeli- Palestinian conflict are *increasingly unaffiliated or loosely affiliated*⁹ 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 volunteer*¹⁰ for suicide missions, as opposed to other forms of military engagement. In short these works cannot explain the individual’s drive for self-sacrifice and hence what their martyrdom signifies both for themselves as well as for their society.

Admittedly, a handful of studies have attempted to understand the social meaning that martyrdom holds for the individual actors involved¹¹. These explanations tend to ignore the organisation and focus more explicitly upon the bomber and his/her self-perception of their actions. They try to decipher what meaning(s) these individuals assign to their own martyrdom and in doing so contextualise the bomber and his/her individual reasoning in a given socio-political cultural milieu. Implicitly then, this literature suggests that the role of organisations in recruiting and indoctrinating suicide bombers may be overstated and questions if individual martyrs view their actions through the

⁹ See for example: Nichole Argo, ‘Understanding and Defusing Human Bombs: The Palestinian Case and the Pursuit of a Martyrdom Complex’, paper presented at the annual meeting of the *International Studies Association (ISA)*, Montreal, 20 March 2004 and ‘Human Bombs: Rethinking Religion and Terror’, *Audit of the Conventional Wisdom* (MIT Centre for International Studies, April 2006)

¹⁰ Personal interview with Dr. Hussein Ahmad, Head of the An-Najah National University Center for Opinion Polls and Survey Studies, 17 January 2005, Nablus.

¹¹ See for example: Mohammed M. Hafez, ‘Dying to be Martyrs: The Symbolic Dimensions of Suicide Terrorism’, in Ami Pedahzur (ed.), *Root Causes of Suicide Terrorism: The Globalization of Martyrdom* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2006); Frahad Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers: Allah’s New Martyrs* (London: Pluto Press, 2005); Nichole Argo, ‘Understanding and Defusing the Human Bombs: The Palestinian Case and the Pursuit of a Martyrdom Complex’, paper presented at the annual meeting of the *International Studies Association (ISA)*, Montreal 20 March 2004; Alan B. Krueger and Jitka Maleckova, ‘Education, Poverty, Political Violence and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Link?’, Working Paper 9074, *National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) Working Paper Series*, (Cambridge, MA: NBER, July 2002)

same prism as the organisations that they belong to. In other words, are individuals motivated by the strategic effectiveness of martyrdom or are there other nationalist, emotive, religious motives behind their choice which have “little to do with instrumental rationality”¹² that need to be considered? At their core, these studies focus on the symbolic dimension of violence and believe that the individual’s choice of martyrdom is driven by motives different to those held by their organisation. These studies thus purport to question and counter the emerging ‘rationalist paradigm’ for studying suicide bombings¹³.

This is certainly a significant step away from literature that privileges organisational aspects over individual ones. Yet these writers still tend to conclude that rationalist approaches can explain an organisation’s decisions to use suicide bombings but not individual motivations, i.e. rationalist approaches cannot explain why an individual would sacrifice him/herself to fulfil organisational objectives. They believe that one cannot conflate individual motives with organisational goals and instead advocate looking “*beyond rationality, into the realm of symbolic framings*”, to understand and explain, at least in part, why individuals become martyrs”¹⁴. Thus while these studies undeniably fill a crucial gap by highlighting the symbolic dimensions of suicide violence they also unfortunately dispossesses both individual motivations and symbolic action of *rationality*. Moreover, in doing so they also implicitly reject that symbolic action may simultaneously possess and/or serve an instrumental function for both the organisation and the individual. This literature thereby creates a false dichotomy between expressive and instrumental violence, and thus, despite attempting to counter the ‘rationalist paradigm’, it uses the same dichotomies that traditional rationalists create by disregarding the rationality of symbolic action and non-material incentives and goals¹⁵.

This work counters these received views. First and foremost, it believes that organisational and individual rationality and motives are of equal importance in understanding the emergence and sustainability of suicide bombing campaigns in the

¹² Mohammed M. Hafez, ‘Dying to be Martyrs’, *opt. cit.* p. 55

¹³ Mohammed M. Hafez states this as an explicit aim of his work. Nichole Argo and Frahad 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 organisation.

¹⁴ Mohammed M. Hafez, ‘Dying to be Martyrs’, *opt. cit.* p. 55

¹⁵ Recent innovations in the rational actor model take into account non-material ends. These innovations are discussed in more detail in the section titled ‘The Revised Rational Actor Model’ which follows

Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This is because each aspect *impacts and propels* the other. Hence in our case while Hamas can certainly identify and manipulate or encourage certain popular emotions, exploitation alone cannot explain the overall increase in both volunteers and unaffiliated/ loosely affiliated bombers in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Most importantly organisational recruitment and indoctrination cannot explain how suicide missions have become a consistent choice for a section of the Palestinian population with widespread, albeit fluctuating, popular support. While the initial impetus for suicide attacks in the Palestinian arena may have come from the organisation, certain shifts have occurred over time that now challenge the organisation's monopoly over suicidal violence. As such, unearthing the rationality behind individual motives, independently from organisational impetus, is crucial to understand why so many individuals are willing to volunteer for and/or independently undertake such missions. In other words, unless the *dialectic* between organisational and individual rationality and motivations is taken into account, no hypothesis can fully explain why suicide attacks have emerged, escalated and become a sustained form of engagement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Until both these aspects are taken into consideration any analysis of the phenomenon will remain incomplete.

Second, this work believes that suicide attacks are both acts of expediency and practical reason as well as acts that are simultaneously symbolic, ritualistic and communicative. In other words, suicide attacks are a volatile and complex combination of expressive (i.e. symbolic) and instrumental (i.e. functional or strategic) violence. Third, it accepts that there is a division between the organisations which deploy suicide bombers and the individuals who actually commit suicide attacks and asserts that despite this distinction the choice of suicide attacks is a 'rational' one for *both* parties involved. For the organisation 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 rationality exists and simultaneously operates at *both* organisational and individual levels. This work thus asserts that symbolic violence is just as rational as functional violence and rationality cannot, and should not, be

aligned with instrumental violence alone. Moreover, it asserts that all expressive and instrumental violence incorporates elements of functionality, symbolism and rationality. While individual motivations for resorting to suicide operations are varied and may tend to be more obviously expressive than the organisation's, they also possess instrumental elements. Similarly while the organisations motives are more overtly instrumental, they also incorporate symbolic elements.

Thus this work sees suicide bombings as the point of convergence of multiple rationalities as well as expressive and instrumental violence. On this basis, it asserts that only by identifying how organisational and individual rationalities and motivations broadly conflate can we begin to more holistically comprehend why suicide bombings emerged, escalated and become a sustained form of engagement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To this end, this chapter identifies organisational and individual aspects of suicide missions broadly conflating along three lines:

1. suicide attacks as survival (political for Hamas, more visceral for the individual)
2. suicide attacks as retaliation (against Fatah and Israel for Hamas, against 'the occupation' for the individual)
3. suicide attacks as competition (vis-à-vis Fatah for Hamas, for personal and societal honour amongst individuals)

However, before this conflation can be demonstrated in the case of Hamas and its operatives the key concepts which have been used to establish the parameters of this analysis need to be clarified and expanded upon.

II. Definitions and Concepts

(i) The Revised Rational Actor Model

The rationality assumption that is generally applied to study collective action, in this case suicide bombings, is rooted in classical rational choice theory. Rational choice theory was first applied by political scientists in the USA from the 1960s onwards to study domestic political issues such as interest groups politics, congressional politics and electoral politics¹⁶. Over the next two decades there was an increasing use of

¹⁶ This social science movement, often referred to as the behavioural school in international relations, first changed sociology and psychology before moving into political science in the form of electoral politics. David Singer's Correlates of War Project applied this approach to systematically collect scientific knowledge about war. The key purpose of applying such an approach to the study of world politics was to make social sciences more 'scientific' and produce testable hypotheses – making the approach positivist in both methodology and ontology.

empirical tools, statistical techniques and game theory models in the political arena and the use of the rational actor model significantly altered the way political scientists study a variety of issues ranging from nuclear deterrence and social movements to the effects of international institutions and theories of justice.

In International Relations, the rationality assumption first comes across overtly in Kenneth N. Waltz's *Theory of International Politics*. While most positivists more or less follow the rationality assumption, until the emergence of the formal methodological approaches of the neo-realists and neo-liberalists, rationality tended to be the impressionistic and informally treated underlying element in arguments rather than an explicitly stated theory or approach¹⁷. It was here that Waltz's work is most significant, for while restating traditional realist tenets, it also utilised analogies drawn from neoclassical economics, most specifically the theory of markets and the theory of the firm¹⁸.

Undoubtedly, rational choice theory is one of the most popular and contentious voices within the social sciences. As a theory borrowed from the discipline of Economics, and reputed for its ability to bring scientific deductions to bear upon politics and social phenomenon, it posits a rather distinctive theoretical hypothesis, i.e. that actors in any given scenario will behave in a purposive and intentional manner aimed at maximising their interests or, in the very least, attempt to minimise their losses. While this is a very broad definition, the rational choice approach to the study of politics tends to be caricatured by "being reduced to one or two of its characteristic assumptions and presented as a monolithic theory that all practitioners are presumed to accept. A more accurate description is that most practitioners agree on some, but not all, the features of the definition of rational choice"¹⁹.

There are however a set of assumptions that are generally shared by most rational choice theorists and some scholars call this the rationality assumption. This consists of

¹⁷ In the behavioural school, rational action is an assumption about the units of analysis because this allows for the aggregation of individuals into collectives on the basis of which one can build predictive models of how things happen. Waltz's work, with its emphasis on the centrality of the state as the unit and the international level as the location of causal explanations, is therefore reflective of the double-shift between from the individual to the state on the one hand, and from human nature to rational action on the other – i.e. the shift from classical realism to neo-realism.

¹⁸ Chris Brown. *Understanding International Relations* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001, 2nd edition), p. 47

¹⁹ Donald P. Green and Ian Shapiro, *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory: A Critique of Applications in Political Science* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 13

three distinct components, namely *purposive action; consistent preferences and utility maximization*²⁰. Paul K. MacDonald defines each of these components succinctly: “Purposive action posits that most social outcomes can be explained by goal-oriented action on part of the actors in the theory, as opposed to being motivated by habit, tradition, or social appropriateness. Consistent preferences refers to preferences that are ranked, are transitive, and do not depend on the presence or absence of essentially independent alternatives. Utility maximization posits that actors will select the behaviour that provides them with the most subjective expected utility from a set of possible behaviours”²¹. At its core then, this approach suggests that given enough information, behaviour can be predicted, and a rational individual can be subject to scientific inquiry. This in turn substantiates the claim that predictive statements can be valid.

While classical rational actor models applied this rationality assumption to the cost-benefit calculations of material factors alone recent innovations in the rational actor model have enabled the incorporation of non-material, ‘selfless’, symbolic or normative elements such as concern for one’s reputation or social standing²². In other words, the aspects of ‘purposive action’ and ‘utility maximization’ have been significantly altered in the revised rational actor model. The key argument here then is that actors are considered rational so long as they consistently seek to maximise their benefits and limit their costs. Hence they are expected to maximise that which is of value to them, even if that value is non-material or altruistic²³. Their cultural and social moorings impact their values, choices and decision making processes and thereby define their goals. Suicide bombing thus becomes an act of utility maximisation because the definition of utility now includes normative, symbolic violence. This innovation in the rational actor model also allows us to expand the notion of purposive action to

²⁰ Some scholars such as Green and Shapiro add to these a fourth element, namely decision-making under conditions of uncertainty. It is thus evident that even these most basic assumptions are controversial. However, for the purpose of this work, I shall take the rationality assumption as comprising of the three elements mentioned above.

²¹ Paul K. MacDonald, ‘Useful Fiction or Miracle Maker: The Competing Epistemological Foundations of Rational Choice Theory’, *American Political Science Review* Vol. 97, No. 4 (November 2003), p. 552.

²² Mohammed M. Hafez, ‘Dying to be Martyrs’, *opt. cit.* See also: R.G. Noll and B. Weingast, ‘Rational Actor Theory, Social Norms and Policy Implementation’ in Kiresten Renwick Monroe (ed.), *The Economic Approach to Politics: A Critical Reassessment of the Theory of Rational Action* (New York, N.Y.: HarperCollins, 1991); Ashutosh Varshney, ‘Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict and Rationality’, *Perspectives on Politics* 1.1 (March 2003)

²³ See Mohammed M. Hafez, *opt. cit.*; Green and Shapiro, *opt. cit.*; Albert S. Yee, ‘Thick Rationality and the Missing ‘Brute Fact’: The Limits of Rationalist Incorporation of Norms and Ideas’, *Journal of Politics* Vol. 59, No. 4 (November 1997)

incorporate goal-oriented action which may be impacted by social and cultural traditions. Thus as per this revised model rational actor action can incorporate symbolic functions in addition to instrumental ones – a factor that is crucial to understanding the rationality of *both* the individual and the organisation that opts for suicide bombings.

(ii) Identifying the Links between Violence and the Rationality Assumption

Having demonstrated how the revised rational actor model incorporates expressive and instrumental aspects of violence, this study applies it to understand how an act of suicide bombing, is a ‘rational’ act of violence that serves clearly identifiable instrumental and expressive functions for both the individual bomber and the organisation. A considerable amount of early literature depicts suicide bombing as an act of irrational, senseless violence conducted by a handful of radicalised lunatics. This is rooted to a large extent in a well established tradition that depicts non-state or individual violence as irrational and senseless. Historically, authorised violence has come to be the realm of the state²⁴ and consequently the ‘legitimate’ use of violence *within* modern society tends to be viewed as the sole monopoly of the state. The stability of this “relatively impersonal monopoly and the resulting pacification of the society at large”²⁵, has led to people to develop strong feelings about both using and witnessing violence. In such a scenario, whatever is widely perceived as the ‘illegitimate and unauthorised’ use of violence, including any violence practiced by non-state and/or individual actors, is also viewed as “anomalous, irrational, senseless and disruptive-as the reverse of social order, as the antithesis of ‘civilisation’, as something that has to be brought under control”²⁶. This conception of violence negatively impacts our analysis. Because a pacified society is seen as natural, and legitimate violence is commonly perceived to be the monopoly of the state, the very practice of violence by non-state or sub-state actors deems them disruptive and illegitimate to the received socio-political order and world view. Most nascent national

²⁴ See for example: David Indermaur, ‘Perceptions of Violence’, *Psychiatry, Psychology and the Law* 3.2 (1996); Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); Max Weber, ‘Politics as a Vocation’, Charles Tilly, ‘War Making and State Making as Organized Crime’ and Zygmunt Bauman, ‘The Uniqueness and Normality of the Holocaust’, all in Ingo W. Schröder and Bettina E. Schmidt (eds.), *Anthropology of Violence and Conflict* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001)

²⁵ Anton Blok, *Honour and Violence* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2001), pp. 103-04

²⁶ *Ibid.* See also: Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (London: Allen Lane, 1970); Hannah Arendt, ‘Reflections on Violence’ in Ingo W. Schröder and Bettina E. Schmidt (eds.), *Anthropology of Violence*, *opt. cit.*; Georges Sorel (translated by T.E. Hulme and J. Roth), *Reflections on Violence* (London: Collier-Macmillan; New York: Collier Books, 1961); Vittorio Bufacchi, *Violence and Social Justice* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

struggles are often seen as illegitimate within an international system of states precisely because they challenge established authority and its monopoly of violence.

Anton Blok points out how when the actual use of violence is studied the focus tends to be upon the instrumental, where violence tends to be studied in “primarily utilitarian, ‘rational’ terms, in terms of means and ends”²⁷. Recent scholarship exemplifies this by systematically attempting to locate the strategic logic and instrumental rationality (if not legitimacy) behind non-state and individual violence. This not only ignores the cultural dimension of violence but in doing so also inadvertently disassociates the problem of causes from that of function²⁸ thus losing the wider context of this action. In other words, this focus loses sight of what the practice of violence *says*. Hence the question of what violence signifies, ‘*says*’ or expresses becomes at best of secondary importance”²⁹, and at worst ignored completely.

Blok explains that where easily identifiable goals are missing and the relationship between the means and the ends is either murky or seemingly absent, violence tends to get categorised as irrational and senseless. While instrumental violence, state or non-state, now tends to be viewed as a rational choice with easily identifiable means and ends, expressive violence, i.e. violence that is ritual, symbolic and communicative, when considered at all, still tends to be represented as an impulsive irrational act - the result of spontaneous emotion³⁰. This tendency is evident in recent studies which, as established in the preceding section, take into account the symbolic aspects of suicide violence yet view it as devoid of rationality.

However, as Ingo Schröder and Bettina Schmidt point out, violence is never completely idiosyncratic and it *always* says something, expressing some sort of a relationship with another party. In other words, symbolic violence is also *always* rational. Violent acts are never random and victims tend to be chosen for their links to the broader category which they represent. Neither can violence be seen as an isolated act - it is linked,

²⁷ Anton Blok, *Honour and Violence*, *opt. cit.*, p. 104

²⁸ David Keen, ‘A Rational Kind of Madness’, *Oxford Development Studies* 25.1 (1997), p. 68. See also David Keen, ‘Since I am a Dog, Beware my Fangs: Beyond a ‘rational violence’ framework in the Sierra Leonean War’, *Crisis States Programme*, Working Paper Series No. 1, Paper No. 14 (LSE: Development Research Centre, August 2002)

²⁹ Anton Blok, *Honour and Violence*, *opt. cit.* p. 104

³⁰ Interestingly Blok also points out 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 practiced 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.

howsoever remotely, to a competitive relationship and is thus the product of a historical process which may extend far back in time. In short, it is a historically situated practice with clear social ramification, and while the social context of violence means that it cannot be completely disassociated from instrumental rationality, it is more than purely instrumental behaviour.

Dominant cultural attitudes about violence play a significant role in determining the resort to violence. For example, cultures which judge “violence as a powerful and definitive response to ‘insult’ and a good way of restoring ‘honour’ will support individual decisions to use violence”³¹. Killing therefore need not be ‘naturally deviant’ because some forms of killing may be culturally or socially sanctioned and not classified as homicide or murder. It must be noted that the act remains the same, i.e. it involves taking another’s life. However violence is differentiated on the basis of how the act is socially and culturally defined and categorised³². The resort to force therefore makes perfect sense within the actor’s own set of values, perspectives and beliefs and the *expression* of violence incorporates these values and beliefs. As the product of socio-cultural and historical processes, violence is then “informed by material constraints and incentives as well as by historical structures and by the cultural representation of these two sets of conditions”³³. Historical processes and culture thus determine the symbolic rationality of violence which is never senseless or meaningless, neither for the actor, nor for the victim nor the observer.

In addition to its instrumental function, violence serves a symbolic function by conveying cultural meaning, values and choices. Thus, no act of violence, including suicide bombing, can be *fully understood* without viewing it as part of a longer pattern of events³⁴ and taking into account both expressive and instrumental facets of the same. Expressive violence is also then *not* automatically devoid of rationality. In addition, due to its social context, no simple distinction can be made between functional and symbolic practice as “instrumental action is always simultaneously semantic”³⁵. The

³¹ Anton Blok, *Honour and Violence*, opt. cit.; David Indermaur, ‘Perceptions of Violence’, opt. cit.

³² Stephen J. Pfhol, *Images of Deviance and Social Control: A Sociological History* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985)

³³ Ingo W. Schröder and Bettina E. Schmidt, ‘Introduction: Violent Imaginaries and Violent Practices’, in Schröder and Schmidt (eds.), *Anthropology of Violence*, opt. cit. p. 3

³⁴ *Ibid.* See also Michael Addison, *Violent Politics: Strategies of Internal Conflict* (Oxford: Palgrave in association with St. Antony’s College, Oxford, 2002);

³⁵ Anton Blok, *Honour and Violence*, opt. cit. p. 30. See also Indermaur, ‘Perceptions of Violence’, opt. cit.; Ingo W. Schröder and Bettina E. Schmidt, ‘Violent Imaginaries’, opt. cit.

resort to violent action is a weighed, rational decision where the costs of the violence are outweighed by its functional and symbolic benefits. What is evident then is that all acts of violence have instrumental and expressive aspects – and both facets of violence incorporate elements of functionality, symbolism *and* rationality.

This work, as stated before, counters the false dichotomy between expressive and instrumental violence by conceptualising a suicide attack as a ‘rational’ act of violence with clearly identifiable instrumental *and* expressive functions that operate in tandem. Blok believes that it is useful to see the relationship between the two faces of violence in terms of a continuum, i.e. he believes that some actions are more instrumental while others are more expressive³⁶. This work contends that a single act of violence can also be more instrumental or more expressive depending on the perspective from which it is approached. Indeed, a suicide attack is perhaps more overtly expressive for the individual operative (though it simultaneously serves instrumental purposes) and more obviously instrumental for the organisation – in this case Hamas (though again simultaneously incorporating an expressive aspect). This explains how suicide missions are a successful cost-benefit calculation on behalf of both the individual and the organisation.

(iii) ‘Altruistic Suicide’ as Expressive Violence and Individual Rationality

The question that then needs to be answered is how an individual arrives at a cost-benefit decision where the cost of sacrificing one’s life is less than the benefits accrued. Since 1993, when suicide bombing emerged in the Israeli-Palestinian scenario, various opinion polls have shown a relatively high degree of support for suicide operations against Israel. A study of the polls also reveals that support is highest in times when the society is under extreme pressure and has little hope for peace or resolution of the conflict. For example, a sharp increase in public support can be seen in response to the failed Oslo Peace Accords or in periods when Israeli retaliatory policies took heavy tolls on the population³⁷. These peaks in public opinion are matched by a corresponding rise in suicide attacks in the same periods. While initially the bombers sent on these missions were recruited by the organisation in response to public

³⁶ Anton Blok, *Honour and Violence*, *opt. cit.* p. 108

³⁷ See polls from 1993-2000 by the *Centre for Palestinian Research and Studies (CPRS)*, Ramallah; polls from 2000 – present by *Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research (PSR)*, Ramallah; polls from 2003 to present by *An-Najah National University Centre for Opinion Polls and Survey Studies*, Nablus; and polls from 1993 to present by *Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre (JMCC)*, Jerusalem.

sentiments three points are crucial: first, that even in the initial stages, Hamas did not need to necessarily ‘brainwash’ all its recruits though undoubtedly it provided the initial impetus for bombings; second, by the time of the *al-Aqsa intifada*, the large number of individuals willing to sacrifice themselves meant that Hamas had to turn away volunteers; third, over time, volunteers for suicide missions became more and more loosely affiliated with specific organisations, choosing instead to use 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, individual self-sacrifice is impelled by altruistic motives rather than organisational pressure, though incidents of the latter certainly also exist. It appears that the categories used by Emile Durkheim to classify suicide, as self-inflicted violence, can also help analyse violence inflicted on others in the form of suicide attacks³⁸. The basic pre-requisite for altruistic suicide, as Durkheim conceived it, is a high level of social integration. His analysis includes soldiers amongst those who show high rates of suicide due to their “extreme subordination to imperative rules and their excessive integration in a national moral order”³⁹. This same logic can be applied to suicide bombers whose high degrees of integration enable them to achieve the state of altruism. There is thus an excessive subordination of the bomber to the group in a process whereby the individual completely subsumes the self to the higher collective order⁴⁰.

Altruistic motives are heavily influenced by social values and social approval. Socially, individual self-sacrifice is perceived as honourable due to its selfless and altruistic character and it thereby becomes a strong mechanism for the bomber to bind with and represent the values of the Palestinian community. In this manner, the bomber in conducting a suicide attack not only reasserts his/her integration with the society but also solidifies these bonds and social values. At the same time, the bomber also delineates and asserts personal character and space and, in a sense, stands ‘apart’ from the very society he/she seeks to represent. Thus, a suicide mission, from at least the individual’s perspective, becomes a key link between the bomber and the Palestinian

³⁸ See Emile Durkheim (translated by John A. Spaulding and George Simpson), *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* (London: Free Press, 1990)

³⁹ Vincenzo Ruggiero, *Understanding Political Violence: A Criminological Analysis* (New York, N.Y.: Open University Press, 2006), p. 51; See also: John Hagen, *Modern Criminology: Crime, Criminal Behaviour, and its Control* (New York and London: McGraw-Hill, 1987); and David Downes and Paul Rock, *Understanding Deviance: A Guide to the Sociology of Crime and Rule-Breaking* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982)

⁴⁰ See Emile Durkheim’s concept of ‘collective effervescence’ in *Suicide*, *opt. cit.*

society he/she defends and represents. Consequently as “values are elaborated and egotistical interests are provisionally set aside, these periods (or this case, events), evanescent though they may be, remain in the memory of the collectivity as periods of supreme integration”⁴¹.

Altruistic suicide is, at its core, the result of the individual’s sense of responsibility to the broader community. In other words, the bomber has an irrevocable belief that he/she must defend and preserve his/her family, community and/or nation⁴². To do so, the individual strongly believes that the cost of his/her personal death is less than the benefit accrued toward their family’s/community’s/nation’s survival. While the logic thus far certainly explains why an individual would choose to be part of a suicide mission, it cannot by itself explain the increasing number of volunteers for such missions in the Israeli-Palestinian landscape of conflict. George Herbert Mead’s inter-subjective account of social reality might provide the answer.

Mead posits a structure of communicative relations between subjects, proposing that cooperation between groups and individuals translates into a scenario where individual conduct stimulates others to perform a certain act, and that this act, in turn, becomes a stimulus engendering a certain reaction, and so on in “ceaseless interaction”⁴³. Symbols and symbolic action therefore assume crucial importance as they represent the means of eliciting a response from the other – internal or external. Symbols are thus “acts that call out responses of the other while responding to the acts performed by the other”⁴⁴. In other words, suicide bombings are the individual bomber’s response to stimuli that originates in both Palestinian and Israeli action. The suicide mission, in turn, is a symbolic action that becomes the stimulus engendering a reaction in both the Palestinian community as well as in Israeli circles. In this study, the key reaction suicidal violence has engendered in the internal ‘other’, i.e. in the Palestinian community which has not volunteered for suicide missions, is that they seem to have encouraged other individuals in society to adopt them as a means of protest, engagement and service to society. It seems then that suicidal violence developed a

⁴¹ Vincenzo Ruggiero, *Understanding Political Violence*, opt. cit. p 54

⁴² Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), especially ‘Utopia in the Age of Uncertainty’

⁴³ Vincenzo Ruggiero, *Understanding Political Violence*, opt. cit., p.109. See also George Herbert Mead, *The Philosophy of the Present* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1959), and *Mind, Self and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviourist* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1967).

⁴⁴ Vincenzo Ruggiero, *Understanding Political Violence*, opt. cit., p. 110

dynamic of its own within the Palestinian community – one that moves beyond organisational control and/or manipulation⁴⁵.

Thus it would appear that individual bombers are willing to carry out suicide operations most broadly for defence (survival), self-respect (competition) and revenge (retaliation). In this manner the individual's motives can be studied along the same lines as those of the organisation with the key difference being that, at their core, suicide attacks are altruistic for the individuals committing them, i.e. they are committed for sake of the Palestinian community. This work will further demonstrate how suicide bombings while being primarily expressive for the individual also simultaneously serve a functional purpose for the bombers⁴⁶.

(iv) Instrumental Violence and Organisational Rationality

The logic of why suicide bombings exist in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is more than evident for an organisation like Hamas which uses it as a political and military tactic. There have been a considerable number of studies which focus upon the strategic logic of suicide missions from an organisational perspective. This section will try to briefly outline some of the key motivations behind an organisation's decision to use suicide operations.

According to Martha Crenshaw, “terrorism” can be understood at times as an expression of a political strategy. Because a group has collective values or preferences it “selects terrorism as a course of action from a range of perceived alternatives (sic) with *efficacy* (emphasis added) being the primary standard by which terrorism is compared with other methods of achieving political goals”⁴⁷. This is a key starting point in understanding the strategic use of suicide bombings.

At a purely tactical level, the suicide bomber is the epitome of the smart bomb for the organisation because the bomber can select the time and place of the attack in order to

⁴⁵ See for example: Duncan Watts work on cascading effects in Duncan Watts, *Six Degrees: Science of a Connected Age* (New York: Norton, 2003) and Charles Tilly's thesis on waves of violence in Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)

⁴⁶ It must be stressed that personal motives behind suicide operations tend to be very diverse and the three categories of analysis outlined here are proposed for their ability to broadly encompass a considerable number (though perhaps not all) of these varying motivations.

⁴⁷ Martha Crenshaw, ‘The Logic of Terrorism: Terrorist Behaviour as a Product of Strategic Choice’, in Walter Reich (ed.), *Origins of Terrorism*, opt cit., p. 8

ensure that maximum damage is inflicted. In conditions of asymmetrical conflict, this is a key consideration for the organisation opting to use this method of engagement. According to George Habbash, the leader of PFLP, “the losses the Israelis are sustaining [because of suicide operations] are very high ... and unlike (sic) in any period of battle in any of the past decades. According to the latest figures, the rate is one Israeli killed for every three Palestinian martyrs. This is despite the great differential or the great imbalance of power and the minimal fighting means and equipment available to the Palestinian people”⁴⁸. Tactically, the military mission is also made simpler for the organisation 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 torture⁴⁹.

Human bombs are also an extremely cost-effective means of engagement for the organisation. 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 city⁵⁰. Yet the psychological damage inflicted upon the target population is disproportionately high in comparison and the message sent is loud and clear, i.e. “we will not bow down and we will hit you when we want and where it hurts”⁵¹. Suicide attacks also simultaneously send a message to the bomber’s own constituency: the struggle is continuing and the enemy too is vulnerable. This can potentially motivate others to join the armed struggle. Bombings campaigns also serve to effectively attract and capture the attention of the international media, thus seeming to represent a ‘win-win’ scenario for the organisation that opts to use them.

Other than the most obvious tactical advantages of suicide operations, there are also a number of theories on its long- term strategic functions. For example, Robert Pape

⁴⁸ Mia Bloom, ‘Palestinian Suicide Bombing’, opt. cit p. 85

⁴⁹ Personal interview with Dr. Riad Malki, General Director of Panorama (The Palestinian Center for the Dissemination of Democracy and Community Development), Ramallah, 31 December 2004; Personal ‘off-the-record’ interview with Israeli psychologist and former Shayetet naval commando, 9 January 2005. The Shayetet 13 navy seals are an elite ‘special forces’ unit designed and trained to conduct naval raids and underwater commando operations. They are also an elite counter-terror unit that specialise in covert operations, including targeted assassinations, deep within enemy territory combining assault by land, sea and air.

⁵⁰ Christopher Reuter, *My Life is a Weapon: A Modern History of Suicide Bombing* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004); Scott Atran, ‘Genesis’, opt. cit.

⁵¹ See for example: Bruce Hoffman and Gordon H. McCormick, ‘Terrorism, Signalling, and Suicide Attack’, opt. cit.

locates suicide bombings as a part of organised campaigns aimed specifically at coercing modern liberal democracies into making significant territorial concessions⁵². Pape also very clearly privileges the role of the organisation over that of the individual because he believes that without consistent organisational motives and goals aspiring suicide bombers would be powerless. Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela have a more nuanced thesis and identify how groups like Hamas have specifically territorial demands but also simultaneously seek to ensure their own political survival, thereby using suicide operations as a mechanism of negotiation, survival and political competition⁵³. Once again in these studies, the individual bomber is ignored in favour of the organisation which is the focus of analysis.

Another key thesis is the 'spoiler thesis' which is a development of a more conventional explanation of Palestinian suicide bombings, and identifies suicidal violence as a mechanism utilised by radical Islamic organisations, such as Hamas and PIJ, to derail attempts to improve relations between Israelis and Palestinians⁵⁴. This thesis states that violence serves the express function of undermining and halting a negotiated settlement and should be expected whenever a negotiated settlement becomes imminent. Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter, for example, identify suicide bombing as a spoiler policy used by either factions opposing the moderate group which is negotiating or by hardliners within the moderate group itself. An alternative thesis argues that suicide violence is often retaliatory. This school of thought locates Palestinian suicide bombings as a response to Israeli provocation. Examples of these provocations are many, ranging from the Hebron massacre to Israel's policy of targeted assassinations to Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount⁵⁵.

Mia Bloom, in a recent study, has focussed on the aspect of political competition in the Palestinian scenario and has identified suicide bombings as a form of outbidding amongst factions and a tool used by these factions to accumulate political capital and

⁵² See for example: Robert Pape, *Dying to Win*, *opt. cit.* and 'The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism', *opt. cit.*

⁵³ See for example: Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000) and 'Participation without Presence: Hamas, the PA and the Politics of Negotiated Coexistence', *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 38, No. 3 (July 2002)

⁵⁴ See for example: Andrew Kydd and Barbara F. Walter, 'Sabotaging the Peace: The Politics of Extremist Violence', *International Organizations* Vol. 56, No. 2 (Spring 2002)

⁵⁵ See for example: Rui de Figueiredo and Barry Weingast, 'Vicious Cycles: Endogenous Political Extremism and Political Violence', under submission to *International Organizations* (May 2001).

prestige⁵⁶. She identifies two clear phases of public support for the bombing campaigns conducted by various groups, including Hamas, and links this data back to the increasing support for groups that used the tactic. In the first period, which she identifies as ranging from 1994 -1996, public support for suicide operations never exceeded a third of the polled group⁵⁷. However, post-2000 support jumped up to two-thirds or more of the Palestinians polled. She states: “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 utilising them”⁵⁸.

Thus far, there are multiple strategic motivations and goals that have been identified by various studies of suicide bombings. This thesis suggests that while all these explanations are valid and certainly need to be factored into any analysis of Hamas’ use of suicide operations, they are all partial explanations which either unfairly privilege the organisation over the individual or, by discounting the trajectory of violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, ignore the increasing *internal* momentum for suicide operations. This thesis frames Hamas’ use of suicide bombings in terms of its political survival, its need to retaliate against Fatah/PA and the Israeli state and finally the necessity to compete with a strongly established PLO/PA/Fatah.

These three broad themes enable this analysis to encompass various considerations outlined above such as the ‘spoiler’ effects of suicide bombing and the use of suicide missions to enhance political prestige and outbid political rivals. In other words, they allow this work to provide a more holistic analysis of an organisation’s use of suicide operations. In identifying the three broad lines of conflation between the organisation and the individual this work applies the rational choice assumption that rational units of analysis behave in a sufficiently similar and utility-maximising manner so as to be aggregatable while also simultaneously behaving in predictable fashions over time⁵⁹. In addition, by refusing to privilege the organisation over the individual, this thesis also attempts to draw attention to the internal changes which have occurred in the

⁵⁶ Mia Bloom, ‘Palestinian Suicide Bombing: Public Support, Market Share, and Outbidding’, opt .cit. and *Dying to Kill*, opt .cit.

⁵⁷ Mia Bloom uses the figures from the Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre Public Opinion Polls. See: <http://www.jmcc.org/publicpoll/results.html> for poll results.

⁵⁸ Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, opt .cit., p. 19

⁵⁹ This approach allows predictions and hypotheses to be made and allows one to use a lens to simplify the infinite complexity of the social world and home in on some variables in order to understand and/or explain a phenomenon (in our case, suicidal violence in the Israeli-Palestinian setting)

Palestinian territories enabling the wholesale use of suicide operations. The study identifies, a dialectical relationship between the organisation and the individual bombers. Finally, this work seeks to demonstrate how suicide bombings, while being overwhelmingly instrumental for the organisation, also incorporate an expressive function for the group using them.

Part II

I. Suicide Bombings as the Converging Point of Instrumental and Expressive Violence

As established in the previous section suicide bombings in the Israeli-Palestinian context can be understood using a rational actor determination of costs and benefits involved in conducting a bombing campaign at the level of both the organisation and the individual. Both organisational 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 tend to be more overtly instrumental for the organisation and more overtly expressive for the individual. This section illustrates this theoretical understanding by demonstrating how both the organisational 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 recognising the equal importance of both levels of analysis, i.e. recognising that while strong organisational 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 organisation 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 inter-group and inter-level interactions, have enabled suicide missions to develop into a sustainable phenomenon within the Palestinian scenario. To this end, this section first traces the use of violence by Hamas over the past nineteen 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 organisational motivations and rationality behind suicide attacks, this section 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*.

competition and retaliation and is crucial in understanding the long-term existence and use of suicidal 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.

II. Hamas and the Instrumental Logic of Suicide Bombings

Hamas' 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 faction⁶⁰. 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'. Various strategies of violent confrontation have been consistently used by all groups to garner public support and gain a political advantage over rival organisations. Till about 2000, Hamas was still not a fully established stable organisation 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 identity⁶¹. 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 process⁶².

The 1993 - 2000 period also saw Hamas steadily attempt to normalise suicide violence as a legitimate means of *retaliating* against the policies of the Israeli state. Hamas' suicide operations were also a retaliatory response to Israeli policies which simultaneously incited a harsher Israeli response thereby engendering an escalating tit-for-tat cycle of violence. This escalation enabled Hamas to both successfully justify

⁶⁰ As explained in Chapter II, Fatah has consistently represented the dominant faction in the PLO/PA. Hamas' interaction with both is exactly the same. As such Hamas' policy towards Fatah at any given point also applies to the PLO/PA and vice versa in this analysis.

⁶¹ See also Appendix C

⁶² Zeev Ma'oz, 'The Unlimited Use of the Limited Use of Force: Israel and Low Intensity Warfare, 1949 – 2004', paper presented at the annual meeting of the *International Studies Association (ISA)*, Montreal, 17- 20 March 2004

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 normalisation 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 which now vied for power with the full support of the rank and file⁶³.

In this complex balancing act Hamas' position vis-à-vis the PLO/PA/ Fatah and Israel has consistently been that of *survival, competition or retaliation* – or a 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 coexistence, controlled violence and finally, as we have seen after 2006, full political integration*⁶⁴. These strategies have either been used alone or in combination with each other to ensure survival and enable competition and retaliation. Suicide bombings are a part of the policy of controlled violence which facilitates Hamas' policy of negotiated coexistence and enabled it to maintain a unique position in the Palestinian political landscape even *after* full political integration.

(i) 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 organisation, 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

⁶³ This notion of suicide missions reflecting a strategy of outbidding was first introduced by Mia Bloom in 'Palestinian Suicide Bombing: Public Support, Market Share, and Outbidding', opt. cit. and *Dying to Kill*, opt. cit. 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: Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas*, opt. cit. and 'Participation without Presence', opt. cit.

⁶⁴ The strategies of controlled violence and negotiated co-existence are introduced and outlined in detail in Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas*, opt. cit.

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' part. Hamas achieved this balance by eschewing open competition in favour of stressing the Islamic opposition to any peace process which 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 which would have been disastrous for its survival as a nascent organisation.

Yet despite its attempts to avoid direct confrontation, Hamas was a violent organisation from the very offset⁶⁵. 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 August 1988, although at this point these attacks, which took the form of shootings, knife attacks and kidnappings, were directed at the military and symbols of the occupation – no bombings had appeared on the scene as yet.

⁶⁵ Mishal and Sela's analysis of the first 30 leaflets issued show that violent directives comprised 30.5% of the total, i.e. violent and non-violent, instructions leaflets 1 to 10. This figure rose to 40% in leaflets 11 to 20, and remained at 39.7% in leaflets 21 to 30. Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas*, opt. cit. p. 61

The arrest of Sheikh Yassin⁶⁶, Hamas' 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 arrests⁶⁷. 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 Tikva⁶⁸. This attack shortly followed the 8th October Temple Mount incident in Jerusalem where seventeen 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 territories⁶⁹. 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 territories⁷⁰.

Yassin's arrest combined with internal pressures and Israeli counter-measures also triggered significant shifts in Hamas' organisation and leadership⁷¹ and conscious efforts were made to rehabilitate the movement by recruiting younger activist members. This shift in membership might explain how the internal reorganisation, which resulted in the concomitant increase in military activity, combined with the Israeli crackdown between December 1990-91 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 shootings⁷². Violence and terror thus preceded and

⁶⁶ See Appendix D

⁶⁷ See Appendix C

⁶⁸ Incidents Database, International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), Interdisciplinary Center (IDC), Herzliya, Israel. <http://www.ict.org.il/apage/6218.php>

⁶⁹ The aspect of *jihad* against the state of Israel is treated in-depth in Chapter V

⁷⁰ International Crisis Group Middle East Report No. 21, '*Dealing With Hamas*' (Amman/Brussels: ICG, 26 January 2004), http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/middle_east_north_africa/21_dealing_with_hamas.doc

>, Date Accessed: 28 February 2006, p. 7

⁷¹ Yassin's arrest prompted the visit of Hamas activists from the USA, led by Musa Abu Marzuq (See Appendix D), who introduced a strict hierarchy into the organisation. The WBG was divided by 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 compartmentalisation and separation of the military and civilian apparatuses. Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas*, *opt. cit.* pp. 58, 64

⁷² See for example: Incidents Database, International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), *opt. cit.*; Anat Kurz and Nahman Tal, *Hamas: Radical Islam in a National Struggle*, Memorandum No. 47

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.

Database analysis shows that while Hamas violence remained almost non-existent 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' 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 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 months⁷³. Thus it would appear, that in the lead up to and immediately after the 1991 Madrid conference, Hamas' 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 thirteen 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 Madrid conference effectively signalled the end of the intifada and had thus removed Hamas' *raison d'etre*. As Israeli-PLO negotiations also left it out in the cold, the only way Hamas could survive both as an organisation and in

(Tel Aviv University: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, July 1997); Yonah Alexander, *Palestinian Religious Terrorism: Hamas and Islamic Jihad* (New York: Transnational Publishers Inc, 2002)

⁷³ See Hisham H. Ahmad, *From Religious Salvation to Political Transformation: The Rise of Hamas in Palestinian Society* (Jerusalem: Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, 1994); Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History With Documents* (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2005, 5th edition); Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997)

the political consciousness of the Palestinian population was to disrupt peace efforts. Its ‘spoiler’ role⁷⁴ 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 that 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.

(ii) 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 1993⁷⁵, suggesting that this first suicide bombing was Hamas’ 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’ 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’ political manoeuvrability, and its very existence, by removing a crucial prestige and support amassing tool from its political kit. At the same time Oslo 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 recognised 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

⁷⁴ Andrew Kydd and Barbara F. Walter, ‘Sabotaging the Peace, opt. cit.

⁷⁵ A total of nine other attacks occurred in this period – seven shootings and two knife attacks

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 coexistence 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 ‘spectacular terrorism’ and maintaining its position on conventional attacks, Hamas managed to retain the unique identity it had developed in the uprising. It adopted a policy of negotiated coexistence 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 which 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 WBG⁷⁶. 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.

⁷⁶ Alain Gresh, *The PLO: The Struggle Within – Towards an Independent Palestinian State* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1988, 2nd edition), p. 446

Two Hamas bombings swiftly followed in April⁷⁷ 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 the Hamas to further weaken Arafat's position vis-à-vis both an angry Palestinian population⁷⁸ and the Israelis who had no faith in the PA to control a violent Hamas⁷⁹, 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' 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 recognise it as legitimate opposition, which would enable Hamas to continue its uninterrupted development under the PA⁸⁰. 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 recognise Hamas as a force to reckon within a rapidly emerging proto-state thus giving it leverage in the talks being held. However,

⁷⁷ Incidents Database, International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), [opt. cit.](#)

⁷⁸ Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas*, [opt. cit.](#)

⁷⁹ Andrew Kydd and Barbara F. Walter, 'Sabotaging the Peace', [opt. cit.](#)

⁸⁰ See Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas*, [opt. cit.](#)

Hamas' 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% of the votes in the January elections, reflecting a tremendous resurgence of Palestinian hopes for peace, but also that the largest turn-out of voters came from Gaza, Hamas' stronghold⁸¹. 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 which 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 Hamas⁸².

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 Bridges, 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 forty Israelis were killed and more than eighty injured. At least one of these bombings was claimed by a group which called itself 'Squads of the New Disciples of Martyr Yahya 'Ayyash'⁸³ - a military cell of Hamas.

⁸¹ Andrew Kydd and Barbara F. Walter, 'Sabotaging the Peace', opt. cit. p. 284

⁸² Incidents Database, International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), opt. cit.

⁸³ Ibid.

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 by 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 organisations and universities, and arrested hundreds of Hamas activists who were imprisoned and often tortured.⁸⁴ For the PA, this was the ideal opportunity to effectively decimate 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' 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 Hamas⁸⁵. 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' fragile state and Netanyahu's stated willingness to use force to crush any reversion to violence by the Palestinians⁸⁶. Hamas also had to concede that their policy of 'ceaseless confrontation' had been rejected by

⁸⁴ International Crisis Group Middle East Report No. 21, 'Dealing With Hamas', *opt. cit.*, p. 10

⁸⁵ Centre for Palestinian Research and Studies (CPRS) Polls –Survey Research Unit, Public Opinion Poll No. 22, 'Armed Attacks, Peace Process, Elections, Unemployment', 29-31 March 1996.

⁸⁶ Benjamin Netanyahu, 'We Can Stop the Terror', *Jerusalem Post*, 4 June 2001

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% to 8% in the wake of the 1996 suicide bombing campaign⁸⁷. Hamas also noted that "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"⁸⁸.

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' attempts to avoid being associated with the 1997 suicide operations characterises 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' 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 process⁸⁹. 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% 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

⁸⁷ Jerusalem Media & Communication Center (JMCC) Public Opinion Polls, No. 14, 'On Attitudes of East Jerusalemites on the Recent Hamas Bombings', March 1996; Also see Opinion Polls No. 15 – No. 18, 'On Palestinian Attitudes Towards Current Issues', August, November and December 1996 respectively.

⁸⁸ ICG Middle East Report No. 21, *Dealing With Hamas*, opt. cit., p. 10

⁸⁹ Incidents Database, International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), opt. cit.; Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas*: opt. cit., pp. 79

level of support for the peace process remained at a high 66% there was concurrently a rise in the levels of support for armed attacks against Israel. Support for violent attacks rose sharply from 44% in early August 1998 to 51% in October⁹⁰. 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% supported violence against Israelis in general – a significant 10% drop from the 51% recorded a month ago. Support for Hamas also dropped to 11% in this poll from the 12% of a month before⁹¹.

Once again this seems to suggest that Palestinian support for suicide operations/armed attacks and groups which 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 Ehud Barak led Avoda party 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-causality violent attacks. An opinion poll conducted in June 1999 showed that public support for armed attacks remained at a relatively high 45% with 49% opposition. This support was highest in refugee camps (49%) and amongst the young and educated (52%), 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 Agreement⁹².

(iii) 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

⁹⁰ Centre for Palestinian Research and Studies (CPRS) Polls –Survey Research Unit, Public Opinion Poll No. 36, 'The Peace Process, Violence Against Israelis, Domestic Situation, Presidential Elections and Political Affiliation', 8-10 October 1998

⁹¹ Centre for Palestinian Research and Studies (CPRS) Polls –Survey Research Unit, Public Opinion Poll No. 37, 'The Peace Process and the Wye Memorandum, Elections for the President and Vice President, and Political Affiliations', 12-14 November 1998

⁹² Centre for Palestinian Research and Studies (CPRS) Polls –Survey Research Unit, Public Opinion Poll No. 41, 'Barak's Victory and the Peace Process, Economic Conditions and Future Outlooks, Perceptions of Corruption, Waste, Democracy, and Freedom of the Press, Elections for the President and Vice President and Political Sympathy', 03-05 June 1999; Also see: Jerusalem Media & Communication Center (JMCC) Public Opinion Polls, No. 32, 'On Palestinian Attitudes Towards Politics', August 1999

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 victimised by the peace process and once again believed that the UN Security Council Resolution 242 was the only peace that could be achieved⁹³. 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% in the six weeks that followed⁹⁴. It was in this atmosphere that Sharon visited the Temple Mount in September 2000 accompanied by about a thousand Israeli policemen. This triggered Palestinian riots and Israeli armed reprisals in which four Palestinians were killed and at least sixty six 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 Jerusalem⁹⁵ 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 characterised by its heavy-handed, disproportionate response towards the Palestinian uprising. Israel now targeted and deliberately dismantled the PA's political, security and institutional infrastructure which had been established under the Oslo Accords, inevitably facilitating Hamas' political hold on WBG. In addition, the PA and Fatah now focussed 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

⁹³ For the full text of Article 242 see *United Nations* (22 November 1967), Security Council Resolution 242, <http://www.un.org/documents/sc/res/1967/sres67.htm>. Date Accessed: 16 January 2007

⁹⁴ Jamil Hilal, 'Hamas's Rise as Charted in the Polls, 1994 -2005', *Journal of Palestine Studies* Vol. XXXV. 3 (Spring 2006)

⁹⁵ Incidents Database, International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), *opt. cit.*

sources assert that this period was also characterised by the beginning of an unprecedented cooperation between secular and Islamic Palestinian factions with activists from 'cocktail cells', mostly comprising of Fatah Tanzim⁹⁶, Hamas and/or the PIJ, conducting joint operations inside Israel⁹⁷.

Despite being urged back to the negotiating table⁹⁸, 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 realised, perhaps for the first time, that it could fully replace an increasingly fragile PA⁹⁹.

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

⁹⁶ 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.

⁹⁷ Ibid; Personal interview with Erik Schecter, Worldpress (Tel Aviv, Israel, January 2005)

⁹⁸ For the full text of the Mitchell Report see BBC News Key Documents (29 November 2001), http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/middle_east/2001/israel_and_the_palestinians/key_documents/1632064.stm, Date Accessed: 24 October 2006.

⁹⁹ Personal interview with Riad Malki, General Director of Panorama (The Palestinian Centre for the Dissemination of Democracy and Community Development), Ramallah, 31 December 2004

2001 and a hundred and eighty Hamas activists 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' higher cadres¹⁰⁰. 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 Hamas¹⁰¹. This in turn prevented any substantial action against Hamas which continued its unmitigated policy of suicide attacks against the Israeli civilian population in an escalating tit-for-tat strategy, conducting a total of eleven suicide attacks between June 2001 and 27th March 2002.

On 28th March 2002, Israel launched Operation Defensive Shield, the stated goal of which was to dismantle the "terrorist infrastructure" that existed in PA controlled territories¹⁰². 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 surrender¹⁰³. 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 Jenin¹⁰⁴ 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

¹⁰⁰ *Guardian Unlimited* (6 December 2001), 'Hamas Supporters Clash with Palestinian Police'. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/israel/Story/0,2763,614521,00.html>, Date Accessed: 23 April 2003.

¹⁰¹ Yezid Sayigh, 'The Palestinian Strategic Impasse', *Survival* 44.4 (Winter 2002-03)

¹⁰² Ariel Sharon (8 April 2002), Address to the Knesset, Jerusalem. The full text of the speech can be seen at: http://www.palestinefacts.org/sharon_speech_8apr02.php, Date Accessed: 23 April 2003.

¹⁰³ Mishal and Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas*, *opt. cit.*

¹⁰⁴ See for example: Tarik Kafala (12 April 2002), *BBC News Online* 'The Battle for Jenin', http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/1926194.stm, Date Accessed: 24 October 2004; *BT' Salem*, 'Operation Defensive Shield: Soldiers' Testimonies, Palestinian Testimonies', www.btselem.org/Download/200207_Defensive_Shield_Eng.pdf, Date Accessed: 25 June 2007

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 support¹⁰⁵.

This hardening Palestinian stance also explains how secular groups began utilising 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 sixteen 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 sixteen other individuals, including eleven children. Hamas, forced to defend its cadres and maintain its image as an organisation that possessed the ability to strike back, once more retaliated with more suicide attacks. Israel conducted thirty three politically ordered liquidations in 2001 and thirty seven in 2002, killing at least forty four Palestinian bystanders including children. Each time Hamas swore to retaliate and what resulted was an escalating tit-for-tat policy that continued through out 2002 -03¹⁰⁶.

Sheikh Ahmad Yassin was assassinated in March 2004, followed swiftly by ‘Abd al-Aziz Rantisi’s in April - effectively destroying Hamas’ top leadership within the territories. While the assassination of its top leadership within the territories weakened the 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’ rise and the PA’s/Arafat’s corresponding decline indicated for the first time that it could potentially

¹⁰⁵ Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents* (Boston, New York: Bedford/St.Martin’s, 2004, 5th edition), p. 505

¹⁰⁶ Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, opt. cit., p. 505

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’ political bureau, effectively heading the organisation 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 Israel¹⁰⁷. Thus Yassin and Rantisi’s assassinations and the mass arrests which followed, weakened Hamas by the 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 leadership¹⁰⁸. 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 focussed upon Fatah. Hamas’ policy of suicide attacks as a mechanism of forcing the Israeli’s to pressurise 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 Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen) into power with a resurgence of hope on the Palestinian street for various reasons. Firstly, it needed the time to regroup in the aftermath of Yassin’s and Rantisi’s assassinations. Secondly, Hamas in the absence of high-profile leaders pragmatically participated in the local government elections instead and thereby retained a significant

¹⁰⁷ See for example: Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas*, *opt. cit.*; Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, *opt. cit.*; Khaled Hroub, ‘Hamas After Sheikh Yassin and Rantisi’, *Journal of Palestine Studies* XXXIII.4 (Summer 2004)

¹⁰⁸ For details of Hamas’ organisational structure see for example: Shaul Mishal and Ma’oz Rosenthal, ‘Al Qaeda as a Dune Organisation: Towards a Typology of Islamic Terrorist Organisations’, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 28 (2005). See also Chapter II for details.

level of its popular support. This local base 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 PA¹⁰⁹. Hamas also accepted a *tahdiya* (cease-fire) 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 cease-fire)¹¹⁰.

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 cease-fire suggests that other incentives are also at play. This work suggests that Hamas' 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' 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 legitimised the established political system, but also reflected Hamas' 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 is 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

¹⁰⁹ Personal interview with Riad Malki, General Director of Panorama (The Palestinian Centre for the Dissemination of Democracy and Community Development), Ramallah, 31 December 2004 and Yasser Ahmad Shalabi, Associate Researcher, The Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS), Ramallah, 02 January 2005.

¹¹⁰ See Yaniv Berman (10 December 2006), 'Israeli-Palestinian Cease-Fires: Facts and Fantasy, Institute for Counter Terrorism.

<http://www.ict.org.il/index.php?sid=119&lang=en&act=page&id=8169&str=hudna>, Date Accessed: 12 December 2006; Haim Malka, 'Forcing Choices: Testing the Transformation of Hamas', *The Washington Quarterly* 28.4 (Autumn 2005)

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 positions¹¹¹. Sheikh Hasan Yusuf, Hamas' 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"¹¹². Hamas' 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.

III. 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*)¹¹³ 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

¹¹¹ Mohammed Daraghmeh, 'Hamas Official Okays State in West Bank', *Associated Press*, 3 December 2004

¹¹² Haim Malka, 'Forcing Choices: Testing the Transformation of Hamas', *opt. cit.*, p. 41

¹¹³ The term martyrdom is used in Palestine today to refer to all suicide missions. It derives from the Islamic term 'shuhada' (the martyr) who achieves 'shuhadat' (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 *shuhadat* since the first intifada is much more loosely used and virtually anyone killed by the Israeli Defence Forces now qualifies as a *shuhada*, even those not actively involved in fighting, such as a bystander caught and killed in cross-fire. Informal discussion with Abu Ali, Ramallah, 10 Jan. 2005.

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"¹¹⁴. Thus as self-sacrifice is increasingly honoured, celebrated and idealised 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?"¹¹⁵ Using Mead's logic of 'ceaseless interaction' outline in part I of this chapter, suicide bombers seem to have successfully 'inspired' others to follow their path by providing the necessary first impetus for suicidal 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 organisation 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 organisational support, as a mechanism to simultaneously ensure societal survival on the one hand, and enable competition and retaliation on the other.

¹¹⁴ In over 50 interviews and discussions which I conducted between December 2004 and January 2005, not one individual criticised suicide bombers. Even the 'pacifists' I spoke to tended to criticise the organisational 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 Chapter IV and V respectively.

¹¹⁵ Informal discussion with a group of street level activists of various affiliations, Nablus, 19 January 2005

(i) Suicide Bombings as an Expression of Retaliation for Individual Bombers

Scott Atran describes how the genius of groups like Hamas lies in its ability to recruit and turn ordinary people into killing machines through training and processes of intense indoctrination often lasting eighteen months or more¹¹⁶. 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 2000¹¹⁷. 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 purification¹¹⁸. 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 will and last testament in the form of a letter, audio tape or video cassette¹¹⁹.

However since the Al-Aqsa intifada, this is no longer seems to be an accurate representation of the phenomenon in the Palestinian scenario. Various sources now suggest that because volunteers are increasingly more common, active recruitment, indoctrination and training is becoming progressively unnecessary. As a direct result, indoctrination seems to be increasingly rare and training time is now also minimal, potentially concentrating only upon familiarising the candidate with the explosive devise and the mission's details¹²⁰. Christopher Reuter in his interview of an individual who was potentially a Hamas activist was told how: "nowadays (sic) 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"¹²¹. Nichole Argo's data also seems to verify this change. Argo

¹¹⁶ Scott Atran, 'Genesis', opt. cit.

¹¹⁷ See for example, the Incidents Database, International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), opt. cit.

¹¹⁸ Asaf Moghadam, 'Palestinian Suicide Terrorism', opt. cit. p. 84

¹¹⁹ Nasra Hassan, 'An Arsenal of Believers: Talking to the 'Human Bombs'', *The New Yorker*, 22 November 2001, p. 38

¹²⁰ Informal discussion with Hamas supporter (name withheld), Nablus, 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.

¹²¹ Christopher Reuter, *My Life is a Weapon*, opt. cit., p. 87; see also Nichole Argo, 'Understanding and Defusing the Human Bombs' and 'Human Bombs', opt. cit.; Personal interviews with Yasser Ahmad

who conducted interviews with fifteen pre-empted suicide bombers in Israeli prisons in 2002, mentions how eight of the fifteen had volunteered for their missions. Most importantly, she points out that five of the fifteen began executing their missions *within ten days* of committing to the operations and ninety percent of them began *within the month*¹²². 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 attack¹²³. 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 organisation 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”¹²⁴. 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 mobilisation”¹²⁵. Given the unfortunate realities of the Israeli-

Shalabi, Associate Researcher, The Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS), Ramallah, 02 January 2005 and Prof. Hisham A. Ahmad, Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science, Birzeit University, in Ramallah, 30 December 2004.

¹²² 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.

¹²³ Ira Sharkansky, *Coping With Terror: An Israeli Perspective* (Maryland and Oxford: Lexington Books, 2003)

¹²⁴ As quoted in Hisham H. Ahmad, ‘Palestinian Resistance and ‘Suicide Bombing’: Causes and Consequences’, in Tore Bjørge (ed.), *Root Causes of Terrorism: Proceedings from an International Expert Meeting in Oslo, 9-11 June 2003* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2003), p. 133

¹²⁵ Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, *opt. cit.* p. 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.

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 are willing to participate in suicide missions, as either volunteers or recruits, are motivated by their desire to *retaliate* against an asymmetrically stronger enemy. Hamas' instrumental goals have been directly benefited by channelising 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 believe that by inflicting terror on the Israeli state, their mission contributes 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 recognise 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*"¹²⁶. (emphasis added)

"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...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*"¹²⁷. (emphasis added)

¹²⁶ Nichole Argo, 'Understanding and Defusing Human Bombs', *opt. cit.* p. 12

¹²⁷ Ibid. It must be noted that Argo states very clearly that this candidate was not recruited but had volunteered for the mission.

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* between those who are soldiers, civilians, kids, adults”¹²⁸ (emphasis added)

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 Netanya 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* and strive in the path of God to defend its honour and its people”¹²⁹. (emphasis added)

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*”¹³⁰. (emphasis added)

¹²⁸ Nichole Argo, ‘Understanding and Defusing Human Bombs’, opt. cit. p. 11

¹²⁹ Mohammed M. Hafez, *Manufacturing Human Bombs: The Making of Palestinian Suicide Bombers* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2006), p. 48

¹³⁰ Christopher Reuter, *My Life is a Weapon*, opt. cit. p. 91

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 attack¹³¹.

(ii) 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 organisational 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

¹³¹ See for example Hisham H. Ahmed, ‘Palestinian Resistance and ‘Suicide Bombing’, opt. cit.

hymns of life... *We die so that future generations might live* (emphasis added)”¹³².

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* in order to please the will of God”¹³³ (emphasis added). 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* (emphasis added)”¹³⁴. It is clear that the bombers believe that their self-sacrifice is a service to their community, and one which will ensure its survival and enable others to live in a better future. As such, the act of suicidal 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 family¹³⁵. 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”¹³⁶. Similarly Miriam Farhat, a nominated Hamas candidate and the mother of Mohammed, Rawad and Nidal, all Qassam Bridges 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*”¹³⁷.

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

¹³² For the full text of the will see Mohammed M. Hafez, *Manufacturing Human Bombs*, opt. cit., p. 90

¹³³ Nichole Argo, ‘Understanding and Defusing Human Bombs’, opt. cit. p. 11

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ 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.

¹³⁶ Mohammed M. Hafez, *Manufacturing Human Bombs*, opt. cit. p. 49

¹³⁷ Zaki Chehab, *Inside Hamas: The Untold Story of Militants, Martyrs and Spies* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), pp. 86-87

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”¹³⁸. 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* (emphasis added). Finally, I was given the green light to leave Gaza for an operation inside Israel”¹³⁹.

Suicide operatives also wish to convey a message to the world and the Israeli state. For example, 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* (emphasis added)”¹⁴⁰. 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* (emphasis added)”¹⁴¹.

The conscious step taken towards militarisation and radicalisation 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

¹³⁸ Nichole Argo, ‘Understanding and Defusing Human Bombs’, opt. cit. p. 12

¹³⁹ Nasra Hassan, as quoted in Kydd and Walter, ‘Sabotaging the Peace’, opt. cit. p. 263

¹⁴⁰ Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, opt. cit. p. 90

¹⁴¹ Mia Bloom, ‘Palestinian Suicide Bombers’, opt. cit. p. 74

operation with the PIJ¹⁴². My own interviews¹⁴³, as well as poll results, also point to a trend where individuals often shift from moderate organisations 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 pressurises moderate political factions to adopt suicide operation or else risk losing popular support. Thus the individual's attitude is a crucial determinant of the dialectic that exists between both levels of analysis.

(ii) Suicide Bombings as an Expression of Competition for Individual Bombers

Martyrdom has become a powerful source of honour in Palestinian society and one which is portrayed as such by both the organisational 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"¹⁴⁴. 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 publicised, his parents are visited and the organisation he died in the name of often organises 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 organisation but also by the

¹⁴² Luca Ricolfi, 'Palestinians, 1981- 2003' in Diego Gambetta (ed.), *Making Sense of Suicide Missions* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005)

¹⁴³ See Appendix A for a list of 'on-the-record' interviews

¹⁴⁴ Mia Bloom, 'Palestinian Suicide Bombers', *opt. cit.* p. 74

entire village/camp. It's 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 operative¹⁴⁵.

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' 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*”¹⁴⁶. (emphasis added)

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 (sic) 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 martyrdom¹⁴⁷. 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 him¹⁴⁸.

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

¹⁴⁵ See for example: Christopher Reuter, *My Life is a Weapon*, opt. cit.; Luca Ricolfi, ‘Palestinians’, opt. cit.; Personal interviews with Anat Kurz, Jaffee Centre of Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, 27 December 2004; Hisham A. Ahmad, Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science, Birzeit University, in Ramallah, 30 December 2004; Amira Hass, Ramallah, 01 January 2005; Yasser Ahmad Shalabi, Associate Researcher, The Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS), Ramallah, 02 January 2005;

¹⁴⁶ Zaki Chehab, *Inside Hamas*, opt. cit. p. 88

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. pp. 91-93

¹⁴⁸ Informal discussion with Hamas supporter (name withheld), Nablus, 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 he in the absence of a police record he could penetrate far into Israeli territory without being recognised. This is why, he continued to explain, he himself was also a good candidate for a suicide bombing.

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]”¹⁴⁹. Others stated how “how anyone with honour would choose the path of martyrdom”¹⁵⁰. 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 minimum¹⁵¹. 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 glory¹⁵². 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 realise that their deaths might amount to more than their lives: children as young as four years old want to ‘grow up to be martyrs’¹⁵³. 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”¹⁵⁴.

Another key reason for martyrdom operations becoming increasingly competitive may be the cash compensation received by the martyr’s family both from the group which organised 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

¹⁴⁹ Hisham H. Ahmed, ‘Palestinian Resistance and ‘Suicide Bombing’, *opt. cit.* p. 126

¹⁵⁰ Informal discussions with students and members of youth movements (Hamas and Fatah) in Nablus, Birzeit and Bethlehem.

¹⁵¹ Edward Said, *The End of the Peace Process : Oslo and After* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2000)

¹⁵² Luca Ricolfi, ‘Palestinians’, *opt. cit.*

¹⁵³ Informal discussion with Abu Ali, Ramallah, 01 January 2005

¹⁵⁴ Christopher Reuter, *My Life is a Weapon*, *opt. cit.*, p. 108

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 2002¹⁵⁵. 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 extent¹⁵⁶.

What is obvious then is that martyrdom and suicide operations have been normalised 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 that would be lots of chocolate cake with coconut flakes which was his favourite desert. 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"¹⁵⁷.

IV. Conclusion

What is evident is that the dialectic between the individual and the organisation plays a crucial role in propelling the use of suicide operations within the Palestinian context. Suicide operations become the converging point of both instrumental and expressive violence, for both Hamas and its operatives. Hamas leader Abu Shanab explained the organisation'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

¹⁵⁵ Alan Krueger and Jitka Maleckova, 'Education, Poverty, Political Violence and Terrorism', opt. cit.

¹⁵⁶ See also: Luca Ricolfi, 'Palestinians', opt. cit.; Matthew Levitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press in association with Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2006)

¹⁵⁷ Christopher Reuter, *My Life is a Weapon*, opt. cit. p.108

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.¹⁵⁸

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’”.¹⁵⁹ 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”.¹⁶⁰

Hence Hamas’ 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”.¹⁶¹

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’ judgment that Palestinian public opinion would tolerate them. “The assessment initially appeared correct,

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Abu Shanab, 5 August 2003. As quoted in the ICG Middle East Report No. 21, *Dealing with Hamas*, opt. cit.

¹⁵⁹ ICG interview with former Israeli security official. December 2003. See: ICG Middle East Report N°21, *Dealing with Hamas*, opt. cit.

¹⁶⁰ ICG interview, former senior Israeli intelligence official, Ramat Gan, 5 November 2003. See: ICG Middle East Report N°21, *Dealing with Hamas*, opt. cit.

¹⁶¹ ICG interview, Ismail Habbash, Palestinian film maker, Ramallah, 4 December 2003. See: ICG Middle East Report N°21, *Dealing with Hamas*, opt. cit.

but the movement 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 has been a consistent pattern of suicide attacks after high-profile Israeli assassinations¹⁶².

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 organisations, 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 *instrumentalised* by Hamas, but also that it has been *internalised* to a considerable degree by a significant proportion of the Palestinian population. In turn, this hints at its emergence as a fully developed norm – an aspect that will be addressed in the following chapter. Overall the result is the generation of an arena of political competition in a quasi-government and proto-state setting with suicide attacks serving the purpose of delineating organisational capacity and individual space. In other words, the instrumental and expressive use of martyrdom in its newest *avatar*, in this setting enables Hamas and its operatives to utilise suicide bombings as mechanisms to ensure survival, competition and retaliation.

¹⁶² ICG Middle East Report No. 21 (26 January 2004), *Dealing With Hamas*, opt. cit.

Chapter IV: Identity, Power and the Palestinian Norm of Militant Heroic Martyrdom

*“When the blood of martyrs irrigates
the land then roses appear”
-Hamas song¹*

Part I

I. Introduction

The last chapter located the instrumental and expressive rationality of suicidal violence in order to explain why it is adopted as a form of protest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This chapter constructs the second pillar of the proposed theoretical framework of analysis by locating how a culturally specific concept of self-sacrifice and martyrdom was appropriated and re-articulated as suicide bombings by Hamas. In other words, this chapter seeks to explain *how* suicidal violence emerged 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.

This chapter begins by identifying Palestinian nationalism as the vital determinant in the emergence of suicidal violence in this setting. To this end the first part of this chapter outlines the evolution of Palestinian nationalism over the course of the twentieth century and locates certain re-occurring key themes in the construction of Palestinian national identity which include: *humiliation, dispossession, suffering, sacrifice* and most significantly for this analysis, *martyrdom*. This account of Palestinian socio-political reality in the *longue durée* enables one to locate the trajectory of protest and violence in the Israeli-Palestinian interaction over the past fifty years in direct relation to the crystallisation of Palestinian nationalism and national identity. Further, it enables one to locate ‘identity politics’ and the ‘notion of the other’ as crucial elements in facilitating what this work

¹ As quoted in Anne Marie Oliver and Paul Steinberg, *The Road to Martyrs Square: A Journey into the World of the Suicide Bomber* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 92

identifies as the historically developed ‘norm of militant heroic martyrdom’. This contextualisation ensures that multiple factors that would otherwise be ignored are taken into consideration in attempting to formulate a deeper understanding of how suicidal 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. The rest of the chapter is dedicated to demonstrating how Palestinian identity is historically rooted in a cyclical active-passive dichotomy of armed struggle/militant heroic martyrdom and suffering/sacrifice. In this section, Hamas is identified as appropriating and re-Islamising the pre-existing, culturally entrenched norm of militant heroic martyrdom (also referred to as MHM) before re-articulating it as suicidal violence at a specific point within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The broad background assumptions of this chapter are therefore rooted in a constructivist understanding which stresses the importance of specific social context.

This background and contextualisation once again facilitates an understanding of suicidal violence on both the organisational and individual levels of analysis and allows one to comprehend how the act of suicide bombing serves multiple functions for different levels in Palestinian society. Overall then this work asserts that 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 organisation (i.e. Hamas), that of the individual bomber and finally at the level of the Palestinian society. These three levels also appear to constantly interact and influence each other’s behaviour and expectations. For example, the increasing support for suicidal violence in Palestinian society may serve to explain why suicide bombings were adopted as a strategy by secular Fatah and even the left-wing PFLP and thereby enable one to argue for the existence of what may be identified as a *norm of militant heroic martyrdom* (with suicide bombing being articulated by Hamas as its most recent expression).

This work also notes how suicide bombings are used as a mechanism to delineate both organisational and individual space within the Palestinian socio-political setting. Therefore suicidal violence is identified as a mechanism whereby the organisations/individuals can not only stand apart from the society as proactive and powerful actors but also simultaneously a mechanism utilised, by both levels, to reintegrate with Palestinian society

and identify with its grievances. This work asserts that the success and survival of both levels is 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 organisation and the individual be consistently perceived to be representative of broader societal sentiments and also be perceived as furthering a common cause - in this case articulated as removing 'Israeli occupation' and establishing an independent Palestinian state.

II. Social Constructivism

While constructivism is of considerable importance in the field of International Relations (henceforth IR) and IR theory it is rather difficult to pin down. A key reason for this is the range of distinct varieties of scholarship that may be categorised as part of the 'constructivist turn' in IR. A significant section of this scholarship attempts to locate constructivism in the broader landscape of theoretical engagement in IR. Thus scholars such as Richard Price, Christian Reus-Smit, Peter Katzenstein, Robert Keohane and John Ruggie see in the development of constructivism a challenge to the dominance of neorealism and neo-liberal institutionalism, and they locate the central debate in IR as ongoing (or emerging) between the rationalists on the one hand, and the constructivists on the other². Others such as Emanuel Adler, see constructivism instead as occupying the 'middle ground' between the traditional rationalist approaches which subscribe to the tenets of positivism and other more radical approaches to studying the international system³. The study is further complicated by a host of other categorisations and foci. Scholars studying international phenomenon in the constructivist vein tend to focus on a wide variety of issues, ranging from security communities to political economy to the culture and construction of national interest⁴. Additionally they also focus on and use concepts that are

² See for example: Richard Price and Christian Reus-Smit, 'Dangerous Liaisons? Critical International Theory and Constructivism', *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 4 (1998); Peter J. Katzenstein, Robert O. Keohane and Stephen Krasner, 'International Organization and the Study of World Politics', *International Organization*, Vol. 52 (1998); John Gerard Ruggie, *Constructing the World Polity: Essays on International Institutionalization* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998).

³ See Emanuel Adler, 'Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics', *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 3 (1997).

⁴ See for example: Peter J. Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Martha Finnemore, *National Interest and International Society* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996); Audie Klotz, *Norms in International Relations: The Struggle Against Apartheid* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995);

equally varied. For example, while some constructivists investigate the significance of norms and rules for the construction of reality, others choose to focus in on identity and inter-subjective practices.⁵ This complexity has led some writers to suggest that constructivism may be no more than a general rubric under which a range of approaches are subsumed and a spectrum of topics studied⁶. It is also this very diversity which is identified by the critics of constructivism as problematic. Combined with what critics see as constructivism's inability to apply either its conceptual or methodological apparatus to successful empirical analysis and, related to this, its failure to advance a comprehensive alternative research programme, this complexity merely serves to accentuate the scepticism about constructivist thought in mainstream IR circles⁷.

Maya Zehfuss' states: "Although constructivism has been defined, explained, assessed and positioned there is as yet little agreement about what it is"⁸. But such scepticism is both misplaced and misleading. While it is true that the scholars who purport to work in a constructivist vein concentrate on a wide range of concepts and issues, to believe that this variety necessarily translates into the absence of *any* common ground would be wrong. In fact understanding the constructivists as second generation critical theorists enables one to categorise them epistemologically, methodologically, ontologically and normatively⁹:

"Epistemologically, critical theorists question positivist approaches to knowledge, criticizing attempts to formulate objective, empirically

Kurt Burch and Robert A. Denemark (eds.), *Constitution International Political Economy* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997)

⁵ See for example: Fredrich V. Kratochwil, *Rules Norms and Decisions: On the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs*, (Cambridge University Press, 1989); Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1999);

⁶ See for example: Maya Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 7.

⁷ Ted Hopf, 'The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory', *International Security*, Vol. 23 (1998), p. 171; Christian Reus-Smit, 'The Constructivist Turn: Critical Theory After the Cold War', *Working Paper 1996/4* (Canberra, Australia: Department of International Relations, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, August 1996).

⁸ Maya Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations*, *opt. cit.*, p. 6.

⁹ See: Christian Reus-Smit, 'The Constructivist Turn: Critical Theory After the Cold War' *Working Paper 1996/4* (Canberra, Australia: Department of International Relations, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, August 1996); Ted Hopf, 'The Promise of Constructivism', *opt. cit.*; Richard Price and Christian Reus-Smit, 'Dangerous Liaisons?', *opt. cit.*; Mark Hoffman, 'Restructuring, Reconstruction, Reinscription, Rearticulation: Four Voices in Critical International Theory', *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 20 (1991); Yosef Lapid, 'The Third Debate: On the Prospects on International Theory in a Post-Positivist Era', *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 33 (1989).

verifiable truth statements about the natural and social world. Methodologically, they reject the hegemony of a single scientific method, advocating a plurality of approaches to the generation of knowledge while highlighting the importance of interpretative strategies. Ontologically, they challenge rationalist conceptions of human nature and action, stressing instead the social construction of interests and actions. And normatively they condemn value neutral theorizing, denying its very possibility, and calling for the development of theories explicitly committed to the exposure and dissolution of structures of domination”¹⁰.

Consequently one can identify three core ontological propositions in constructivist writing. The first of these “asserts the importance of normative or ideational structures as well as material structures; [the second]...asserts that identities constitute interests and actions; [and the third] ...ontological proposition claims that agents and structures are mutually constituted”¹¹. This thesis shares these three core ontological propositions about social life and uses them as its broad background assumptions while seeking to construct an understanding of suicide bombings in the Palestinian context. In other words, this work regards constructivism as a ‘meta-theoretical commitment’ and as such asserts the importance of defining and constructing the nature of social reality.

III. Definitions

Having established the importance of social reality one can specifically draw attention to Palestinian nationalism and the struggle against the Israeli state as the most significant and sustained reality within the occupied territories. Within this ‘box’ of the Palestinian national struggle, three ideational forces are seen to play a key role, i.e. identity, the notion of the other and the concept of norms. Before proceeding any further however it is

¹⁰ Richard Price and Christian Reus-Smit, ‘Dangerous Liaisons?’, opt. cit., p. 261. See also: Christian Reus-Smit, ‘The Constructivist Turn’, opt. cit.; Mark Hoffman, ‘Restructuring, Reconstruction, Reinscription, Rearticulation’, opt. cit.; Yosef Lapid, ‘The Third Debate’, opt. cit.

¹¹ Richard Price and Christian Reus-Smit, ‘Dangerous Liaisons?’, opt. cit., p. 266-67. See also: Emanuel Adler, ‘Seizing the Middle Ground’, opt. cit.; Mark Hoffman, ‘Restructuring, Reconstruction, Reinscription, Rearticulation’, opt. cit.; Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* and ‘Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics’, *International Organization* Vol. 46 (1992).

necessary to delineate what each of these terms denotes and thereby establish the parameters of analysis.

While it is beyond the scope of this work to address theories of nationalism in any great length certain definitional parameters need to be established¹². First, this thesis uses Antony Smith's definition of 'nations and 'national identities'', i.e. "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"¹³. This definition stresses the importance of the *longue durée* in studying the formation of nations while also throwing light upon the constructed nature of nations and nationalism. Hence, "the nation that emerges in the modern era must be regarded as both construct and process"¹⁴. Second, 'national movements' are identified as an extension of the politicised dynamic nation and therefore understood as the phenomenon of a nation mobilised. In other words, a national movement may be seen as a protest community that seeks statehood for the nation it represents¹⁵. In turn 'nationalism' is not identified as a latent force that spontaneously and unpredictably manifests itself under only extraordinary circumstances and situations of pressure. Instead this work, in line with Umut Özirimli's study, endorses a very broad definition of nationalism which enables it to circumvent 'terminological chaos'¹⁶ caused, for example, by making distinctions between 'positive' and 'negative' nationalisms. Endorsing this broad theoretical framework, one may define nationalism as a discourse that consistently shapes the consciousness of a nation and thus determines how

¹² For a comprehensive overview of current debates on nationalism see Umut Özirimli, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction* (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2000). For further reading by some key writers on nationalism see amongst others: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991, 2nd edition); John A. Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); Homi K. Bhaba, *Nations and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990); Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (New Delhi and Newbury Park: Sage, 1991); Ernest Gellner, *Encounters with Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) and *Culture, Identity and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Antony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1991); and Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)

¹³ Antony D. Smith, *National Identity*, *opt. cit.*, p. 14

¹⁴ Anthony D. Smith, 'The Origins of Nations', *Ethnic and Religious Studies* Vol. 12, No. 3 (July 1989). See also his book *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986)

¹⁵ There is debate whether only full statehood engenders political sovereignty or if there are exceptions. Ernest Gellner suggests the former in *Nations and Nationalisms* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983) while David Miller is a proponent of the latter as evidenced in *On Nationality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). This thesis aligns itself with Miller's views.

¹⁶ Walker Conner, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994)

that nation constitutes the meaning of the world¹⁷. Nationalism determines the collective identity of a people by “producing and reproducing them as nationals. It is a form of seeing and interpreting that conditions a people’s (sic) daily speech, behaviours and attitudes”¹⁸. Nationalism is thus a real political force that serves to *construct* nations and identities¹⁹.

The constructivist conceptualisation of actor identity is that it is not pre-given but developed, sustained or transformed in processes of interaction²⁰. The term itself originates in social psychology and 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”²¹. Within international relations, nations are seen to 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 (sic) relationally defined within a social structure”²². 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 specifically constituted by interaction²³. What is key is that identity is a prescriptive representation of actors *themselves* as well as an account of their relationships

¹⁷ See Étienne Balibar, ‘The Nation Form: History and Ideology’, *New Left Review* 13.3 (1990), Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995); Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996) and ‘Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism’ in J.A. Hall (ed.), *The State of the Nation: Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

¹⁸ Umut Özkipimli, *Theories of Nationalism*, opt. cit., p. 4. See also Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, opt. cit.

¹⁹ See Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, opt. cit.; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, opt. cit.; and Eric Hobsbawm in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

²⁰ See Alexander Wendt, ‘Anarchy is what States Make of it’, opt. cit., p. 391-425; ‘Collective Identity Formation and the International State’, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 88, No. 2 (1994), p. 384-396; ‘Identity and Structural Change in International Politics’, in Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil (eds.), *Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996); *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

²¹ Ronald L. Jepperson, Alexander Wendt and Peter J. Katzenstein, ‘Norms, Identity and Culture in National Security’, in Peter J. Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 59.

²² *Ibid.* p. 59

²³ *Ibid.* p. 59. “Being democratic, for example, is an intrinsic feature of the U.S. state relative to the structure of the international system. Being sovereign is a relational identity that exists only by virtue of intersubjective relationships at the systemic level”.

with each other. As such identity serves to regulate actor behaviour, motivation and character²⁴.

Actors can share identities and form collectives or groups – as seen with nations. However, it has also been noted in various studies that shared identities do not necessarily engender a structure of peace and cooperation (as opposed to conflict)²⁵. This potential for divergence is crucial for comprehending the existence of competition and conflict *within* given identity groups – in our case this would refer to clashes between various Palestinian political groups. Additionally, the existence of a shared identity implicitly points to the existence of others or outsiders.

In direct relation to the concept of ‘negative others’, social scientists have stressed that an important relationship exists between identity 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”²⁶. The fact that there are such differences within shared identities not only implicitly points towards conflicts *within* given identity groups, as has already been mentioned above, but also towards the existence of levels of identities, with multiple processes of interaction *between* various levels²⁷. Thus the logic of threat construction can be extended to suggest that when a shared identity is confronted with a threat, it (the threat) often represents an external pressure which can serve to unify the group under the rubric of its overarching collective identity by silencing to a significant degree alternative perceptions and internal strife between levels. This logic of unification under external pressure is further exaggerated under conditions of high politico-military shock and stress.

²⁴ Paul Kowert and Jeffrey Legro, ‘Norms, Identity, and Their Limits: A Theoretical Reprise’, in Peter Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security*, opt. cit., pp. 452-3; Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, opt. cit., p. 224

²⁵ Michael N. Barnett, ‘Identity and Alliance in the Middle East’, in Peter Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security*, opt. cit., p. 408. See also Anton Blok’s treatment of the ‘Narcissism of Minor Differences’ in *Honour and Violence* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2001)

²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 408

²⁷ 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 identities would co-exist and interact. For example: 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.

This is however not to suggest in any way that external pressure causes levels of identity to collapse or coalesce. In other words, while external pressure can cause broad unification of the collective identity, it does not necessarily completely subsume conflict and competition between levels of identities within the broad collective²⁸.

The external pressure or ‘threat’ discussed above can alternatively be identified as ‘the other’ (albeit the negative other). The notion of the other is of considerable significance because it plays a decisive functional role in the evolution of identity. In other words, identity is often defined, at least partially, on the basis of what it is *not*. Such juxtapositioning serves to facilitate cohesiveness for the identity group²⁹. Others can be represented not only by external antagonists but also by culturally, ethnically and religiously peripheral minorities. Hence the other does not necessarily have to be located spatially outside but can be also be an “internal other” or even a past version of oneself³⁰. This ties into the logic of competition and conflict *between* different levels within a given identity group. However, for the purpose of our analysis it seems that the Israeli state (and before that the Zionist presence in Mandate Palestine) represents the most sustained threat to the Palestinian collective and thereby influences the evolution of Palestinian national identity. The state of Israel as an external antagonist is both militarily much stronger and also located in close physical proximity.

This work does not study identity in abstract. Instead identity is seen as being defined and asserted by the adoption of value positions that in turn impact normative behaviour. This brings us to the concept of norms which can be defined as describing “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 with this having ‘constitutive effects’ that specify what actions will cause relevant others to recognise 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

²⁸ Again in our case while external pressure (represented by the threat of the Israeli state) can facilitate the unification of Palestinians as a collective it cannot fully subsume competition between Hamas and Fatah factions within this collective.

²⁹ Iver B. Neumann and Jennifer M. Welsh, ‘The Other in European Self-definition’, *Review of International Studies*, Vol.17, No.4 (1991), p. 329. See also Iver B. Neumann, ‘Self and Other in International Relations’, *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1996), pp. 139-174

³⁰ Iver B. Neumann and Jennifer M. Welsh, ‘The Other in European Self-definition’, *opt. cit.*, p. 330.

proper behaviour. Norms thus either define (or constitute) identities or prescribe (or regulate) behaviour, or they do both".³¹ 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".³²

This chapter *identifies martyrdom as a norm in Palestinian society* which manifests itself in myriad ways, including as suicide missions. However, and most importantly, it must be stressed that because martyrdom operates simultaneously as a constitutive and regulatory (also known as prescriptive³³ or behavioural³⁴), it wields enormous power in the development and transformation of Palestinian social reality³⁵. Its strength as a norm can also be illustrated by the high levels of agreement that it commands despite vigorous internal debate on the efficacy and correctness of suicide bombings³⁶. In other words, as a norm it possesses both instrumental power and agency. However, the mere existence of norms does not generate compliance and new or emerging norms have to perforce compete with existing ones³⁷. I argue that this element of competition might also explain the construction of elaborate language justifying and linking suicide missions to more traditional conceptions of militant heroic martyrdom in Palestinian society³⁸. This ties in with the idea that norms are built upon and transformed rather than created as they are rooted in pre-existing cultural³⁹ knowledge, institutions and memory⁴⁰. Furthermore,

³¹ Peter Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security*, opt. cit., pp. 5, 54

³² *Ibid.* p. 5

³³ Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change', *International Organization*, Vol.52, No. 4 (1998), p. 891.

³⁴ Paul Kowert and Jeffrey Legro, 'Norms, Identity, and Their Limits', opt. cit., p. 453

³⁵ 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 Ronald Jepperson, Alexander Wendt and Peter Katzenstein, 'Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security', opt. cit., p. 55

³⁶ On empirical issues of how many actors must share an assessment before it qualifies as a norm see the concept of 'life-cycles' of norms in Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change', opt. cit.

³⁷ Ronald Jepperson, Alexander Wendt and Peter Katzenstein, 'Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security', opt. cit., p. 56

³⁸ This is in line with Finnemore and Sikkink who state that: "because norms by definition embody a quality of 'oughtness' and shared moral assessment, norms prompt justification for action and leave an extensive trail of communication among actors we can study". This justification of action also enables us to identify a norm when we see one.

³⁹ This work uses culture as a broad label to denote collective models of national identity carried by custom or law. "Culture refers to both a set of evaluative standards (such as norms and values) and a set of cognitive standards (such as rules and models) that define what social actors exist in a system, how they operate, and how they relate to one another". Peter J. Katzenstein, 'Introduction' in *Culture of National Security*, opt. cit., p. 6. See also: Dominique Jacquin-Berdal, Andrew Oros and Marco Verweij, *Culture in World Politics* (Basingstoke, Macmillan Press, Ltd. 1998)

because norms interact with constantly developing identities they can either be strengthened or weakened in the process; as such strong norms can ‘solidify’ while weak norms can either ‘fade’ away, *both potentially also transforming to suit newer situations and identities*⁴¹.

A final crucial point that must be made regarding norms is that often a given actor complies with a norm in order to demonstrate his/her adaptation to the social environment to which the he/she belongs. Thus norm compliance reinforces identity and generates a community by fulfilling the actor’s psychological need to be part of a broader group. As such norm compliance ties in closely with ideas of *legitimacy, conformity and esteem*. Actors can thus sometimes conform with certain norms because they “want others to think well of them and they want to think well of themselves” and this imparts both legitimacy and strengthens identification with a specific group. Also because identity is based, at least partially, on aspects of the self “from which an individual gains self-esteem” the “desire to gain, or defend, one’s esteem”, i.e. the desire to delineate identity, can explain norm compliance; where the failure to do so can lead to a loss of esteem and legitimacy⁴².

Given these parameters the following section provides a brief historical narrative of Palestinian nationalism and locates MHM as a key component in the construction, definition and assertion of Palestinian national identity. MHM is identified as a constitutive and regulatory norm that has existed in Palestinian cultural memory, knowledge and practice since at least the early twentieth century. In other words, historically establishing MHM as the standard of proper behaviour under conditions of high stress enables this work to identify the *act* of martyrdom as one which conveys a very specifically proactive

⁴⁰ Paul Kowert and Jeffrey Legro, ‘Norms, Identity, and Their Limits: A Theoretical Reprise’, opt. cit., pp. 469, propose that norms are built rather than created. My own research, as well as other writing in sociology, suggests that norms are also transformed over time and space by processes of interaction with both the structure and other agents. See also Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, ‘International Norm Dynamics and Political Change’, opt. cit., for a discussion of the role of ‘norm entrepreneurs’ and ‘organisational platforms’ in the origins and emergence of norms.

⁴¹ For a discussion of ‘solidifying’ and ‘fading’ norms see: Martha Finnemore, ‘Constructing Norms of Humanitarian Intervention’, and Paul Kowert and Jeffrey Legro, ‘Norms, Identity, and Their Limits: A Theoretical Reprise’, both in Peter Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security*, opt. cit.

⁴² See Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, ‘International Norm Dynamics and Political Change’, opt. cit., and Michael N. Barnett, ‘Identity and Alliance in the Middle East’, in Peter Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security*, opt. cit.

Palestinian identity to relevant others. Relevant others in this case are represented by both the Israeli state as well we other (passive) members of the Palestinian collective.

Part II of this chapter is dedicated to illustrating dedicated to illustrating how Hamas transformed the historically and culturally entrenched norm of MHM into suicidal violence in 1993. This section demonstrates how the norm of MHM was successfully appropriated and rearticulated by Hamas to suit a new situation and also renew a proactive Palestinian identity. This part of the chapter also demonstrates how the assertion of this more proactive identity is in fact an assertion of power and is closely tied into issues of legitimacy and esteem in Palestinian society. In short, the chapter will reveals that while suicidal violence in the Palestinian territories is rooted in ideational factors, changing material structures have also impacted its evolution and implementation. Thus, martyrdom has come to be fully constructed and operationalised in the conflict against the negative other, i.e. the Israeli state and people.

IV. Locating the Role of Militarised Martyrdom in the Construction of Palestinian National Identity:

The Palestinian struggle for national identity is a crucial element in comprehending the emergence of suicide operations in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Suicide bombings in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are the most recent (albeit the most brutal) manifestation of the Palestinian norm of martyrdom - which is not only historically entrenched in the Palestinian consciousness but which has also consistently evolved over time to finally produce this phenomenon. In other words, this chapter locates suicide bombings as another step in the progressively escalating violence that is aimed at constructing a Palestinian identity and state. As stated above, this work also identifies Hamas as inserting itself into a pre-existing culture of heroic martyrdom that it has merely reinterpreted and articulated as suicidal violence.

Palestinian national identity is seen by many as exceptional and unique given the conflict ridden history of the region. Scholars such as Helena Lindholm Schulz and Rashid Khalidi successfully identify two broad approaches adopted whilst studying this phenomenon and

not surprisingly these emerge from two diametrically opposite political poles⁴³. The first approach researches Palestinian nationalism and uses it to bolster the image of a divided people with no real national identity. These studies, primarily Israeli in origin, tend to regard the Palestinian national consciousness as merely reactive and thereby assert the non-existence or illegitimacy of a separate Palestinian identity⁴⁴. The second approach emphasises instead the essentialism of the Palestinians and thereby stresses their presence and linkages with the land since time immemorial⁴⁵. Schulz acknowledges and combines these two approaches and instead depicts Palestinian nationalism and identity as being consistently constructed and re-constructed at the point where both external and internal factors convene⁴⁶.

This chapter adopts this combined method of analysis with the belief that this more holistic approach would enable the researcher to take into consideration a number of structures, processes and actors that would otherwise be overlooked. In addition, it is believed 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. As Schulz and Khalidi rightly point out, nationalism and national identity are not monolithic but are multi-faceted and fluid concepts that are continuously negotiated-both internally and externally⁴⁷. Thus because nationalism changes with historical processes it is misleading to speak of one Palestinian nationalism and instead what needs to be developed is an understanding of how nationalism, as it exists in Palestine today, was arrived at⁴⁸. To this end, what follows is a

⁴³ Helena Lindholm Schulz, *The Reconstruction of Palestinian Nationalism: Between Revolution and Statehood* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.2 and Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 145

⁴⁴ See for example Joan Peter, *From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab- Jewish Conflict Over Palestine* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984, 1st edition); Yehoshua Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement 1918-1929* (London: Frank Cass, 1974)

⁴⁵ See for example: Walid Khalidi (ed.), *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem Until 1948* (Beirut: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1971); Abdallah Farangi, *The PLO and Palestine* (London: Zed Books, 1982); Muhammed Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); Abdul-Wahhab Kayyali, *Palestine: A Modern History* (London: Croom Helm, 1978);

⁴⁶ Helena L. Schulz, *opt. cit.*, p. 2

⁴⁷ Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, *opt. cit.* especially chapter 7; Helena L. Schulz, *opt. cit.*

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 4-9. Despite the existence of multiple nationalisms Schulz also identifies homogenisation 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 homogenisation requires a dominant political elite, which serves to implement it and which may change over time. This political elite must be legitimised by the population and as such the ideology which is used by this political elite to integrate a population must be acceptable to a majority of the same. Hence, Schulz combines Gellner's conception of the 'homogenisation of culture' with

brief history of the evolution and construction of Palestinian national identity as may be seen from the early twentieth century to the present. Recounting this history allows one to locate certain re-occurring key themes in the construction of Palestinian national identity, which included *oppression, emasculation, degradation, dispossession, humiliation, sacrifice, suffering, by the late 1960s defeat, and most crucially, martyrdom*. The evolution of this narrative of dispossession, disaster and martyrdom can be traced through Palestinian prose, poetry, graffiti, slogans, murals, posters and leaflets of the twentieth century. Hamas' literature, leaflets, slogans and graffiti also reflect these very themes as will be illustrated in the next section.

The modern ideology of nationalism may be identified as emerging 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 Syria⁴⁹. Palestinian society under the Ottomans was composed mostly of peasants (*fellahin*) whose primary identification was with local reference groups, i.e. kin, faction, village and region⁵⁰. The Ottoman Land Law of 1858 created an increasingly strong landowning class which 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 elites⁵¹. The *a'yan* were closely tied into the Ottoman rulers and functioned as an intermediary political structure whose aim was to facilitate the rule of the Ottomans in the region⁵². Yet in the post-Ottoman period the *a'yans* saw in an independent Palestine a chance to further their own ambitions and while their policies seem to subordinate national interest to personal aspirations they still fermented the notion of an autonomous Palestinian state.

Paul R. Brass's 'instrumentalism'. See Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, opt. cit and Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, opt. cit. See also Umut Özkiprimli, *Theories of Nationalism*, opt. cit. Also see the section on theoretical frameworks outlined in Chapter I.

⁴⁹ William B. Quandt, Faud Jabber and Ann Mosely Lesch, *The Politics of Palestinian Nationalism* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1973), p.14

⁵⁰ Nels Johnson, *Islam and the Politics of Meaning in Palestinian Nationalism* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1982), pp. 9, 11, 99

⁵¹ The *a'yan* came into being in the nineteenth century and remained dominant till about the 1930s. Johnson, p. 9

⁵² Helena L. Schulz, opt. cit., p. 23.

The period during the First World War saw the rise of Arab nationalism which was inspired by British and French models and 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 mandates⁵³ provided this early Arab nationalism the impetus to develop into an anti-imperialist nationalism. Interestingly, Arab nationalism had only a marginal appeal in Palestine and Palestinian nationalism which began taking shape around 1910 was based more on local patriotism than on Arabism. This was the direct result of the intimate links which existed between Ottomanism and the Palestinian elite⁵⁴. By early 1920s this Palestinian nationalism was fast being consolidated. The social structure of the region, based on a system of family and clan networks which were attached to the *a'yan* through a complex network of patron-client relationships also ensured that all levels of society were mobilised and participative in the crystallisation of this nationalism⁵⁵. However, 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 Christians⁵⁶. The early 20th century was marked by an indecisive, fragmented nationalism that oscillated between Arabism, Ottomanism and Palestinianism⁵⁷. Even so, despite the hurdles and drawbacks, 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, as detailed in Chapter II, also saw an immense increase in Jewish immigration and land purchase while the post-war period was characterised by increasing land alienation and urbanisation for the Palestinian peasantry⁵⁸. What thus emerged was an

⁵³ As explained in Chapter II, 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. "In 1918, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine had been divided into three areas which were referred to as the Occupied Enemy Territories (OET), based on the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916. Palestine thus became the OET-South. When the British mandate was approved in 1922, the area east of the River Jordan was separated from the mandate and established as Trans-Jordan under Amir 'Abdallah". See for example: Schulz, *opt. cit.*, pp. 49, 25 and Walid Khalidi, *Palestine Reborn* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1992).

⁵⁴ Helena L. Schulz, *opt. cit.*, p. 24

⁵⁵ Rashid Khalidi, 'Palestinian Peasant Resistance to Zionism Before World War I', in Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens (eds.), *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question* (London and New York: Verso, 1988).

⁵⁶ William B. Quandt et al., *opt. cit.*, pp. 14, 17.

⁵⁷ Helena L. Schulz, *opt. cit.*, p.26

⁵⁸ See for example: Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries* (London: Zed Press, 1979); Walid Khalidi, *Palestine Reborn* , *opt. cit.*, pp. 28-41; Helena L. Schulz, *opt. cit.*, p. 23. Khalidi and Sayigh also provide figures for Jewish immigration and Arab displacement over this crucial period.

addressal of Palestinian specific problems as is best exemplified by the Zionist enterprise and the gradual creation of the most stable ‘other’ in Palestinian politics.

These very early expressions of Palestinian nationalism already reflect themes of *impotence* and *degradation* vis-à-vis the imperial and Zionist presence in Palestine. For example in the text of a ‘General Summons to Palestinians’, issued in June 1918, by one of the several societies that had been newly founded to wage violent and non-violent struggle against the imperialist and Zionist forces, the Palestinians are described as a fallen and degraded people. They are described as having plummeted from the position of “masters, leaders and scholars...[to] the lowest and most despicable of people”. The text goes on to state: “Our spirit has been blunted; our heart has died. Evil straits have taken possession of us in a way that disaster follows disaster...Dangers have surrounded us already from every side, every direction, every corner”⁵⁹. A study of the Palestinian literature from this period shows a high degree of self-loathing and criticism that is levelled at the general populace and its inability to resist British and Zionist powers. A sense of futility and despair also begins to characterises the narrative from this period onwards.

By the 1930s, the category of *shabab* had emerged as a new social force in the Palestinian setting. 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”⁶⁰. This shift in the social structure enabled political parties in the 1930s to mobilise the *shabab* and the professionals against the *a’yan* while increasing Jewish immigration and land dispossession provided fertile grounds for popular political action. Yet neither the institutionalised elite nor the new intellectual stratum was able to channel the grievances of the underprivileged social strata into cohesive political action. The resulting vacuum in leadership was filled by Sheikh ‘Izz al-Din al-Qassam who called for the peasant rebellion of 1936.

⁵⁹ Ian S. Lustick, ‘Changing Rationales for Political Violence in the Arab-Israeli Conflict’, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 20.1 (1990), pp. 64-5

⁶⁰ Helena L. Schulz, *opt. cit.*, p. 27

The Great Revolt, as it is often referred to, brought together dispossessed peasants and the *shabab* to give rise to the first Islamic-nationalistic militancy in Palestine⁶¹. Qassam called for a revolt against the traditional elite, the British and the Zionists and the successful response to this call marks the spread of nationalist ideas to the underprivileged classes in Palestinian society⁶². Already in the period leading up to the Great Revolt, the traditional portrayals of Palestinian impotence and degradation were increasingly accompanied by celebrations of Palestinian violence perpetrated against the British and the Jews. Violence was thus 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 *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 emphasised the necessity of courage and self-sacrifice. Qassam himself is remembered in Palestinian history as one of the first *fedayeen*⁶³ and is reputed to have ordered his men to “die as martyrs”⁶⁴. Abudullah Schleifer states how “Al-Qassam continuously returned to the theme that it is not a necessary condition that the Muslim be as strong in number and weaponry as their enemy when the fighting starts...even if he knows he is going to die...martyrdom inspires the other Muslims to continue the struggle and the martyr’s death is kindling wood for *jihad* and Islam...The *mujahid* (i.e. a warrior on the path of God) must be the vanguard and light the way for those who will follow”⁶⁵. Thus the revolutionaries of 1936 initiated the militarisation of the Palestinian notion of martyrdom.

⁶¹ William B. Quandt, et. al., *opt. cit.*, p. 33; Nels Johnson, *opt. cit.*, pp. 38-46; Helena L. Schulz, *opt. cit.*, p. 28;

⁶² Ted Swedenberg, ‘The Role of the Palestinian Peasantry in the Great Revolt (1936-1939)’, in Edmund Burke, III and Ira M. Lapidus (eds.), *Islam, Politics and Social Movements* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988)

⁶³ The term *fedayeen* is rooted in the ideology of *fida* or sacrifice and refer to ‘those who sacrifice’ themselves. Personal interview with Abu Ali, former-PFLP activist, Ramallah, 01 January 2005. See also Helena L. Schulz, *opt. cit.*, pp. 31, 50;

⁶⁴ Ian S. Lustick, ‘Terrorism in the Arab-Israeli Conflict: Targets and Audiences’, in Martha Crenshaw (ed.), *Terrorism in Context* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005, 3rd edition), p. 535

⁶⁵ S. Abudullah Schleifer, ‘The Life and Thought of ‘Izz-id-Din al-Qassam’, in *Islamic Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 23 (1979), pp. 69, 72. This heavily Islamised language is echoed by Hamas (see Chapter V for details). This statement also recalls Mead’s concept of ‘ceaseless interaction’ detailed in Chapter III, Part I.

In addition, socio-economic adversity led to the mingling of nationalist grievances with Islamic symbolism to construct a powerful nationalist discourse. “The 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 idiom⁶⁶”. Indeed, the Revolt of 1936 marked the invention of a ‘folk nationalism’ and a popular culture emerged which romanticised the peasants and lower classes and emphasised Palestinian links to land. Many of the ideas that Qassam instrumentalised, 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 Fatah.

The next phase of Palestinian nationalism did not emerge till the massacres of 1948 essentially because of the heavy handed British response to the uprising in 1936. By the 1940s, significant socio-political transformations had occurred with the rise of a working class⁶⁷ and an emerging bourgeoisie consisting of entrepreneurs, merchants, professionals and intellectuals, who posed a strong challenge to the economic authority of the *a'yan*. Political authority remained with the notables as a result of the British repression of the revolt and the removal of any alternative political leadership and they maintained political legitimacy by their consistently anti-Western position. The United Nations voted for the partition of Palestine in 1947 and by then the Palestinian question had become a pan-Arab one as a result of the spread of Palestinian nationalism amongst the educated youth of the Arab world who then pressurised their respective governments. Yet it was, according to Yezid Sayigh, only after the disintegration of the British Mandate that the political elite commenced territorialising their claims⁶⁸. The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 resulted in the first Arab-Israeli war and the resulting dispersal (*shatat*) and large-scale

⁶⁶ See Helena L. Schulz, *opt. cit.*, p. 29; Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal, *Palestinians: The Making of a People* (New York: The Free Press, 1993), p. 123.

⁶⁷ Issa Khalaf, *Politics in Palestine: Arab Factionalism and Social Disintegration 1939-1948* (New York: State University of New York Press), p. 47; Helena L. Schulz, *opt. cit.*, p. 30. The Second World War resulted in the emergence of a working class in this region as a result of the British war effort which produced a growing sector in construction. While the Arab economy boomed in this period it was obvious that the British favoured the Jewish economic sector. This might have had something to do with the large number of Zionist sympathisers in Britain and the increasing US pressure to allow greater Jewish immigration into the region. See also Peter Mansfield, *A History of the Middle East* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 234 and Walid Khalidi, *Palestine Reborn*, *opt. cit.*, chapter 1.

⁶⁸ Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 10

displacement of the Palestinian population. The *nakba*, i.e. ‘the catastrophe’, was characterised by violence, fear and the resultant increase in refugee flows⁶⁹. Additionally, as a direct result of the war, the Gaza Strip was brought under Egyptian administration and what was left of what is now called the West Bank came to be united with the newly proclaimed Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The *nakba* built upon ‘folk nationalism’ of the late 1930s with its emphasis upon Palestinian links to land and engendered a Palestinian identity of the *dispossessed* and *oppressed* people – an identity that was based in emasculation, degradation and humiliation till a resurgence of armed struggle in the 1960s recovered agency and power for the Palestinian people. Rosemary Sayigh’s work reproduces accounts of the *nakba* given to British Mandate officials and international aid and media organisations by eye-witnesses :

“Probably the most affecting sight in the hills is at Bir Zeit, north of Jerusalem, where about 14,000 destitutes are ranged on terrace upon terrace under the olive trees – a tree to a family – and are forced to consume bark and burn the living wood that has meant a livelihood for generations. Here and at Nablus, where the organization is slightly more systematic, there is at present so little milk for babies that abortion seems the kindest way out”⁷⁰.

“I was twelve when we left our village. We went to a village called Abu Sinan. We were a family...and we had nothing to eat. I used to ... creep back to get things from our home...I used to go in and get soap, flour, food to eat. One time ...I trod on an electric wire which rang an alarm bell...It was our country, but we had become thieves in it! ...We stayed the whole winter in Abu Sinan and then, in March, the Israelis started pressing on the ‘refugees’ – we were refugees in our own country!- to leave. They came at five o’clock at night, surrounded the village ... [and told us] to get into the trucks.

⁶⁹ For a powerful account of the Palestinian dispersal experience see Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians*, opt. cit.

⁷⁰ An eye-witness account carried in *The Economist* of 2 October 1948 as quoted in Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians*, opt. cit., p. 82. Sayigh gives a chilling account of the war of 1948 and its repercussions for the Palestinian population in chapters 2 and 3.

We weren't allowed to take anything with us...then they took us and
threw us over the border, on the Merj al-Amer road”⁷¹.

This illustrates how themes of impotence, loss, shame, sadness and overwhelming shock dominated the vocalisation of Palestinian identity in this period. In other words, themes of martyrdom and self-sacrifice that were such prominent elements of Palestinian identity the 1930s were now overtaken by those of humiliation and degradation. Yet 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. Hence, the refugee experience and the Palestinian social and political marginality in host Arab states combined with the shared displacement and trauma of 1948 coalesced to generate a common Palestinian identity like never before.

However, due to the *shatat* the period immediately after the first Arab-Israeli war is yet again marked by a lacuna in Palestinian leadership. The flight of the middle class ensured that they were discredited thus weakening their claims to leadership in this period. The *nakba* also caused immense fragmentation of all social strata and additional distinctions were introduced between the refugees moving into the West Bank and Gaza and the established Palestinian residents of the same areas⁷². As refugee populations in Arab states grew, the Palestinian refugees demonstrated susceptibility to the political ideologies of their resident states. What thus emerged during this period was the active use of Arab nationalism to rescue the Palestinian cause. In the 1940s, Palestinian liberation had became an important element in the broader Arabism and anti-Western rhetoric of the Middle East. Now with Arab universities constituting the primary medium for the spread of new ideologies, educated Palestinians routed the diffusion of this Arab nationalism into Palestinian ranks where it served as the key ideology implemented to rescue the fractured Palestinian movement. Thus, the 1950s saw the emergence of a new generation of Palestinian activists and a resurgence in violent tactics. These activists often emerged in the form of small Arab groups, often based out of refugee camps, and became known as *fedayeen*. The *fedayeen* were significant in assisting the re-emergence of Palestinian

⁷¹ The account of a middle-aged woman from the village of Kweikat who then became a resident of the Bourj al-Barajneh refugee camp in Lebanon, as cited in Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians*, opt. cit., pp. 88-9.

⁷² Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, opt. cit., p. 35

nationalism towards the late 1950s⁷³. Yezid Sayigh believes that while the common experience of the *nakba* gave rise to a common Palestinian identity, it was perhaps the sudden, collective loss of land which transformed “Palestinianism...from a popular grass-roots patriotism into a proto-nationalism in the decade after 1948”⁷⁴. Certainly the narrative constructed as a result of the 1948 *nakba* helped create the context in the camps in the late 1950s/early 1960s for the emergence of the *fedayeen* ideology. Thus, according to Ian Lustick, the emphasis on the experience of misery and humiliation 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. Hence violence and militarised heroic martyrdom once again became the means to redress the loss of land and prestige and to regain agency and power. In turn, this encouraged the growth of *fedayeen* groups in the camps and created internal pressures, especially in Jordan and Egypt, to provide them with support⁷⁵.

Of the newly emerging radical political activist groups, al-Fatah which was founded by radical students, including Yasser Arafat, from Cairo and the Gaza Strip in 1959, was the first to articulate Palestinian nationalism in territorial terms and was hence crucial to the construction of the idea of a Palestinian identity that was state-based. Fatah’s most significant contribution to the construction of a Palestinian identity, as stated in Chapter II, was the inversion of the dominant pan-Arabist strategy according to which Palestinian liberation would never be achieved without the prior establishment of Arab unity⁷⁶. Fatah instead insisted that as Palestine was central to the Arab cause, Arab unity was unachievable without Palestinian liberation and consequently took priority⁷⁷. Fatah forwarded a *Palestinian* national ideology in which *Palestine* would be liberated by *Palestinian* action. Both the formation and ultimate success of Fatah was hugely influenced by the experience of the Palestinian diaspora:

⁷³ The term *fida'i* over time has come to refer to the guerrilla, revolutionary or combatant and its “root carries the semantic content of ‘redemption’ or ‘self-sacrifice’ in a cause”. See Nels Johnson, opt. cit., p. 85.

⁷⁴ Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*, opt. cit., p. 46

⁷⁵ Ian S. Lustick, ‘Terrorism in the Arab-Israeli Conflict’, opt. cit., and ‘Changing Rationales for Political Violence’, opt. cit.

⁷⁶ See for example Helena Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organisation : People, Power and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984)

⁷⁷ William B. Quandt, et. al., opt. cit., pp. 107, 57. This reversal was in direct contrast to George Habbash’s Movement of Arab Nationalists (MAN).

“...Life in the tent has become as miserable as death..[T]o die for our beloved Fatherland is better and more honourable than life, which forces us to eat our daily bread under humiliation or to receive it as charity at the cost of our honour...We, the sons of catastrophe, are no longer willing to live this dirt, despicable life, this life which has destroyed our cultural, moral and political existence and destroyed our human dignity”. ⁷⁸.

Fatah also was the first group to call for the formation of a Palestinian state in which the Arabs, Jews and Christians could live in peace and in this regard was also the first group to demonstrate a pragmatic accommodationist strategy vis-à-vis the state of Israel⁷⁹. Abu ‘Iyad, a Fatah leader, articulated the above in 1969 when he stated:

“We have always believed and declared ... that armed struggle is not an end in itself. It is a means for a great humanitarian aim. Since 1917 Palestine has been subjected to wars, revolutions and bloody fighting. The time has come for this land and its people to live in peace as other human beings. We carry arms in order to achieve a truly peaceful settlement of the problem, and not a false settlement based on the imposition of aggression and racism. Such peace cannot be achieved except within the framework of a democratic state in Palestine”⁸⁰.

While Fatah managed to gain widespread support due to its cohesive nationalist message, this is not to state that there was no Islamism/Islamist rhetoric present in its message. Indeed the method of articulating its nationalist goals using the language of patriotism and Islam in conjuncture enabled Fatah to garner support from diverse sections of the Palestinian society including the traditional elite, the conservative Islamists as well as the radical left-wing elements. Fatah was characterised by its revolutionary national liberation

⁷⁸ Fatah’s underground journal *Filastinuna* 2 (November 1959) as quoted in Helga Baumgarten, ‘The Three Faces/Phases of Palestinian Nationalism 1948-2005’, *Journal of Palestine Studies* XXXIV. 4 (Summer 2005)

⁷⁹ Helena L. Schulz, opt. cit., p. 32

⁸⁰ Abu ‘Iyad, in an interview with Lutfi Khouli, Egyptian sociologist and editor of al-Tali’ah in June 1969. From Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians*, opt. cit., p. 144.

ideology and its primary goal was the unification of the Palestinian people in the course of revolution. In a sense, the Islamism of Fatah is representative of the fact that camp politics were more prone to Islamism whilst the educated intellectuals and professionals tended towards Arab nationalism in this period⁸¹.

Simultaneously, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) was formed primarily under the influence of the Egyptian leader Nasser in May 1964. It has been suggested that Nasser's interest in the formation of the PLO as the primary representative of the Palestinian people was an effort to control the *fedayeen* movement in accordance with his regional power ambitions⁸². Yet, Sayigh points out that the PLO's formation was also simultaneously based in the statist ambitions of PLO's founders, most significantly Ahmad al-Shuqayri⁸³. Thus over this period Arab nationalism continued to interact in a myriad of complex ways with Palestinian identity formation. Fatah soon emerged as the dominant *fedayeen* group and launched its armed struggle in January 1965 and guerrilla activities increased in the period leading up to the 1967 war. Consequently, led by Fatah and various other *fedayeen* groups, sacrifice and active struggle once again became an important component of Palestinian national identity.

It can thus be asserted that by the mid-1960s the Palestinian national identity was constructed on a *fedayeen* ideology and incorporated symbols of the *nakba* – i.e. *shatat*, defeat, expulsion, dispossession, suffering, as well as sacrifice and martyrdom. The 1967 defeat of the Arab alliance against the Israelis in the Six Days War not only consolidated this disaster and resistance based Palestinian identity, but also led to the emergence of a belief that the Arab nations were impotent in their ability to effectively assist the Palestinians in their quest for statehood. Yet the fact that the landless Palestinian *fedayeen* based in the East Bank could challenge the Israeli army, as was seen during the battle for Karamah gave birth to the mythification and glorification of the *fedayeen* and generated self-confidence and hope within the Palestinians. This re-introduction of armed struggle successfully infused the humiliated and broken Palestinian identity with renewed dignity, pride and vigour:

⁸¹ Helena L. Schulz, opt. cit., p. 32.

⁸² Helena L. Schulz, opt. cit., p. 33. See also Beverly Milton-Edwards and Peter Hinchcliffe, *Conflicts in the Middle East Since 1945* (Second edition; London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

⁸³ Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, opt. cit., pp. 95-100

“The Palestinian felt after the Revolution that he’s living like a normal person again after a life of humiliation. The camps now are like fortresses, where in the past people had nothing to do but die under these zinc roofs”⁸⁴.

“The circle of fear was over, and now there was active movement in the camp. For the first time in our history women took their right role, and there was military training for girls as well as boys. We felt we had regained our identity, not just as Palestinians, but as human beings”⁸⁵.

“I feel proud to be Palestinian, one of a people that is revolutionary, struggling and suffering. We were lied to many times, others tried to bury our existence as Palestinians. But with the Revolution we broke our handcuffs. Before I was living in a refugee camp, now I feel it is a training camp”⁸⁶.

Fatah further bolstered this glorification of the guerrilla and added to the image of the Palestinians as a military, revolutionary people willing and able to fight and die for their lost homeland- representing the re-emergence of the Qassamite concept of self-sacrifice and martyrdom. As Sayigh states:

The dramatic rise of the guerrilla movement after the battle of Karamah, created a new myth. “To declare Palestinian identity no longer means that one is a “refugee” or second-class citizen. Rather, it is a declaration that arouses pride, because the Palestinian has become the *fida’i* or revolutionary who bears arms. Armed struggle was the source of political legitimacy and national identity, the new substance of the ‘imagined community’ of the Palestinians.”⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Cheryl A. Rubenberg, *The Palestinians: In Search of a Just Peace* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynn Rienner Publishers Inc., 2003), p. 164

⁸⁵ Ibid. pp. 165-66

⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 167

⁸⁷ Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*, opt. cit., p. 195

It is interesting to note the ‘secular-nationalist’ Fatah’s consistent use of symbolically religious language in the articulation of its revolutionary nationalistic politics. The following communiqué, from the post 1967 period, is a good example :

[We washed] away the shame of our Defeat [*al-hazimah*, the 1967 war] with the blood of our martyrs. We openly declared the jihad among the ranks of our youth and we gave up the best of them on that path....Our pledge to you and God is to bear arms until victory or martyrdom [*ishtishad*].⁸⁸

Interestingly this is precisely the same terminology and rhetoric found not only in the literature from the period of the Great Revolt but also in Hamas leaflets of both *intifadas*. This seems to vouch for the fact that militant heroic martyrdom was firmly entrenched in the Palestinian cultural consciousness as a constitutive and regulatory *norm* by at least the 1960s. Thereafter Fatah’s armed struggle further steered the course of evolution for this norm in Palestinian society.

This was possible because by 1969 Fatah had emerged as the dominant group in the PLO and this successfully merged the Palestinian Resistance Movement, which had been established in refugee camps in the Arab world through the *fedayeen* and their activism, with the PLO. This generated both a formalised Palestinian national identity as well as a consolidated political arena as the nationalist legitimacy of the guerrillas was blended with the institutional legacy of the PLO. It is imperative to once again emphasise the predominantly external construction of modern Palestinian identity. The definition of what it is to be Palestinian was formulated by the refugee and camp populations dispersed around the world. These were the people who, deprived of their lands and property in the *nakba*, re-created the Palestinian identity from deeply personal experiences of exile and loss⁸⁹. This outside – inside division was also reflected in Fatah’s organisational base. Based out of Jordan and heavily involved in local politics, it was in a sense removed from the ground realities of WBG. Yet this very distance from the ‘inside’ also enabled Fatah to organise

⁸⁸ Nels Johnson, opt. cit., p. 75. Fatah communiqué dated 1968.

⁸⁹ Helena L. Schulz, opt. cit., p. 37; Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*, opt. cit., Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, opt. cit.

itself militarily, a task it so successful accomplished that it was able to challenge the Israeli army during the battle of Karamah in 1968.

However, as detailed in Chapter II, it was this very militant face of Palestinian identity which also resulted in the Jordan debacle of 1970 which caused the This debacle resulted in the virtual destruction of PLO bases and infrastructure and resulted in its expulsion from Jordan thereby increasing the vulnerability of the Palestinian diaspora that was based in Jordanian territory. In addition, the 1976 attacks of the Christian Falangist against the Palestinian refugee camps in East Beirut once again consolidated Palestinian feelings of vulnerability, hopelessness and the belief that they were alone in their quest. Indeed, despite the fact that the Palestinian cause has been used time and time again as a tool of legitimisation and as a call for Arab/Muslim unity in the Middle East and elsewhere, the fact that the Palestinians call themselves *qamis uthman* (Uthman's shirt) perhaps best reflects their view on this:

We are only Uthman's shirt. After the Caliph Uthman was murdered, leaders would say, 'I do this in the name of Uthman' when they wanted people to believe them. But they only used his name. They waved his bloody shirt/ Today we Palestinians are Uthman's shirt.⁹⁰

By the late 1970s, the PLO had fully formed statist aspirations. This was assisted by the influx of money from other Arab states especially after 1978. What thus emerged over time was a quasi-government structure with an additional militant face as represented by various *fedayeen* groups, such as Fatah's military wings, as well as PFLP and DFLP, who were Marxist in their leanings. The PLO structure now constituted of a 'parliament' (PNC), a 'government' (the executive Committee) and a military apparatus (the PLA). Simultaneously, the 1970s also saw the rise of strong waves of Palestinian nationalism in WBG. 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 dependency⁹¹. The feeling of dispossession and frustration continued to

⁹⁰ Interview with a Palestinian in Nels Johnson, opt. cit., p. 60

⁹¹ Cheryl A. Rubenberg, opt. cit., p. 23.

build within the Palestinian community. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 served to not only destroy PLO bases in southern Lebanon but also killed thousands of Palestinian civilians. This combined with Arafat's policy 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 discontentment with the impotency of Palestinian leadership⁹².

The period from about 1967 to 1987 was also marked by increasingly harsh Israeli policies towards the Palestinians. It would thus not be misleading to state that the outbreak of the first intifada in 1987 was the logical culmination of twenty years of frustration with Israeli occupation, over a century of upheaval and disruption and the evolution of Palestinian nationalism. The intifada not only illustrated the pent-up Palestinian frustration with the political and economic situation of occupation but also demonstrated the younger generation's loss of faith in the PLO and Fatah's ability to resolve the crisis – either through military or diplomatic means⁹³.

The heavy-handed Israeli response to the intifada was characterised by mass detentions, the use of live fire against unarmed civilians and the deployment of the army inside the towns and cities of WBG. This response served to strengthen the Palestinian resolve and combined with disillusionment with the PLO/Fatah also assisted the emergence of Hamas as a new movement that arose to challenge Fatah's dominance in the Palestinian political arena for the first time in twenty years on the very issues that had been Fatah's founding doctrine: armed struggle and the liberation of historic Palestine⁹⁴. What also re-emerged in this period was the image of the heroic martyr willing to die for his homeland. 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. Hamas used this opportunity to fully articulate a socio-political and religious justification to resort to an increasingly violent military struggle and this allowed them to garner popular support from a dissatisfied and frustrated Palestinian population. By 1993, the intifada was significantly more militarised

⁹² Ibid., p. 24.

⁹³ Helena L. Schulz, opt. cit., p. 61

⁹⁴ Helga Baumgarten, 'The Three Faces/Phases of Palestinian Nationalism', opt. cit.

as evident by the appearance of the conflict's first suicide attacks. Hence it seems that by 1993, Hamas had managed to successfully appropriate and re-articulate the Palestinian norm of militant heroic martyrdom as suicidal violence.

Part II

I. Hamas Inserts Itself into an Established Narrative of Palestinian Selfhood

Hamas, unlike Fatah, has never enjoyed an undisputed pre-eminence within Palestinian politics. 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 1987. The previous section 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 Zionist (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 Fatah. Hamas must be seen as yet another party in this long line of political players impacting the consistently evolving Palestinian national identity.

The previous section also identified certain re-occurring key themes in the construction of Palestinian national identity, which included *oppression, emasculation, dispossession, humiliation, sacrifice, martyrdom, suffering, and by the late 1960s also defeat and occupation*. These key themes of Palestinian collective identity have consistently propelled the evolution of Palestinian nationalism and the national struggle. Yet simultaneously, and as established in the previous section, 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 the norm of militant heroic martyrdom (*shahada*) has increasingly played a more prominent role in the evolution of Palestinian national identity since 1987.

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, rather than actively creating it Hamas merely needed to insert itself into a pre-existing ideology of heroic martyrdom in 1987. At the

same time Hamas can certainly be credited with first appropriating this norm before re-Islamising it, and then finally rearticulating it as suicide bombings from 1993 onwards. As a result, a historically developed and culturally entrenched norm of militant heroic martyrdom was consciously and coldly escalated to a new level of violent self-sacrifice by Hamas.

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 the *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 though 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”⁹⁵. 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 a negative other.

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

⁹⁵ Richard Sennett, *Respect: The Formation of Character in an Age of Inequality* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 55

narrative of Palestinian selfhood and history embodies a basic ‘active-passive’ cyclical dichotomy of ‘armed struggle/ heroic martyrdom’ and ‘suffering/sacrifice’⁹⁶.

Interestingly, those who opt for armed struggle always escalate the violence and thereby raise the bench-mark of militant heroic martyrdom each time. 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 the 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 militarised heroic martyrdom consistently, and cyclically, become the means to redress the trauma caused by the loss of land and prestige. The remainder of this section 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 violence but also how it has also escalated it to the level of suicidal violence. 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 re-defined the parameters of the one it inherited.

A survey of Hamas’ politico-ideological texts, including its Covenant (*mithaq*), leaflets (*al-bayanāt*), wall graffiti (*shi’arat*), murals, posters, songs, videos and official statements reflects how it is, like its 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’ key concerns echo those of Fatah in its early years. The key themes for Hamas include: (i) the trauma of defeat and concurrently the crisis of oppression and dispossession; (ii) the long-standing experience of humiliation, suffering and degradation; (iii) a deeply ingrained sense of helplessness and emasculation and; (iv) the necessity to exercise heroic martyrdom to regain freedom, land and dignity. Hamas inherits these concerns and uses them to define its own identity as a truly Palestinian organisation; reconfirm the Israeli identity as the most prominent ‘other’ for the Palestinians; and to propel its particular version of militant heroic martyrdom as a means of

⁹⁶ It is Schulz who first identifies and links a basic dichotomy of struggle/resistance and suffering/sacrifice to the Palestinian narrative of selfhood and history in her work. However, while she identifies this dichotomy she neither develops it further nor uses it in her analysis of Palestinian nationalism.

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 militarised heroic martyrdom.

(i) The trauma of defeat and concurrently the crisis of oppression and dispossession

First and foremost, Hamas clearly recognises and draws upon the deeply internalised 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 ...”⁹⁷

Key events that are constantly referred 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”⁹⁸). 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 struggle⁹⁹. For example:

⁹⁷ Hamas Leaflet No. 13, dated 7 April 1988 in Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, *Speaking Stones: Communiqués from the Intifada Underground* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994)

⁹⁸ Hamas Leaflet No. 32, dated 25 November 1988 in Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, *Speaking Stones*, *opt. cit.*

⁹⁹ The exception 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.

“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”¹⁰⁰.

“A 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”¹⁰¹.

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 twelve 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”¹⁰².

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 freedom¹⁰³. Emphasising this isolation assists Hamas in naturalising its call for sacrifice and martyrdom as a pre-requisite for liberation. Yet at the same time, and in response to the

¹⁰⁰ Hamas Leaflet No. 45, dated 27 October 1989 in Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, *Speaking Stones*, opt. cit.

¹⁰¹ Hamas Leaflet No. 39, dated 5 April 1989 in Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, *Speaking Stones*, opt. cit.

¹⁰² Anne Marie Oliver and Paul Steinberg, *The Road to Martyrs Square*, opt. cit., p. 26

¹⁰³ See for example Hamas Leaflet No. 2, dated January 1988 in Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, *Speaking Stones*, opt. cit.

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...”¹⁰⁴

Thus Hamas first keeps a disaster-based historical memory alive before highlighting the isolated nature of the Palestinian struggle. Then based upon this construction, and using similarly 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”¹⁰⁵.

¹⁰⁴ Hamas Communiqué dated 1 August 2001, in Yonah Alexander, *Palestinian Religious Terrorism: Hamas and Islamic Jihad* (Ardsley, New York: Transnational Publishers Inc., 2002). This is a clear reference to the ‘three circles’ that the 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 Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice* (Washington D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2000)

¹⁰⁵ Hamas Leaflet No. 4, dated February 1988 in Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, *Speaking Stones*, opt. cit.

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 instrumentalisation of, day-to-day Palestinian experiences and concerns. This empathy enables it to cast itself as an organisation that is rooted in Palestinian daily reality and hence attract popular support¹⁰⁶.

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 focussed 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 MHM and could now be overshadowed by more contemporary narratives of ‘disaster’, i.e. the first intifada and the failed Oslo Peace process.

(ii) The long-standing experience of humiliation, suffering and degradation

The second theme that Hamas consistently draws upon and instrumentalises 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 internalised 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

¹⁰⁶ This is in direct contrast to the ‘external’ leadership of the Fatah. See for example Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*, *opt. cit.*; Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, *opt. cit.*

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’tar¹⁰⁷ 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 ...¹⁰⁸”

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, 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

¹⁰⁷ Za’tar is a popular mixture of herbs and spices made by combining dried powdered ingredients such as hyssop, sumac, sesame seeds, oil and salt and is most commonly consumed with yogurt in the Palestinian territories.

¹⁰⁸ Anne Marie Oliver and Paul Steinberg, *The Road to Martyrs Square*, opt. cit.

surveillance, returning home in the evening to collapse in bed for a few hours...”¹⁰⁹

Statements made by Palestinians echo these themes. 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”¹¹⁰. 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’ais* [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”¹¹¹. 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”.

Once again it must be stressed that Hamas did not need to create this feeling of suffering and degradation but instead it 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 instrumentalise the option of MHM.

Hamas’ references to the themes of 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.

¹⁰⁹ Joyce M. Davis, *Martyrs: Innocence, Vengeance and Despair in the Middle East* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 105

¹¹⁰ Personal interview with Assam (last name withheld) at An-Najah University, 17 January 2005, Nablus, West Bank.

¹¹¹ Personal interview with female student (name withheld), age 21 years, 17 January 2005, Nablus, West Bank.

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”¹¹².

It 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*” (emphasis added) ¹¹³.

“The uprising continues, to flinch from it is death, the Zionist *occupiers torture and humiliate the people at every opportunity. Let*

¹¹² Leaflet No. 2, dated January 1988 in Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, *Speaking Stones*, [opt. cit](#)

¹¹³ Military Communiqué issued by the Qassam Brigades dated 16 February 2002 in Yonah Alexander, *Palestinian Religious Terrorism*, [opt. cit](#).

the stone be our strong weapon against the occupiers!” (emphasis added)¹¹⁴

Hamas operatives also echo this general sense of humiliation and degradation and refer 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...”¹¹⁵

An important subtext to this 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 idealised image of the Palestinian peasant who stayed on his land and refused to leave. It was therefore a passive strategy of resistance and symbolised 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 such¹¹⁶. Yet this thesis asserts that *sumud* as a component of Palestinian selfhood has been undoubtedly and irreversibly incorporated into contemporary Palestinian consciousness¹¹⁷.

Closely aligned with the concept of *sumud* is the concept of *sabr*, which literally translates as ‘patience’. *Sabr* is a quality that every ideal 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 bloom¹¹⁸. The

¹¹⁴ Leaflet No. 7, dated 4 March 1988 in Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, *Speaking Stones*, opt. cit

¹¹⁵ Christopher Reuter, *My Life is a Weapon: A Modern History of Suicide Bombing* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 90

¹¹⁶ For details on the strategy of *sumud* and its failures see Salim Tamari, ‘The Palestinian Movement in Transition: Historical Reversals and the Uprising’, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XX, No. 2 (Winter 1991)

¹¹⁷ 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 Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, *opt. cit*, p. 13.

¹¹⁸ Informal discussion with Abu Ali, 1 January 2005, Ramallah, West Bank.

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”¹¹⁹.

Hamas consistently draws upon both these concepts in its leaflets and political statements, thereby 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*”¹²⁰, 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”¹²¹ stance of a true *Mujahid* and stresses that the people need to “remain patient and steadfast”¹²² for the sake of the resistance and Allah and face the enemy with “determination and constancy”¹²³. It also often represents the Palestinians as “patient ones who resist all forms of oppression, humiliation, and surrender”¹²⁴, again invoking the well established prior narrative while simultaneously referring to the established subtext of *sumud* and *sabr*. Hamas thus consciously plays an active role in the 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.

¹¹⁹ Anne Marie Oliver and Paul Steinberg, *The Road to Martyrs Square*, opt. cit., p. 74

¹²⁰ See Yonah Alexander, *Palestinian Religious Terrorism*, opt. cit. and Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, opt. cit. The term ‘mujahid’ literally translates to a warrior on the path of God. The term ‘murabitun’ refers to Muslim settlers of the frontier implicitly referring to those who face hardship and hostility.

¹²¹ See for example Military Communiqué issued by the Qassam Brigades, dated 4 June 2001 in Yonah Alexander, *Palestinian Religious Terrorism*, opt. cit.

¹²² See for example Hamas Political Communiqué, dated 24 October 2001, in Yonah Alexander, opt. cit.

¹²³ Hamas Leaflet No. 45, dated 21 July 1989 in Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, opt. cit.

¹²⁴ Hamas Leaflet No. 8, dated 13 March 1988 in Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, opt. cit.

(iii) 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 colonisation and the violence faced in 1948 and 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. Thus, Hamas' 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. 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”¹²⁵.

“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”¹²⁶.

Like its Qassamite and PLO predecessors, Hamas also identifies active resistance as the answer to Palestinian helplessness and emasculation. It juxtaposes cowardice and dishonour with daring activism, pride and honour. It accuses the Arab regimes of cowardice and of abandoning the Palestinian cause and in doing so once again underscores the isolated

¹²⁵ Leaflet No. 14, dated 15 April 1988 in Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, opt. cit.

¹²⁶ Military Communiqué issued by the Qassam Brigades, dated 22 March 2001, in Yonah Alexander, opt. cit.

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 mobilised 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 mobilise 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?”,¹²⁷

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”¹²⁸

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

¹²⁷ Hamas Political Communiqué, dated 24 October 2001, in Yonah Alexander, opt. cit.

¹²⁸ Hamas Leaflet No. 1, dated January 1988 in Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, opt. cit.

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”¹²⁹.

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”¹³⁰.

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 intifada¹³¹. 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) which must be paid, not in gold but in blood: “My country is my bride, and her *mahr* is my martyrdom”¹³². It is therefore not surprising that the martyrs’ blood also often takes the place of the traditional wedding henna that decorates a bride’s hands and forms a graphic, but effective, symbol of sacrifice and heroic 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 imbues this melodramatic, yet powerful, subtext and plays its own part in furthering the construction the blood cult in Palestine.

¹²⁹ Hamas Leaflet No. 11, dated 1 April 1988 in Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, opt. cit.

¹³⁰ Hamas Leaflet No. 7, dated 4 March 1988 in Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, opt. cit.

¹³¹ The term ‘blood cult’ is first used by Helena L. Schulz in her work.

¹³² Anne Marie Oliver and Paul Steinberg, *The Road to Martyrs Square*, opt. cit., p. 76

(iv) 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 purposes for both political parties as well as individuals. While the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas' parent organisation, 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 service¹³³. The creation of Hamas marked a clear break with this twenty 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 heroic martyrdom are identified as pre-requisites to freedom in Hamas literature, slogans and graffiti from the very beginning. For example, Hamas' 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*" (emphasis added)¹³⁴.

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 thesis 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

¹³³ For details on the participation of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1948 and 1967 see for example, Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*, opt. cit.; Abd Al-Fattah Muhammad El-Awaisi, *The Muslim Brothers and the Palestine Question 1928-1947* (London and New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998); Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence and Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000)

¹³⁴ Hamas Leaflet No. 1, dated January 1988 in Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, opt. cit.

light of the activism that characterised the 1987 intifada¹³⁵. However, what is most significant here is the way in which Hamas, from the very first instance, revitalised entrenched notions of sacrifice and martyrdom on the one hand, while also re-introducing 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 *ishtishad* (martyrdom)¹³⁶. Therefore from the time of its inception, Hamas consciously inserted itself into and attempted to both appropriate and operationalised 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 re-articulate the necessity of self-sacrifice and heroic martyrdom. Hamas achieved this by first highlighting the key themes of Palestinian selfhood outlined above in its literature. 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 characterises the narrative of Palestinian selfhood. In short Hamas’ 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 militant heroic martyrdom at the very centre of its resistance narrative Hamas also revived and propagated the powerful Palestinian tradition of the blood cult, thereby normalising and legitimising 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

¹³⁵ For details see Chapter III

¹³⁶ For details on Hamas’ deliberate Islamisation of Palestinian nationalism see Chapter V

way to stop the bloodshed caused by occupation was to kill and die for the nation, i.e. spill more blood. Blood was literally everywhere – it “soaked the land, which was commonly described as haemorrhaging’ 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”¹³⁷. 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”¹³⁸ 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 normalise and ritualise 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...”¹³⁹

“Flay my bones with a whip; put my neck under the knife.
Break, break my bones and shed my blood...”¹⁴⁰

“Kill me, rend me, drown me in my blood;
You will never live in my land, you will never fly in my sky ...”¹⁴¹

“...the only solution is to the problem is blood, knee-deep...”¹⁴²

¹³⁷ Anne Marie Oliver and Paul Steinberg, opt. cit. pp. 91-92

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 92

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 59. The lines from song no. 2, side 1 of *Call of Jihad*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 93. A *mawwal* (chanted introduction) from a Hamas anthem.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 105. These words are spoken by Sheikh Hamid al-Beitawi, a Hamas cleric in a video that first depicts Palestinian before calling for martyrdom.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 98. A line from a song in the Hamas-produced audiocassette, *Islamic Zajel 3*

Thus Hamas gradually re-created an environment where violence was normalised 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 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”¹⁴³. 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 again juxtaposed the honour of martyrdom with the dishonour of negotiations, oppression and occupation through slogans like, “Yes to martyrdom and immolation ... no to disgrace”¹⁴⁴.

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 that 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*” (emphasis added)¹⁴⁵.

¹⁴³ Helena L. Schulz, opt. cit. p. 65

¹⁴⁴ Anne Marie Oliver and Paul Steinberg, opt. cit. p. 59

¹⁴⁵ Hamas Leaflet No. 1, Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, opt. cit.

“O plundering occupier, *violence on your part will only bring about an escalation of the outburst*. 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 (emphasis added)”¹⁴⁶.

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!”¹⁴⁷ 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 emphasised that while early Hamas leaflets speak of martyrs, no mention is ever made of suicide bombings. In other words, despite Hamas’ 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* that will rip out the intestines of the Jews (emphasis added).”¹⁴⁸

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 servicemen¹⁴⁹. 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 which provided them with both material and moral support. Consequently, a strategic transfer of

¹⁴⁶ Hamas Leaflet No. 2, *Ibid*.

¹⁴⁷ Anne Marie Oliver and Paul Steinberg, opt. cit. p. 59

¹⁴⁸ Hamas Leaflet No. 1, Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, opt. cit.

¹⁴⁹ 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 al-Shiqaqi, the founding leader of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), advocated the use of this tactic against the Israel’s military superiority as early as the mid-1980s though the first suicide attack did not take place till 1993 and then by then Hamas operative, Tamam Nablusi. Personal interview, Anat Kurz, Tel Aviv University, 27 December 2004.

military skills and tactics is believed by many to have occurred at this point, resulting in the first successful suicide bombings in 1993.

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 a “copy-cat phenomenon” which was based on purely strategic considerations¹⁵⁰. However, 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 effective¹⁵¹.

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 prerequisite. Hamas’ 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”¹⁵². Hamas further bolstered and normalised 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’ text and electronic publications carried elaborate eulogies of each suicide bomber which described in-depth the operation in which he was killed along with the casualties he

¹⁵⁰ Personal interview with Yoram Schweitzer, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies (JCSS), Tel Aviv University, 23 December 2004. For a more theoretical approach on the contagion effects of suicide bombing see for example: Martha Crenshaw, ‘The Logic of Terrorism: Terrorist Behaviour as a Product of Strategic Choice’, in Walter Reich (ed.), *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Mia Bloom, ‘The Contagion Effect of Suicide Bombing’, paper presented at the annual meeting of the *International Studies Association (ISA)*, Montreal, 17 March 2004; and Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005)

¹⁵¹ For more on the copy-cat characteristics of terrorism see Martha Crenshaw, ‘Logic of Terrorism’, *opt. cit.*

¹⁵² Matthew Levitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press in association with Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2006). These are the lyrics of a song from the Hamas audiocassette, *The Pearl of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs*, as quoted in Matthew Levitt, p. 137

inflicted upon the enemy. Hamas' children's magazine, *al-Fatih*, carried stories about the life and death of its martyrs. Often the magazine also reproduced their last wills. The *shahid'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 caps¹⁵³. All this worked towards normalising suicide attacks as an acceptable version of militant heroic martyrdom for Palestinian society.

Sporadic martyrdom operations were conducted by Hamas and other organisations 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 operationalised within the Palestinian landscape thereby reflecting a consolidation of the re-interpreted norm of MHM. 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
Make your scream of anger heard by everyone everywhere...”¹⁵⁴

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,

¹⁵³ Personal interview with Meir Litvak, The Moshe Dayan Centre for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University, 26 December 2004. Personal interview with Prof. Manuel Hassassian, Executive Vice President and Middle East and International Relations Specialist, Bethlehem University, 4 January 2005.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. p.125

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.”¹⁵⁵

As these statements illustrate, Hamas’ imagery of MHM became progressively more reflective of suicidal violence. While Hamas played a part in reviving and escalating the norm of 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. There is no denying that Hamas reinterpreted the concept of heroic martyrdom as suicide attacks. It is also evident that it channelised key themes of Palestinian selfhood into constructing a narrative which glorified and actively encouraged a new variant of militant heroic martyrdom, thereby creating a conducive environment for the progressive normalisation of suicide attacks. This conscious radicalisation 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 intifada that some writers attribute the emergence and rise of suicide attacks in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to organisational brainwashing and coercion¹⁵⁶. However, while the role of the organisation 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 organisational manipulation/recruitment are not enough to explain the *society’s* willingness to support suicide bombings¹⁵⁷. 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 re-constructed enabled individuals to achieve a

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 133

¹⁵⁶ While a number of writers profess this view some well known ones include for example: Scott Atran, ‘Genesis of Suicide Terror’, *Science Magazine*, Vol. 299 (March 2003) and ‘Individual Factors in Suicide Terrorism and Fictive Kin in Suicide Terrorism’, *Science Magazine*, April 2004 letters ; Ariel Merari, ‘Deterring Fear’, *Harvard International Review* Vol. 23.4 (2002)

¹⁵⁷ See for example: Nichole Argo, ‘Understanding and Defusing Human Bombs: The Palestinian Case and the Pursuit of a Martyrdom Complex’, paper presented at the annual meeting of the *International Studies Association (ISA)*, Montreal, 20 March 2004; Mohammed M. Hafez, ‘Symbolic Dimensions of Suicide Terrorism, in Ami Pedahzur (ed.), *Root Causes of Suicide Terrorism: The Globalisation of Martyrdom* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006)

significant degree of moral disengagement and de-individuation (where social identity subsumes individual self) vis-à-vis the enemy, and thereby sanctioned suicidal 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 organisation, 2 had first attempted operations on their own and turned to organisations for support only upon incurring problems, 8 out of the 15 had *volunteered* for their suicide missions, and 5 out of the 15 had commenced executing their missions within 10 days of committing to the operation, and over 90 percent undertook their mission within a month of committing to them¹⁵⁸. 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" ¹⁵⁹, became evident. In other words, more and more bombers seem to have been self-selected and the role of organisations as facilitators seems to have declined considerably. This, as mentioned in Chapter III, is clearly manifested in the loose allegiances that many bombers have to organisations. Argo's interviews indicate that the lack of material or logistical expertise caused 3 out of 8 bombers who volunteered for a mission with one organisation 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 re-articulated and expressed in Palestinian society. But by September 2000, the rearticulated norm seems to have gained enough legitimacy in its new *avatar* to deem organisations peripheral. Again this suggests that the norm of MHM as a component of Palestinian identity was far more embedded in society than the organisation(s) articulating or escalating it. It was, therefore, potentially uncomplicated for certain sections of society to internalise a new variation of an older established norm. In other words, suicide missions were propelled not only by organisations like Hamas but also by Palestinian *society*. Furthermore, it must be stressed

¹⁵⁸ All interview figures from Nichole Argo, 'Understanding and Defusing Human Bombs, *opt. cit.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p. 9

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 has increased in the Palestinian scenario rather than the overall *propensity* for suicide missions in preference to conventional attacks¹⁶⁰. This further suggests that the norm of MHM 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 is accommodated within Palestinian society.

Interestingly, data shows that individuals who took part in suicide missions echo Hamas’ logic when explaining why they opted for these operations. In other words, these individuals also refer back to key themes of Palestinian selfhood that Hamas uses to construct its narrative of escalated heroic martyrdom. This suggests that the discourse that Hamas constructed to legitimise suicide operations has been internalised by the society to a certain degree. Again, it must be stressed that this internalisation while facilitated by Hamas cleverly tapping into established narratives of the Palestinian national struggle and selfhood was relatively simple because these narratives *already* existed. Therefore individuals justify their MHM 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 *istishhadi* (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”¹⁶¹

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 organisation to help me do it. There were few factors affecting the

¹⁶⁰ Luca Ricolfi, ‘Palestinian’, in Diego Gambetta (ed.), *Making Sense of Suicide Missions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)

¹⁶¹ Nichole Argo, ‘Understanding and Defusing Human Bombs, *opt. cit.* p. 11

decision – the stress of the occupation, the humiliation of my cousin being searched by soldiers, the killing ... against the kids...”¹⁶²

In every instance, the case for suicide bombing is built upon the perceived injustice of occupation. As stated above Hamas builds the narrative of martyrdom by highlighting the inhumanities of Israeli oppression which enables it to justify suicide attacks against this apparatus as an act of selfless martyrdom. Hamas also highlights the obvious asymmetry in the conflict and the helplessness of the Palestinian population. In doing so Hamas successfully dehumanises the enemy and formulates the mechanisms of moral disengagement which enables the option of suicide attacks to be practiced without guilt. Palestinian society seems to have internalised 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 missions¹⁶³.

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”¹⁶⁴. The helplessness, anger and dehumanisation voiced by Munabrahim are typical of many Palestinians and it is this which fuels suicide attacks against the Israelis. The element of revenge and retaliation as established in the previous chapter is also a common feature that emerges 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 friend¹⁶⁵. Again, the logic of revenge is built upon experiences of humiliation and oppression under occupation but a recent trauma seems to often act as a trigger. 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, paralysed neck-down.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ See Albert Bandura, ‘Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement’, in Walter Reich, *Origins of Terrorism*, opt. cit.

¹⁶⁴ As quoted in Joyce M. Davis, *Martyrs*, opt. cit. p. 123

¹⁶⁵ As quoted in Hisham H. Ahmed, ‘Palestinian Resistance and ‘Suicide Bombing’: Causes and Consequences’, in Tore Bjørge (ed.), *Root Causes of Terrorism: Proceedings from an International Expert Meeting in Oslo, 9-11 June 2003* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2003), p. 133

What would you do? Stay quiet or take action? Take revenge?¹⁶⁶ Hence conditions of protracted conflict have fed the construction of a culture of misery and blood in which revenge is not discouraged but instead framed as an acceptable and even desirable course of action.

Issues of asymmetry, fear and victimisation are clearly evident in these statements and it seems that violent action not only expresses frustration and revenge, but in doing so enables the individual to seize back agency and therefore power in a situation of powerlessness. Sarraj describes 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”¹⁶⁷ – a feeling again very clearly rooted in the humiliation, helplessness and violence that is so intrinsic to the Palestinian experience. Numerous other statements suggest that violence imparts agency to the individual exercising it. When Argo asked the bombers she interviewed what the term *istash'had* (martyrdom) meant to them one of them replied: “it is martyrdom: the holding of land, religion, respect”¹⁶⁸. A suicide bombing thus incorporates for the individual an assertion of identity, respect and *sumud*, all of which enable the individual to seize power and agency.

Moreover, these statements also suggest that suicide bombing enables agency to be exercised in the only sphere which the Israelis cannot 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 terrorise them as they brutalise us all the time, why not do it?”¹⁶⁹ The bombers believe that their actions will “destroy Israeli social life... and force them to leave the country because they are afraid”¹⁷⁰. Thus suicide attacks are used specifically to *retaliate* against Israeli occupation by instilling the same insecurities within Israeli society as those faced by the Palestinians. It is in other words, as described in Chapter III, an attempt to establish a balance of terror. It

¹⁶⁶ Informal discussion with Ala (last name withheld), Nablus, 18 January 2005

¹⁶⁷ Discussion with journalist Erik Schechter, Tel Aviv, 15 January 2005. See also Erik Schechter, ‘Where have all the Bombers Gone?’, *Jerusalem Post* (6 August 2004)

¹⁶⁸ Nichole Argo, ‘Understanding and Defusing the Human Bomb’, opt. cit. p. 11

¹⁶⁹ Un-named Palestinian youth quoted in Hisham H. Ahmed, ‘Palestinian Resistance’, opt. cit. p. 129

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

is thus obvious that individual motivations of survival, retaliation and competition as outlined in the previous chapter are encouraged and exacerbated by the narratives of humiliation, misery and blood.

Thus militant heroic martyrdom is framed as the “natural response to the brutality of Israeli occupation”¹⁷¹. This response also 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 opposite¹⁷². Thus Israelis love life while the Palestinians not only do not fear death but love it passionately – a trait which gives them the edge over the Israelis despite the latter’s military superiority¹⁷³. This subtext frames Palestinian martyrs as positive internal others, i.e. individuals to be admired, imitated and avenged¹⁷⁴. 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 has been internalised by Palestinian society. 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”¹⁷⁵. In short, the operationalised norm of militant heroic martyrdom enables 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 MHM 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 it¹⁷⁶.

¹⁷¹ Informal discussion with Ala (last name withheld), opt. cit.

¹⁷² See leaflets in Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, opt. cit.

¹⁷³ See for example Anne Marie Oliver and Paul Steinberg, *Road to Martyrs Square*, opt. cit. p. 32

¹⁷⁴ 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.

¹⁷⁵ As quoted in Joyce M. Davis, *Martyrs*, opt. cit. p.131

¹⁷⁶ Needless to state, the narrative of MHM 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. For studies on how Israeli and Palestinian narratives of national identity mirror each other see for example: Stephen Cohen, ‘Intractability and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict’ and Shibley Telhami, ‘Beyond Resolution? The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict’, both in Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson and Pamela Aall (eds.), *Grasping the Nettle: Analyzing Cases of Intractable Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2005); Farhad Khosrokhavar (translated by David Macey), *Suicide Bombers: Allah’s New Martyrs* (Ann Arbor, MI and London: Pluto Press, 2005)

II. Conclusion: Identity, the Other and the Norm of Martyrdom in Palestinian Social Reality

Having first assumed the importance of social context this chapter has specifically drawn 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 does not reduce Palestinian national identity to a reactive, residual category which is merely parasitic on the Israeli one. Instead, highlighting the element of ‘identity’ and ‘the other’ forces us to hone in on the *process* of Palestinian identity formation and recognise it as an intersubjective practice. It also implicitly places 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. This focus on processes of identity formation allows the chapter to tease out the layers of political identity that exist under the overarching, seemingly monolithic, rubric of the Palestinian national identity, which in turn facilitates an understanding of political competition and conflict within Palestinian society and political groups. The complexity which must be highlighted here arises 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 attempts to circumvent these complications and at the same time avoid “conceptualising identity as a unitary circumscribable concept”¹⁷⁷ by establishing some base givens. This is in line with Wendt’s conception that actors already have “private, domestically rooted beliefs”¹⁷⁸ about both self and the other even prior to a first encounter. Thus despite shifting identities, Palestinian self perception is 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 coloniser, the oppressor and occupier, and its chosen strategy to confront the same is 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 re-distributed, if not equally between both actors, at least more evenly than in situations of

¹⁷⁷ Maya Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations*, opt. cit., p. 92.

¹⁷⁸ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, opt. cit., p.141

non-violent passivity¹⁷⁹. The chapter also identifies this attribution of power as the crucial point where a self-image of heroic martyrdom is inserted into the analysis and which acquires significance as a historically important facet in Palestinian identity formation. In other words, MHM 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 the chapter to recognise MHM as a long-standing powerful norm in Palestinian society and thereby categorise suicide bombings as its latest, most violent manifestation. In other words, the chapter contextualises 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 MHM within the Palestinian context and understand *how* they emerged within this specific context. This escalation, illustrated today via the normalisation and internalisation of suicide operations by significant sections of the Palestinian population, demonstrates the inter-subjective evolution of MHM as a norm.

There are a number of questions which this chapter has not addressed or circumvented due to limitations of space. Questions like: Has suicide bombing as MHM acquired the status of a sustainable norm in Palestinian society? Can understanding the intersubjective nature of norms enable us to manipulate ideational structure in order to make suicide bombings ‘fade’? These are avenues where research is necessary. Any sustained empirical analysis of the Israeli- Palestinian conflict from the early 1980s to the present, which also takes into account historical interactions between the Israeli and Palestinian populations in the 20th century, reveals that the politics of identity, with its focus on ideational rather than material forces, drives Palestinian politics in general and suicide bombings in particular. Thus, research that focuses on ideational forces as primary, causal and independent, is sorely needed for this area of study. This is where social constructivism can play a key role in understanding facets of suicidal violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and thereby form a crucial component of this work’s proposed theoretical framework of analysis.

¹⁷⁹ 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.

Chapter V: Jihad, Political Islam and the Duality of Suicide Bombings

“...And it is a Jihad until either victory or martyrdom.”
-Hamas slogan

PART I

I. Introduction

The preceding chapter, seeking to construct the second pillar of the proposed theoretical framework of analysis, illustrated how the culturally specific norm of militant heroic martyrdom was appropriated and re-articulated as suicidal 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 practiced by Hamas, are rational acts of violence rooted in the norm of militant heroic martyrdom historically constructed within the specifically Palestinian socio-political reality, this chapter will strive to probe and illustrate the role of religion in these operations. In doing so, this chapter will contribute to the debate on the relationship between violence, Islam, politics and the contemporary world and demonstrate that Hamas’ use of religious rhetoric to justify the violence it uses facilitates a distinctly state-oriented political agenda, where the language of religion, in this case political Islam, is used specifically to grant legitimacy to the movement. In addition, by identifying how the ideological framework of jihad is reinterpreted by Hamas using political Islam, this chapter will also construct the third, and final, pillar of the proposed theoretical framework of analysis and explain *how* suicidal violence is justified, legitimised 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 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. Hamas not only alludes to this moral responsibility but also harnesses it to the Palestinian nationalist project in its call for jihad. The Islamic tradition of jihad is usually interpreted by scholars as being equivalent to the Western just war tradition. This work therefore believes that just war theory provides a successful entry point into understanding and contextualising the phenomenon of suicidal violence as used by Hamas as part of its jihad against the Israeli state¹.

The first part of this chapter addresses the main components of just war theory as accepted in international relations before asserting that this received understanding must be expanded in order to incorporate the concept of modern jihad in its full scope². The Islamic convention of jihad in its classical form not only incorporate the Western conceptions of 'just war' and 'limited war' but also that of 'holy war', even though the latter is traditionally seen in Western just war theory as irreconcilable with the just and limited war ideals. This work asserts that political Islam further expands the concept of jihad to include, in addition to these three traditional components, the even more contradictory conception of 'total war', understood in this work in its broad philosophical sense, as a war fought without limits. It is this inclusion of the total war idea within this broad rubric that enables Hamas to successfully justify, legitimise and enact suicidal violence as a modern-day jihad against the Israeli state.

Having expanded the parameters of traditional just war theory, part two of the chapter proceeds to demonstrate how this nuanced theoretical understanding can be applied to contemporary realities, specifically in relation to Hamas. This section of the chapter contextualises 'martyrdom operations', i.e. suicide bombings, as an intrinsic part of the broader jihad narrative constructed by Hamas and demonstrates how the language of

¹ Chris Brown defines the normative approach as one which addresses the moral dimensions of international relations. He delineates three focal points of the normative theory agenda as: the moral basis of state autonomy, the ethics of force (which incorporates the Just War tradition) and international justice with the focus being the obligations of richer states towards their poorer counterparts. This work will address only the aspect of the just war tradition and ethics of force thesis. See Chris Brown, *International Relations Theory: New Normative Approaches* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992).

² This work recognises that the just war tradition, unlike the social science methodologies/theories of rational choice or social constructivism is a philosophy and one way of thinking about the relationship between war and politics. However, in contemporary scholarship it has been 'reduced to' and used as a theory, which is how this work chooses to apply it. A further discussion of this is included in the section that follows.

political Islam enables Hamas to place suicidal violence at the very core of this rhetoric. This focus on political Islam as an alternative value system also explains how, for a radical Muslim organisation like Hamas, there is no real conflict between the state, modernity and religion. Instead, Hamas' political ambitions are identified as being clearly state-oriented where political Islam is used specifically as a tool to facilitate the goal of establishing a Palestinian nation-state. In short, political Islam facilitates the expansion of the traditional jihad concept to include suicidal violence and also enables Hamas to harness this classical Islamic concept the modern ideology of nationalism.

II. The Just War-Holy War and Limited War-Total War Dichotomies: Some Conceptual Parameters

The just war theory that has metamorphosed over time and space is a tradition of justifying and limiting wars descended from early Christian just war thinking³. It is however difficult to speak of a single doctrine of just war or trace the linear development of a single idea. Neither is it possible to outline a continuous history of the concept or confine it to one particular culture⁴. Consequently, at best we may state that the “just war doctrine is a set of recurrent issues and themes in the discussion of warfare and reflects a general philosophical orientation towards the subject”⁵. In particular, the just war tradition is the military portion of the broader theory of statecraft and provides guidance about the place of force in the attempt to develop a just social order⁶.

³ William V. O'Brian states: “From its statement by St. Thomas and its mature elaboration by the seventeenth century at the hands of the Scholastics, just-war doctrine evolved from wholly religious sources to a mixture of religious and secular sources. Thus, the two secular sources- the chivalric code and customary law (*jus gentium*) - were added to the basic doctrine called the Classic Just War Doctrine. After the decline of both Scholastic and secular just-war theories in the period from the seventeenth century to the twentieth centuries, there has been a twentieth century revival of just-war thinking referred to as Modern Just War Doctrine. Its components are both religious and secular”. William V. O'Brian, *The Conduct of Just and Limited War* (New York: Praeger, 1981), p. 13

⁴ Christian theologians claim just war as a doctrine that both emerged and attained its fully developed form within the church while international lawyers identify the just war idea in the articulation of the principles and precepts of their discipline. Simultaneously, military professionals claim that the concepts highlighting the restraint of war and fair play are rooted in considerations of courtesy and chivalry. See for example, James Turner Johnson, *Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981)

⁵ Ian Clark, *Waging War: A Philosophical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 31

⁶ John Kelsay, *Islam and War: The Gulf War and Beyond* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993, 1st edition), p. 29

The just war tradition is composed of two main components: concepts relating to the justification for going to war (*jus ad bellum*) and the concepts relating to restraint in war (*jus in bello*). As per the just war tradition whether or not force may be used is governed by a number of criteria namely: just cause, comparative justice, legitimate authority, right intention, probability of success, proportionality and last resort. These criteria (*jus ad bellum*), taken as a whole, must be satisfied in order to override the presumption against the use of force⁷. The just war tradition also seeks to curb the degree of violence in a situation of war by restraining armed combat between contending parties. This restraint is achieved by imposing moral standards and restraints (*jus in bello*) for the conduct of armed conflict which include: non-combatant immunity and proportionality. Historically, these moral restraints take the form of the extent of harm that may be done to non-combatants as well as the restraints on weapons of war. For the purpose of this work this concept of restraint on legitimate weapons in the arena of war as well as non-combatant immunity is of utmost importance⁸.

It must be pointed out that while the Christian/Western just war tradition evolved over the space of a thousand years or so, its main precepts were produced and refined roughly between the fifth and the seventeenth centuries through the works of Francisco Suárez, Francisco de Vitoria and Hugo Grotius⁹. However, from approximately the late eighteenth century onwards little of importance was written in the tradition. This changed dramatically in the mid-twentieth century, when something of a “renaissance” occurred in writing and thinking about the just war tradition. Nicholas Rengger points out that in the twentieth century, the specific context for writing about the just war tended to be generated by events in the political world. As a result, the just war tradition developed several faces over the

⁷ It must be noted that ‘presumption against the use of force’ is an area of debate within contemporary just war thinking. Thinkers such as James Turner Johnson and Paul Ramsey see there being a strong presumption against *injustice*, rather than against *war*. The presumption against war, which is applied in much just war thinking today, seems to have been introduced by developments in international law.

⁸ See for example: James Turner Johnson, *Just War Tradition*, opt. cit.; John Kelsay and James Turner Johnson (eds.), *Just War and Jihad: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives on War and Peace in the Western and Islamic Traditions* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991); Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* (New York: Basic Books, 2006, 4th edition)

⁹ See for example: Chris Brown, Terry Nardin and Nicholas Rengger (eds.), *International Relations in Political Thought: Texts from Ancient Greece to the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

course of this period of which the secular face became increasingly important¹⁰. In the twentieth century the tradition also came to be increasingly seen in terms of international jurisprudence, rather than a tradition of moral and ethical reflection. This legalisation of the just war tradition in combination with the dominance of ‘principles’, ‘rules’ and ‘theories’ in contemporary intellectual and political traditions gave rise to notions of set moral rules with universal applicability as well as efforts to create a just war *theory* which could be applied to the analysis of the modern political world. James Turner Johnson points out how over time *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* aspects of the just war tradition had come to revolve around a given set of central principles. However, it is perhaps this legalisation and attempt to generate a just war theory which explain why so, “many of these assumptions have either narrowed markedly from their original sense or disappeared altogether, while those that remain have become legal, rather than principally ethical, in their force”. The key question however is, if the just war tradition, which was as a tradition of practical reasoning intimately connected to related understandings of practical life in the late medieval and early modern era now, before it was eclipsed by the rise of the state and the development of international positive law, can be successfully distilled into and applied as a modern theory with a characteristic set of core principles¹¹.

The answer is perhaps best supplied by Johnson’s logic. Johnson, who prefers to refer to a tradition of just war rather than to a just war theory, explains how in the West, the just war concept is claimed theologians, philosophers, jurists, soldiers and statesmen alike. Christian theologians, for example, claim just war as a doctrine that both emerged and attained its fully developed form within the church while international lawyers identify the just war idea in the articulation of the principles and precepts of their discipline. Simultaneously, military professionals claim that the concepts highlighting the restraint of war and fair play are rooted in considerations of courtesy and chivalry. Johnson emphasises that despite such contradictory claims, all of these categories contributed over the centuries to the growth of a *tradition* in which certain reasons for war are considered appropriate while others are not. Further, a remarkable degree of common ground may be identified between the proponents

¹⁰ Nicholas Rengger, ‘On the Just War Tradition in the Twenty-First Century’, *International Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 2, April. 2002, p. 358

¹¹ For a discussion on theory see for example: Emre Lakatos (edited by John Worrall and Gregory Currie), *The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes*, Philosophical Papers Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), especially the introduction and chapter I.

of these very different perspectives. Johnson believes that, “when different individuals, whatever their perspective, approach the subject of war and its restraints to deal creatively with it, no one should expect to find anything but what we do in fact find: differences of emphasis, of interpretation, of order, of the way concepts are related to one another, and so on”¹². Yet beyond these minor differences there is a considerable degree of consensus which makes it more meaningful to talk in terms of a *tradition* of just war, rather than mere just war *theory*.

Extending this logic to modern leanings in intellectual and political traditions, which favour theories over abstract philosophies or traditions, Johnson believes that the expression of the just war idea as a tradition would enable one to formulate a *theory of just war*, as long as it is expressed generally and with a sense of open-endedness. Such a method would allow for varying interpretations of the general provisions of the theory and also for the development of its ideas in correspondence with the changing faces of reality and context. In other words, accepting just war foremost as a tradition would enable one to use it as a theory (like any other theory in international relations) to study and analyse a given phenomenon. On this basis, this thesis aligns itself with Rengger’s view that the core proposition of just war theory is its opposition to injustice.

Limited war doctrine, like the just war doctrine, is an old tradition derived from a variety of distinct intellectual foundations. This thesis aligns itself with James Turner Johnson’s view that “the limited war idea is but a particular expression of the larger Western consensus on restraining war called the ‘just war tradition’”¹³. The concept of limited war is therefore intricately and inextricably interwoven with the ideas of just conduct of war (*jus in bello*). However, while the just war doctrine represents in its development the great traditions regarding philosophical speculations about war, the limited war doctrine has evolved primarily as a *political tradition*. Tracing its roots back to thinkers such as Niccolò Machiavelli and Carl von Clausewitz, limited war has taken many different shapes and forms over the centuries and the term can thus have either a historical or a contemporary referent. Historically, the term limited war traditionally referred to the specific kind of warfare prevalent in eighteenth century Europe. In the contemporary context however,

¹² James Turner Johnson. *Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War*, opt. cit., pp xxi -xxii.

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 224

especially from the 1960s, the term limited war may be used to refer to a number of different and more recent ways of conceiving war. Johnson formulates a composite definition of limited war in the contemporary context asserting that modern limited wars are: wars that are local in nature; fought for limited objectives; fought using limited means with regards to the quality and quantity of weaponry used; wars where restraint is reflected in the choice of targets for attacks; and finally wars where restraint is also imposed by economic and manpower resources¹⁴. In this manner, the political tradition of limited war has continued to evolve closely intertwined with modern just war thinking, a process that has been facilitated by developments in international law which regards setting limits *jus in bello* as a crucial component of what constitutes a modern just war. Hence, restraints in the choice of targets and quality of weaponry are, once again, of particular relevance to the analysis forwarded later in this chapter.

The constraints placed on war, which formed the main precepts of the traditions of both just and limited war date back to the Middle Ages in Europe. The norms of war in Medieval Europe were those of *bellum hostile*, concerned primarily with the regulation of violence, plunder and the ransoming of prisoners. However, in wars against outsiders, infidels or barbarians, Europe followed the brutal Roman legacy of *bellum romanum* or *guerre mortelle*, a “conflict in which no holds were barred and all those designated as enemy, whether bearing arms or not, could be indiscriminately slaughtered”¹⁵. By identifying *Romanitas* (literally, “Romanness”) with an adherence to Roman Christianity the early Middle Ages integrated with this traditional conception of *bellum romanum* an idea of a war fought by God’s people for God’s own purposes, chief amongst which was to protect and expand the realm of Christianity, in other words a *holy war*. Thereby as long as a war was fought for pious ends there were no effective limits applied¹⁶. The Christian conception of holy war thus incorporated and meshed with religion the traditions of *bellum romanum* under which prisoners could be enslaved or massacred, where there were no privileges of ransom, and no distinction was made between combatants and non-

¹⁴ Ibid. pp. 191-196. For a detailed analysis of similarities and differences between just and limited war see also Ian Clark, *Waging War*, opt. cit.

¹⁵ Michael Howard, ‘Constraints of Warfare’ in Michael Howard, George J. Andreopoulos and Mark R. Shulman (eds.) *The Laws of War: Constraints on Warfare in the Western World* (London: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 3

¹⁶ Robert Stacy, ‘Age of Chivalry’ in Michael Howard, George J. Andreopoulos and Mark R. Shulman (eds.) *The Laws of War*, opt. cit., p. 28

combatants. The Western philosophical tradition of holy war traces its roots back to this Christian conception¹⁷. In other words, in the Western tradition, a war fought for religious ends (i.e. a holy war) evolved, at least theoretically, as a total war fought without limits and hence with an inherent tendency to degenerate into an unrestrained conflict. On this basis total war may be *philosophically* defined as a military confrontation that is ultimate in nature and reflects a complete disregard of restraints imposed by custom, law and morality in the conduct of war¹⁸. Such a war tends to be driven overwhelmingly by ideology and bears the hardest on non-combatants. Consequently Western just war thinking has evolved by juxtaposing total war and just war where a total war is *not* equivalent to a just war¹⁹. Johnson points for example how “total war” denotes a form of conflict that has been referred to by a variety of other names – including “holy war”. This statement bolsters John Kelsay’s suggestion that within the Western tradition of just war, when resort to war is governed by religion as opposed to moral or political causes, restraint tends to be lost and therefore, at least in theory, a religious or holy war is a total war in conduct and hence *not* a part of the *modern Western just war understanding* as it has evolved²⁰.

III. Jihad: Just War, Holy War or Both?

Despite being a notion central to Islam, the concept of jihad is frustratingly elusive and this can be credited to its essentially polyvalent nature which has been made even more

¹⁷ See for example James Turner Johnson, *The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997)

¹⁸ It must be noted that there is no agreement on the term ‘total war’. For some scholars ‘total war’ refers to a phenomenon specific only to the 19th and 20th centuries in which both the state and its population was fully mobilised in the war effort and there exists literature which uses the term in this narrow sense. However, while this work acknowledges this usage it utilises the term in its broader philosophical and descriptive sense where ‘total war’ connotes a war without limits and restraints. Philosophically then this thesis uses the term ‘total war’ to describe a failure to abide by *jus in bello* norms.

¹⁹ Scholars such as Michael Walzer outline conditions of ‘supreme emergency’ where limits and restraints in the conduct of war may be relaxed. However, this is a contentious area within contemporary just war thinking and international law primarily because of the traditional compartmentalisation of just war (most specifically its *jus in bello* aspect) and total war (in its descriptive and philosophical sense where it connotes a war fought without limits). See Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, *opt. cit.*

²⁰ James Turner Johnson, *Just War Tradition*, *opt. cit.*, pp. 229; John Kelsay, *Islam and War*, *opt. cit.*, p. 45. This is also not to suggest a false dichotomy between the historical development of the just war and holy war traditions. According to Johnson and LeRoy Walters, historically holy war and just war “interpenetrated each other” and as such, at least historically, these traditions develop in tandem with each impacting the evolution of the other. Moreover, prior to the division of the Church and the state, religion was a matter of state and therefore defence of religion, directly in line with classical just war thinking, constituted a *just cause* for war. See also: James Turner Johnson, *Ideology, Reason, and the Limitation of War: Religious and Secular Concepts, 1200- 1740* (Princeton, London: Princeton University Press, 1975)

complex by being layered over with interpretations of political Islam. It is commonly accepted that the Islamic tradition of jihad is equivalent to the Western tradition of just war. The Shi'a and the Sunni, despite historical differences, tend to share the same overall conceptions of jihad. They both agree that jihad 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 faith²¹. They both believe in the distinction that exists 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 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'a and Sunni disagree, for example, with regard to who possesses the proper authority to sanction a jihad²². Even so, like the Western tradition of just war, jihad too can be located within the broader Islamic theory of statecraft and its struggle for a just and equal social order. The tradition of jihad can therefore be described as the "special military aspect of a working politico-military doctrine by which Muslims attempt to foster stable relations between peace, order, and justice in human affairs"²³. In Islamic legal theory then, jihad is a temporary design devised to achieve the ideal Islamic public order²⁴.

There does exist some degree of debate and questioning if jihad is truly the equivalent of the Western just war tradition. Scholars such as Bassam Tibi assert that the Western distinction between just and unjust wars, especially with regard to grounds for war, is unknown in Islam²⁵. Tibi states that all religious wars fought against non-believers are morally justifiable and therefore to read jihad as a just war in the Western sense is entirely misreading the Islamic concept. John Kelsay, on the other hand, believes that despite the fact that the Islamic tradition of jihad is based upon religion constituting just grounds for

²¹ The hostility faced by early Muslims from their non-Muslim neighbours necessitated a struggle for survival that led to a harsh, aggressive interpretation of jihad which ignored, to a large part, earlier Qur'anic verses addressing persuasion, patience, tolerance etc. See M. Raquibuz Zaman, 'Islamic Perspectives on Territorial Boundaries and Autonomy', in Sohail H. Hashmi (ed.), *Islamic Political Ethics: Civil Society, Pluralism and Conflict* ((Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002)

²² 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.

²³ Kelsay, *opt. cit.* p. 42

²⁴ Hilmī. M Zatawi, *Is Jihād a Just War? War, Peace and Human Rights Under Islamic and Public International Law* (New York and Ontario: Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), p. 110

²⁵ Bassam Tibi, 'War and Peace in Islam' in Sohail H. Hashmi (ed.), *Islamic Political Ethics*, *opt. cit.*

war, there are still persistent commonalities between jihad and the Western just war tradition that override the differences²⁶. Writers such as Sohail Hashmi also agree with Kelsay that there are distinct similarities between the Islamic tradition of jihad and the Western tradition of just war. However and perhaps more crucially, Hashmi identifies both just war and jihad as dynamic, constantly evolving concepts which are increasingly showing a greater degree of convergence in the process of adapting to changing international realities²⁷. This work adopts a stance similar to Kelsay and Hashmi and thereby believes that there are distinct parallels between the Islamic tradition of jihad and the Western just war conception, especially with regard to the *conduct of war*. This section will briefly delineate the concept of jihad and address specific components of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* in jihad which are of significance to the analysis being constructed. Special emphasis will be placed on the evolution of Sunni conceptions of jihad as the focus of this study, i.e. Hamas, is a Sunni Muslim organisation.

Traditional 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 which 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 characterised by internal strife and disorder. Hence, 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 order²⁸. Jihad is therefore the struggle to expand the boundaries of the realm of Islam and thus, for especially the Sunni jurists, jihad occurs at the intersection of *dar al-islam* and *dar al-harb* and as the Prophet stated: “it is the duty of every Muslim to

²⁶ John Kelsay, *Islam and War*, *opt. cit.*

²⁷ Sohail H. Hashmi, ‘Interpreting the Islamic Ethics of War and Peace’ in Sohail H. Hashmi (ed.), *Islamic Political Ethics*, *opt. cit.*

²⁸ It must be noted that at least in the Sunni conception the citizens of *dar al-islam* need not all be Muslims. Space was made for religious pluralism via the notion of protected religious groups called *dhimmiyya* which were free to practice another religion so long as they paid tribute and acknowledged Islamic sovereignty. For a full delineation of Shi'a and Sunni conceptions of *dar al-islam* and *dar al-harb* see for example: John Kelsay, *Islam and War*, *opt. cit.*; Richard Bonney, *Jihād: From Qur'ān to bin Laden* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004)

command the good and forbid the evil with the heart, the tongue, and the hand (or sword)”²⁹.

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. Within classical Islam the two broad faces of jihad, the violent and the non-violent, are contrasted in a well-known prophetic tradition. It is said that when Muhammad returned from battle he told his followers: “we return from the lesser jihad to the greater jihad”³⁰. This greater jihad is an internal struggle against one’s own ego, selfishness, greed and evil and the attempt to bring oneself into accordance with the will of God. This peaceful striving in the path of God is essential because logically guidance cannot be brought into the world if the *mujahid* himself lacks discipline and an awareness of God’s will. Ibn Rushd (better known in the West as Averroes), a medieval writer of the twelfth century, also 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 escalation³¹. 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 a valid option if it satisfies the requirements of just cause and the legitimate authority – criteria which are closely aligned to the principles of *jus ad bellum* of the Western just war tradition. Moreover, once force is used it is closely regulated in accordance with Islamic values³². Given the Sunni acceptance of using of force to extend *dar al-islam*, the criterion of right authority functions as a powerful tool in limiting the prerogative of political leaders to resort to war in situations of conflict.

The criterion of right authority also translates into a vital difference between the Sunni and the Shi’ia perceptions of jihad. The Sunnis believe that authority rests with the caliph who with the support of the *ulema*, i.e. the religious scholars, wields the necessary political and

²⁹ John Kelsay, *Islam and War*, opt. cit., p. 34

³⁰ John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 28

³¹ Sohail H. Hashmi, ‘Interpreting the Islamic Ethics of War and Peace’, opt. cit., p. 205

³² See for example: Hilmi M. Zatawi, *Is Jihād a Just War?*, opt. cit.; John Kelsay, *Islam and War*, opt. cit.; Majid Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1955)

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 initially "in (sic) the absence of their Imam, only a defensive jihad was considered permissible"³³. Thus while the Sunni position traditionally regards religion as a legitimate cause for extending *dar al islam* by means of war, the Shi'ite view rejects this expansionist dimensions of the Sunni perspective. This conceptual difference translates 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. Yet modern Sunni thought has evolved striking parallels with the Shi'ite position. As opposed to the classical Sunni perspective, 'modernists' argue that according to the Qur'an military force may *only be used to defend Islamic territory or values*. One of the main proponents of this position is the formidable Sheikh al-Azhar, the leading spokesperson for 'establishment Islam' in Egypt³⁴. These shifts and evolutions are of particular importance when understanding the rhetoric of defensive jihad constructed by Hamas.

Conceptually what is of crucial significance is that the Islamic tradition of jihad does not make exactly the *same distinctions* between just and unjust grounds for war as does the Western just war tradition. Hence, while there are distinct parallels between the two traditions, in the modern Western just war tradition a "holy war" (i.e. a religious war) is not considered to be a "just war". However, the modern Islamic concept of jihad, whether it is defensive or offensive in nature, by accepting *religion as just grounds* (i.e. *jus ad bellum*) *for waging war*, *merges* the contemporary Western understanding of a "just war" with that of "holy war". As Ibn Khaldun, the great medieval Muslim historian, states: there are four kinds of war. The first occurs between neighbouring tribes and competing families, the second is caused by hostility and focuses upon depriving the other of his possessions, the third are religious wars called the 'holy war', and the fourth are dynastic wars fought against seceders and those who refuse obedience. "The first two are unjust and lawless; the other two are holy and just"³⁵. While this medieval analysis cannot be directly transposed

³³ John L. Esposito, *Unholy War*, *opt. cit.*, p. 39

³⁴ John Kelsay, *Islam and War*, *opt. cit.*, p. 40

³⁵ Ibn Khaldun from Franz Rosenthal (ed.) and N.J. Daood (abridged). *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967, in Lawrence Freedman (ed.) *War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994. p. 90

upon the modern Islamic conception of jihad, it certainly indicates that historically the Islamic concepts of “just war” and “holy war”, unlike the more strictly compartmentalised Western/Christian tradition, evolved with far greater linkages between the two. In part, this may be directly linked to the absence of an overt division between the state and religion in Islam. This crossover between these two apparently opposing concepts of “just war” and “holy war” in the modern Islamic conception of jihad is a crucial component of our analysis because the term ‘jihad’, despite ongoing debate, seems to have evolved and is used as an umbrella term encompassing *both* “just war” and “holy war”. While other *jus ad bellum* principles can also be seen in the Islamic traditions of jihad they are not of central relevance to this work and will not be expanded upon here.

Principles of the Western tradition of *jus in bello* can also be located within the Islamic conception of jihad, though once again not exactly in the same manner. Most important in connection with this study are the *jus in bello* concepts of non-combatant immunity and means of war as they exist in the Islamic tradition of jihad. First, with regards to means of war, the Sunni jurists seem to adhere to the Western just war principle of *vim vi repellere licet*, which approximately translates into: “it is allowed to repel force with equal force”³⁶. This is again of vital significance to this study of Hamas and its justification for the use of suicidal violence against the state of Israel.

The case of non-combatant immunity however is a bit more complex. The Qur'an, the Sunna as well as later jurists expressively exempt women, children and the elderly from war and killing. Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, the first Muslim Caliph for example, conveyed the following to his army on their march to Syria:

“Do not commit treachery, nor depart from the right path. You must not mutilate, neither kill a child or aged man or woman. Do not destroy a palm tree, nor burn it with fire and do not cut any fruitful tree. You must not slay any of the flock or the herd or the camel, save for your subsistence. You are likely to pass by people who have

³⁶ John Kelsay, *Islam and War*, opt. cit., pp. 64-65

devoted their lives to monastic services; leave them to that which they have devoted their lives³⁷”

A number of *hadith* in the text entitled, *Kitab al-Siyar* (literally ‘the book of conduct’, especially the conduct of international relations), written by the Sunni jurist Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybani (d. 804-805), also highlight principles for the ideal conduct of war. In one of these Muhammad states:

“....he [the Apostle of God] enjoined the Muslims who were with him to do good...Fight in the name of God and in the “path of God”...Combat [only] those who disbelieve in God. Do not cheat or commit treachery, nor should you mutilate or kill children”³⁸.

As the *Kitab al-Siyar* progresses what emerges is a comprehensive list of non-combatants granted immunity from direct and intentional assault. This list includes women, children, old men, the blind, the crippled, the insane, and so on, with the resulting definition of non-combatant immunity as it evolved being easily comparable with that of the Western just war doctrine and contemporary international norms. Also inherent in the text is an acknowledgement of the rule of double-effect and the limited application of violence during the course of the conflict³⁹. Hence it seems that modern Islamic conceptions of jihad have largely evolved in adherence to these basic criteria of *jus in bello* which find significant parallels in the modern Western just war thinking.

However this thesis also agrees with Kelsay’s statement that the Islamic tradition of *jus in bello* restraints, like its Western counterpart, “reflects a cultural consensus on the conduct of war; a consensus that owes much to moral principles and theological concerns but is also indebted to political and military factors”⁴⁰. As such, jihad could, and in certain circles still can, legitimately be waged against all those who refused to either convert to Islam or submit to Islamic hegemony by paying tribute. Thus people living in the territory of war, both individually and collectively, by refusing to acknowledge Islam become categorised as

³⁷ Hilmī M. Zatawī, *Is Jihād a Just War?*, opt. cit., p. 90

³⁸ John Kelsay, *Islam and War*, opt. cit., p. 59

³⁹ James Turner Johnson (eds.), *Just War and Jihad*, opt. cit.

⁴⁰ John Kelsay, *Islam and War*, opt. cit., p. 59

ahl al-harb or the “people of war”, and thus party to collective guilt. This is in direct contradiction to the Qur'an and Sunna which, as mentioned above categorises, women, children and other non-combatants as exempted from killing in war.

How then does this moral-theological exemption granted via the concept of immunity co-exist with the politico-military idea of collective guilt? Sunni scholars resolve this discrepancy by referring to the Prophetic saying: “they are from them”, which is what Muhammad supposedly uttered upon discovering that some women and children had been killed in a night raid. On the basis of this prophetic statement, Muslim forces waging a jihad are *not considered to be responsible for the welfare of non-Muslim civilians*. Responsibility is instead devolved to those who, in their decision making capacities, have chosen to resist Islam and thereby placed these non-combatants under risk of attack. The justification which is inherent to the phenomenon of double-effect in the Western just war tradition, i.e. justification for killing that is unintentional or coincidental to the main object of battle, is wholly missing in the Islamic jihad tradition when referring to non-Muslim civilians. Therefore while the jihad and the Western just war tradition do share a number of *jus in bello* concerns, it must be emphasised that they have sometimes developed along radically different trajectories as a direct result of the interaction of moral concerns with specific religious, political and military factors⁴¹. Again, as Hashmi states, it may be emphasised that traditional conceptions of Western just war and jihad are increasingly showing a greater degree of convergence in the process of adapting to changing international realities. This adaptation might explain the concentrated effort made by Hamas to justify its actions using multiple frames of reference – including the Islamic, the traditional, the modern and also those represented by international law.

The theological debates that have raged within Islam have therefore consistently struggled to capture the concept and draw boundaries between understandings of jihad that stretch across “self-defence and aggression, resistance and rebellion, reform and terrorism”⁴². The understanding of jihad has changed and altered with time and the resultant doctrine, as stated earlier, is not the “product of a single authoritative individual or organization’s

⁴¹ For further elucidation on other concepts of *jus in bello* see for example: James Turner Johnson (eds.), *Just War and Jihad*, opt. cit.; John Kelsay, *Islam and War*, opt. cit.; Hilmi M. Zatawi, *Is Jihād a Just War*, opt. cit.; Richard Bonney, *Jihād: From Qur'ān to bin Laden*, opt. cit.

⁴² John L. Esposito, *Unholy War*, opt. cit., p. 29

interpretation. It is rather the product of diverse individuals and authorities interpreting and applying the principles of sacred texts in specific historical and political contexts”⁴³. Nonetheless, what is often seen is the replication of historical mentalities towards jihad by its latter day proponents, which simultaneously depicts the invocation of cultural memory and a reliance on the past for guidance intricately meshed with modern elucidation. In other words, a conception of jihad based more on the expediencies of *political Islam* rather than upon Islam as a theology.

IV. Enter Political Islam

To reiterate, the Western tradition of just war is firmly based in the belief that religion as a cause of war leads ineluctably to a disintegration in the standards of discrimination and proportionality. Thus in the Western conception, when resort to war is governed by religion, as opposed to moral or political causes, limitation in war tends to be lost and therefore, at least in theory, religious or holy war moves towards a total war in conduct. In Islam however, while religion constitutes a just cause for military action this does not necessarily translate into a war without limits. Hence Kelsay counters the Western perception and asserts that “the Islamic tradition, in both its classical and contemporary manifestations, suggests that religion as resort to war provides a way to *limit* the occasion and damage of war. In short, contrary to the Western understanding, “the Islamic tradition suggests that ‘holy war’ is *not* the equivalent of ‘total war’, any more than ‘just war’ always means ‘limited war’”⁴⁴. On the basis of such an understanding the question that then arises is: how does Hamas justify suicide operations, which violate basic *jus in bello* principles of non-combatant immunity, as part of a jihad against the Israeli state?

Suicide attacks are by nature deliberately aimed at non-combatants/civilians and accompanied by a degree of moral disengagement that place them in practice firmly into the category of a “total war” declared upon illegitimate targets. Both the Islamic tradition of jihad and the Western tradition of just war with their emphasis on restraint in the conduct of war (as a key component of *jus in bello*) are irreconcilable with the use of the “total” violence associated with the tactic of suicide operations. Western just war theory asserts

⁴³ Ibid. p. 64

⁴⁴ John Kelsay, *Islam and War*, opt. cit., p. 45

that: “A justified war (sic) is not necessarily a just war. To be fully “just” a war must be characterized by both *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*. A war obviously cannot be just if one is unjustified in entering upon it in the first place, but neither can it be just, however just the cause and right the intention, if it utilizes indefensible means”⁴⁵. The traditional Islamic conception of jihad would also find the lack of restraint in war problematic. Thus traditional normative theory, with its equal emphasis on just grounds for war as well as the just conduct of war, would not categorise the “total war” of suicide attacks as a “just war” or a “jihad”. In other words, understandings of just war/jihad constructed by traditional normative theory make Hamas’ legitimisation of suicide operations in the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation as a jihad both unconceivable and invalid.

However, this work asserts that there are distinct crossovers between the two apparently opposing concepts of “total war” and “just war”, which operate in the Palestinian socio-political reality and facilitate the use of suicide missions against the Israeli state. It is these crossovers that need to be recognised if we are to understand *how* suicide bombing as a form of protest and resistance against the Israeli state is legitimised, rationalised and finally enacted through the medium of Hamas. In short, this work asserts that the act of ‘martyrdom’ merges just grounds for war (*jus ad bellum*) with the use of *total force* in the conduct of that war – thereby merging concepts that are traditionally seen as irreconcilable unless framed in terms of the condition of *supreme emergency*. The cause of freedom, as presented to and subsequently internalised by the larger public and the suicide operatives, is just. However, while this would traditionally imply, at least in theory, limiting damage in war, the tools used on the ground, i.e. suicide bombings, extend the idea of just cause into the realm of total, and hence unlimited, conduct. In other words, as the cause is just the ends are seen to justify the means. This crucial jump between the supposedly irreconcilable concepts of “just war/jihad” and “total war” is facilitated by political Islam which provides Hamas the necessary rhetoric to legitimise this total war as a *jihad* to the Palestinian street. This rhetoric is crucial because it represents a tacit acceptance of the Islamic distinction between combatants and non-combatants while also acknowledging the same distinction in international law. The resulting problematic is addressed by framing all resistance activity as a *defensive act of jihad* against an asymmetrically powerful enemy, i.e. by constructing

⁴⁵ Robert L. Holmes. *On War and Morality* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989) p 175

conditions of *supreme emergency*. As explained in the previous section, the concept of jihad encompasses both the traditional Western just war and the holy war ideals – though both are ideally supposed to be practices with limits and restraints according to classical Islam. However, political Islam, by enabling Hamas to frame suicidal violence under the same rubric, facilitates the absorption of the total war concept into modern interpretations of jihad. In doing so, contemporary interpretations of jihad appear to more closely echo traditional Western conceptions of religious wars (i.e. holy wars) with their corresponding tendency to degenerate into unrestrained confrontations against an external ‘other’. It is this dual face of contemporary martyrdom operations, i.e. of just ends- unrestrained means, both of which are encompassed by the *single concept of modern jihad*, which must be grasped if we hope to formulate any concrete understanding of how this phenomenon is practiced today. As such, this thesis believes that a suicide attack represents the *exact point of interstice* between these two supposedly opposing concepts of “just war” and “total war”. What emerges then is a spectrum of violence where the moderate pole of modern jihad is characterised by a “just and limited war” and the opposite pole by what is, in essence, a “total war”. To paraphrase Kelsay: when facilitated by political Islam, an Islamist “holy war” can indeed be the equivalent of a “total war” in conduct.

So what exactly is political Islam? Often referred to as Islamism or Fundamentalism, political Islam refers to movements and ideologies which draw upon Islamic terms, symbols and events in order to articulate a distinctly modern, political agenda⁴⁶. Typically the political Islam project supplies a comprehensive critique of the existing order, challenges it and strives to change it. It is therefore a political instrumentalisation of Islam in that it provides a political response to contemporary challenges by attempting to create a future based on re-appropriated, reinvented concepts rooted in Islamic traditions. It is an essentially modern phenomenon in that it addresses contemporary political, social, economic and cultural realities and challenges faced by Muslim societies. At its core political Islam is a political activist project dressed in the garb of religious rhetoric. Its

⁴⁶ For discussions of Islamism versus Muslim politics and other terminology see for example: Ray Takeyh and Nikolas K. Gvosdev, *The Receding Shadow of the Prophet: The Rise and Fall of Radical Political Islam* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 2004); Bassam Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder* (Berkley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1998); Joel Beinin and Joe Stork (eds.), *Political Islam: Essays from Middle East Report* (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997)

primary concern is power in the world order and its activism rests upon the belief that an Islamic society is a just one.

Furthermore, 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”⁴⁷. It thus operates at the intersections with major twentieth century ideologies – Marxism, fascism, nationalism and capitalism, to name just a few. As such, it shares with these secular movements both grievances and goals and also contests the same set of symbols and memories. It has been employed both ‘from above’ to legitimise a certain regime or ‘from below’ to provide a basis for opposition to the status quo. Political Islam 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 Islamised society is a just one the Islamisation project is central to political Islam. However, it is also believed that such Islamisation is possible only through concentrated social and political action. The followers of political Islam believe that it is the duty of every Muslim to revolt against a corrupt state and leader and see the application of shari'a as the key to the Islamisation of society⁴⁸. The more radical Islamists see this application of shari'a as a project based in a full reformation of the society if the Islamisation mission is to be more than mere insincere lip-service. As such, to reiterate, political Islam is a movement ground in centuries of thought that has been adapted to address contemporary international realities and which is shaped by an intersection with modern secular ideas and ideologies.

The origins of political Islam as we know it today can be traced to the Society of the Muslim Brotherhood established by the schoolteacher Hasan al-Banna in Egypt in 1928, and the Jamaat-i-Islami of Pakistan, created by Abul-Ala Mawdudi in 1941. The Muslim Brotherhood, which is the focus of our study as the parent organisation of Hamas, was inspired by the thinking of Sayyid Qutb, and spawned a whole host of radical Islamist

⁴⁷ Anthony Shadid, *Legacy of the Prophet: Despots, Democrats, and the New Politics of Islam* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2001)

⁴⁸ A considerable rift developed within the Islamist movement between the revolutionaries and the ‘neo-fundamentalist’ over this idea of the Muslim duty to “excommunicate (*takfir*) the sovereign considered apostate and to move into violent action (terrorism and revolution). Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 36

organisations since the 1970s⁴⁹. Along with al-Banna, Mawdudi and Qutb, the Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran was also instrumental in developing the ideology of political Islam to its current theoretical understanding. However, Islamic activist organisations today run the full length of the spectrum, ranging from those who work within the system (like the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Jordan or Sudan) to those which resort to violence to challenge the status quo (such as Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hizballah)⁵⁰.

Jihad occupies a prominent position in the thinking of both contemporary ‘modernist’ scholars as well as the Islamists⁵¹. As stated earlier, modernists tend to believe that according to the Qur'an an aggressive jihad may only be invoked to *defend* Islamic territory or values. The more radical political Islamists however, believe in a much 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 not unexpected⁵². Even so, a major divergence may be located in the 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 civilisation. Yet this dichotomy in the works of twentieth century writers like al-Banna, Qutb and Khomeini reflects an understanding based on a radically different historical reality – that of European colonialism and unfavourable American policies in the Middle East⁵³. These thinkers, unlike their medieval counterparts, therefore tend to depict the *dar al-islam* and *dar al-harb*

⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 35

⁵⁰ John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, 3rd edition), p. 9

⁵¹ The categorisations 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 *ulema* often accused of practicing an obscure and passive Islam. There are also reformers in the *ulema* that may be credited for various re-interpretations 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 Islamisation 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 Islamisation via social action and education. See for example: Sohail H. Hashmi, ‘Interpreting the Islamic Ethics of War and Peace’, *opt. cit.*; Ray Takeyh and Nikolas K. Gvosdev, *The Receding Shadow of the Prophet*, *opt. cit.*; John Kelsay, *Islam and War*, *opt. cit.*; Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, *opt. cit.*

⁵² Sohail H. Hashmi, ‘Interpreting the Islamic Ethics of War and Peace’, *opt. cit.*, p. 208

⁵³ See also Chapter I

dichotomy in international relations as a struggle between Islam and the West. Similarly whereas the medieval jurists' treatment of jihad was preoccupied by concerns of right authority, 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. Hence jihad, facilitated by political Islam, has also become for the contemporary Islamists "an instrument for the realisation 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 wrong'"⁵⁴. Of the main proponents that have shaped contemporary understandings of political Islam this thesis will focus briefly on al-Banna and Qutb due to their direct ideological links with the Muslim Brotherhood and therefore, Hamas.

Hasan al-Banna was the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood (*Ikhwan al-Muslimun*) in Egypt and a proponent of Islamisation by education and missionary activity (*tabligh wa-da'wa*). Al-Banna incorporated social and political goals within the movement in a bottom-up approach 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"⁵⁵, 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's was assassinated at the hands of the Egyptian police in 1949 and in 1954, Nasser's regime began a brutal crackdown on the organisation which drove it effectively underground⁵⁶. It was this environment of persecution and violent repression that gave shape to the radical ideology of Sayyid Qutb.

⁵⁴ Sohail H. Hashmi, 'Interpreting the Islamic Ethics of War and Peace', *opt. cit.*, p. 210

⁵⁵ Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 29

⁵⁶ For a detailed overview of Hasan al-Banna's thoughts see for example: Anthony Shadid, *Legacy of the Prophet*, *opt. cit.*; Abd Al-Fattah Muhammad El-Awaisi, *The Muslim Brothers and the Palestine Question 1928 – 1947* (London and New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998)

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. Qutb 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 philosophy⁵⁷. He was deeply impacted by the writings of Mawdudi 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*. In this text, 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 Muslims"⁵⁸. In the Egyptian context this implied members of the Muslim community who were then categorised as apostates. Qutb advocated jihad to establish an Islamic state and in doing so argued against established ideas of a defensive jihad. He legitimised 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. Thus, this modern jihad was interpreted as an eternal armed struggle against "every obstacle that came (sic) 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"⁵⁹. 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 the illegitimate state. 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.

Given this background, one may see how political Islam is central to this analysis because, firstly, it enables the absorption of the total war logic into the traditional concept of jihad,

⁵⁷ Anthony Shadid, *opt. cit.*, p. 58

⁵⁸ Quintan Wiktorowicz, 'A Genealogy of Radical Islam', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 28 (2005), p. 79

⁵⁹ Sayid Qutb, *Milestones* as quoted in Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005)

and therefore facilitates the use of suicidal violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Secondly, it enables classical Islamic symbols and conceptions to be harnessed to modern secular ideologies – in this case, nationalism. Hamas clearly follows the parameters of political Islam established by both al-Banna and Qutb. It continues, like the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, to maintain a social programme of reform in addition to its more activist political and military agendas. Further, it consolidates its unique position as an Islamic revolutionary organisation by accusing Fatah and the PLO of compromising with the Israeli state and of straying from the path of the Islamic faith. It holds Fatah and the PLO responsible for hindering the establishment of a free and *Islamic* Palestine. Thus, Hamas weaves 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 suicidal violence as a defensive jihad against a disproportionately powerful Israeli state. It is possible that the narrative of defensive jihad is rooted in Hamas' awareness of modern international perspectives on issues such as non-combatant immunity, and consequently in its attempts to circumvent such concerns. Either way, what is clear is that political Islam is used specifically by Hamas as a tool to legitimise an escalation in violent confrontation with Israel as part of the Palestinian struggle for a state. This legitimisation not only propels the use of suicidal violence in the territories but also consolidates Hamas' unique position in the Palestinian political arena vis-à-vis more established players, like Fatah and the PLO.

PART II

I. Locating Political Islam in the Message of Hamas: The Legitimisation of Jihad and Martyrdom

Hamas' 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 categorised as a modern political movement which is involved in a traditional struggle for power and whose oppositional discourse is based on political Islam. Beverly Milton-Edwards points out that a lack of an indigenous tradition of *ijtihad* (interpretation) has led Islamist organisations in Palestine, including Hamas, to depend overwhelmingly upon external Islamic ideologues. Consequently, Hamas' 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" ⁶⁰. 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 also address rapidly changing political realities. In this regard, Hamas despite its Islamic hue has always functioned, first and foremost, as a pragmatic political organisation with a distinctly modern agenda. This section will briefly outline the main issues of concern for Hamas and endeavour to illustrate how Hamas' 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 utilises political Islam to construct a unique identity for itself which in turn allows it to adopt the strategy of jihad facilitate the use of suicidal violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The second part of

⁶⁰ Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine* (London and New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 1996), p. 181.

this section will illustrate how this strategy of jihad and martyrdom constructed by Hamas has been accepted and internalised by its operatives and segments of Palestinian society.

Even a cursory survey of Hamas' 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: (i) the challenge of Zionism and the Jewish-Israeli state; (ii) the crisis within both the Palestinian and wider Muslim community and concurrently the challenge posed by the secular nationalist opposition; (iii) the sanctity of Palestinian land and the predicament of foreign occupation of Jerusalem; (iv) the defence of Palestinian national aspirations as a legitimate Islamic goal and the establishment of a Palestinian Islamic state; (v) the declaration and justification of jihad as a legitimate strategy to accomplish specifically nationalist goals; and (vi) the defence of martyrdom as a legitimate Islamic tool of struggle within this jihad against oppression and occupation⁶¹. Of these six themes, while the last two are crucial to our analysis, the other four are also vital components in Hamas' step-by-step construction of the overarching rhetoric of jihad and martyrdom (as specifically a suicide attack) within the territories.

First and foremost, Hamas' 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 regarded as the product of Judaic faith and consequently Hamas believes that the only way to combat it is by establishing an Islamic state, as that alone possesses the strength to confront and counter all other faiths and ideologies⁶². At its very core, Hamas' ideology emphasises the 'Islamic essence' of the Palestinian cause (*Islamiyat al-qadiyya al-Filastiniyya*) and by extension of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict⁶³. For Hamas the conflict is primarily a confrontation not between nationalisms but between faiths and as such represents an unbridgeable dichotomy between

⁶¹ It must be noted that these some of concerns build upon the categories which were first outlined by Beverly Milton-Edwards in her analysis of Islamic solutions to the Palestinian situation in *Islamic Politics in Palestine*, opt. cit. 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.

⁶² See for example: Meir Litvak, 'Religious and Nationalist Fanaticism: The Case of Hamas' in Matthew Hughes and Gaynor Johnson (eds.), *Fanaticism and Conflict in the Modern Age* (London: Frank Cass, 2005); Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Islam and Violence in the Modern Era* (Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Yvonne Haddad, 'Islamists and the 'Problem of Israel': The 1967 Awakening', *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 2, Spring 1992.

⁶³ Meir Litvak, 'Religious and Nationalist Fanaticism: The Case of Hamas', opt. cit.

absolutes. Hence a leaflet addressed to Israel 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”⁶⁴ or “So Israel with its Jewishness and its Jewish population challenges Islam and Muslims”⁶⁵. The May 3rd, 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*, in order to eradicate this cancer [of Zionism/Judaism/the Israeli occupation] which is spreading...”⁶⁶(emphasis added)

Hamas also explicitly aligns itself with broader political Islamic concerns of the modern Middle East by identifying and demonising the Jews/Zionists as instruments of the ‘West’ in the region. Various references are also made to the power exercised in turn by the Zionists over the ‘West’. This association of Israel/Zionism/the Jewish people with imperialist Western powers is firmly rooted in the broader anti-colonial, anti-imperialist concerns and memories that find echoes 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, monopolised 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

⁶⁴ Undated Hamas leaflet from the first Intifada in Shaul Mishal, ‘Paper War – Words Behind Stones: The Intifada Leaflets’ in *The Jerusalem Quarterly* 51 (Summer 1989)

⁶⁵ Excerpts from The Hamas Charter, Article 28, August 1988 in Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2000)

⁶⁶ Hamas Leaflet No. 16, 3rd May 1988 in Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, *Speaking Stones: Communiqués from the Intifada Underground* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994)

support the enemy with all their might, with material and human aid, and they change roles”⁶⁷.

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

Secondly, Hamas is also 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, Israeli occupation is the direct result of the society’s loss of faith⁶⁸. Moreover, as Israeli occupation is punishment for straying from the path of Islam, the only way to remove it is by returning to the faith and an observation of its rules.

“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*. And whoever is satisfied with life without religion, then he has allowed annihilation to be his partner”⁶⁹. (emphasis added)

“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”⁷⁰.

⁶⁷ Excerpts from The Hamas Charter, Article 22, August 1988 in Khaled Hroub, *Hamas*, opt. cit.

⁶⁸ See for example: Meir Litvak, *The Islamisation of Palestinian Identity: The Case of Hamas*, Occasional Paper (Tel Aviv, Israel: Moshe Dayan Centre for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University, 1996); Andrea Nusse, *Muslim Palestine: The Ideology of Hamas* (Oxford: RoutledgeCurzon, 1998); Khaled Hroub, *Hamas* opt. cit.; Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine* opt. cit.

⁶⁹ Excerpts from The Hamas Charter, Article 6, August 1988 in Khaled Hroub, *Hamas*, opt. cit.

⁷⁰ Hamas Communiqué dated 18 September 2001 in Yonah Alexander, *Palestinian Religious Terrorism: Hamas and Islamic Jihad* (Ardsley, New York: Transnational Publishers Inc., 2002)

Hamas, very much like the Muslim Brotherhood, believes that the re-Islamisation of the Palestinian community is a crucial predecessor to Palestinian liberation. However, for Hamas, unlike its parent organisation, liberation is attainable only through a combination of *tabligh wa da'wa* and jihad. Furthermore, Hamas believes 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. Hence: "...despite our respect for the Palestinian Liberation Organisation ... 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"⁷¹. 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.

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" ⁷²

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".

⁷¹ Excerpts from The Hamas Charter, Article 27, August 1988 in Khaled Hroub, *Hamas*, opt. cit.

⁷² Hamas Communiqué No. 4, dated 1 October 2000 in Yonah Alexander, *Palestinian Religious Terrorism*, opt. cit.

By virtue of being the land of *al-Isra*, Palestine is simultaneously distinguished from other Islamic lands and also made the inheritance of all Muslims⁷³.

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 Palestine⁷⁴. Hamas 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”⁷⁵. This of course means that Hamas frames any compromise or political settlement over this land as tantamount to sacrilege. 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”⁷⁶. 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 for not shouldering its duty towards Palestine and its people”⁷⁷.

Hamas’ 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 had to, first and foremost, create a narrative whereby it could justify Palestinian Islamic nationalism as a legitimate Islamic goal. It did this by carefully constructing links between the Islamic sanctity of

⁷³ Meir Litvak, ‘Palestinian Nationalism and Islam: The Case of Hamas’, *opt. cit.*

⁷⁴ Meir Litvak, *The Islamisation of Palestinian Identity: The Case of Hamas*, *opt. cit.*

⁷⁵ Excerpts from The Hamas Charter, Article 11, August 1988 in Khaled Hroub, *Hamas*, *opt. cit.*

⁷⁶ Excerpts from The Hamas Charter, Article 14, August 1988 in Khaled Hroub, *Hamas*, *opt. cit.*

⁷⁷ Hamas Communiqué dated 1 August 2001 in Yonah Alexander, *Palestinian Religious Terrorism*, *opt. cit.*

Palestinian land and Palestinian nationalism. Hamas 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 Palestinian state and nationalism by placing it 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”⁷⁸. In creating this narrative, Hamas successfully retained its essence as an Islamic organisation while simultaneously merging this Islamic identity with a pragmatic nationalist stance which allowed it to compete with the PLO and the PA. In positioning itself as a political group whose nationalism encompassed the “materialistic, humanistic and geographical ties” of other nationalisms *as well as* “divine reasons”⁷⁹ Hamas has evolved a unique identity in the Palestinian political arena over the past twenty years. Nationalism (*wataniyya*) can therefore be located as a dominant theme in Hamas’ ideology and it repeatedly portrays itself as an Islamic-nationalist organisation with clearly Palestinian roots and aspirations of establishing an “Islamic Palestine from the Sea to the River”⁸⁰. 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-1990’s continues to depict Palestine as a cause for Arabs and Muslims everywhere, it no longer finds it necessary to reconcile Hamas’ *wataniyya* with the traditional Islamic stance on nationalism, suggesting perhaps a popular acceptance of Hamas’ Islamic-nationalist identity by this time – or in other words, the successful Islamisation of Palestinian nationalism. Given this background one can now focus in-depth on how Hamas uses the concept of jihad and martyrdom to facilitate the use of suicidal violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

II. Political Islam, Jihad and Shahadat in Hamas Literature

This Islamisation of Palestinian nationalism and the national struggle constructed by Hamas sheds light on how it has built and naturalised 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’ stress upon the strategy of jihad can be traced

⁷⁸ Excerpts from The Hamas Charter, Article 12 and 13, August 1988 in Khaled Hroub, *Hamas*, opt. cit.

⁷⁹ Excerpts from The Hamas Charter, Article 12, August 1988 in Khaled Hroub, *Hamas*, opt. cit.

⁸⁰ The title of Hamas Leaflet No. 28, dated 18 August 1988. For the full text see Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, *Speaking Stones*, opt. cit.

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: “There is no solution to the Palestinian problem except through jihad”.... “The IRM is a link in the chain of Jihad against Zionist occupation”⁸¹. Furthermore, because this jihad has been declared in response to the usurpation of Muslim lands by foes which cannot be repelled with a small force, Hamas stresses that every individual Palestinian Muslim is obliged to participate in fending off the enemy. Thus, by predinating 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)”⁸². 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 ... also constitute Jihad for the sake of God*”⁸³ (emphasis added)

Therefore, Hamas intricately weaves its modern call for an interpretation of jihad, as harnessed to the Palestinian national movement, with the imagery and narrative of classical Islam.

Hamas 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:

⁸¹ Excerpts from The Hamas Charter, Articles 13 and 7, August 1988 in Khaled Hroub, opt. cit.

⁸² Excerpts from The Hamas Charter, Article 12, August 1988. *Ibid.*

⁸³ Excerpts from The Hamas Charter, Articles 15 and 30, August 1988. *Ibid.*

“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”⁸⁴

However, because suicide (*intihar*) is a highly problematic concept in Islamic theology often categorised by jurists as *haram*, i.e. forbidden, the Hamas consciously and systematically circumvents this theological pitfall by terming its suicide attacks ‘martyrdom operation’ (*amaliyat istishhadiyya*) thereby evoking the notion of self-sacrifice (*ishtishad*) 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 eternity⁸⁵. Hamas emphatically stresses this difference between *intihar* and *ishtishad*. 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 worth emulating. For example, according to the former second-in-command of Hamas' 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”⁸⁶. 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 describes 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”⁸⁷.

⁸⁴ The Hamas Charter, Article 8, August 1988. *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ See for example: Christopher Reuter, *My Life is a Weapon: A Modern History of Suicide Bombing* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004); Prof. Abdul Hadi Palazzi 'Orthodox Islamic Perceptions of Jihad and Martyrdom' and Reuven Paz 'The Islamic Legitimacy of Suicide Terrorism' both in *Countering Suicide Terrorism: An International Conference* (Herzliya, Israel: The International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism at the Interdisciplinary Centre Herzliya, Feb. 20-23, 2000)

⁸⁶ *Al-Hayat* interview with Rantisi conducted on 25 April 2001 as cited in Christopher Reuter, *My Life is a Weapon*, opt. cit., p. 123

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p. 117

The narrative of *shahadat* constructed by Hamas is a crucial component of its military strategy and a key example of the expediency of political Islam and how it is channelized into facilitating suicidal violence in the territories. Hamas substantiates 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 thus urges the Palestinians to fight persecution and injustice on the path of God and to never fear death, as those killed in battle are 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 fear of death, for those who die waging a jihad attain Paradise. For example:

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"

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 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 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?"⁸⁸

Hamas' 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

⁸⁸ All verses are quoted in Yonah Alexander, *Palestinian Religious Terrorism*: opt. cit. and Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, *Speaking Stones*, opt. cit.

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 instead scared of dying. Hamas' 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 characterises 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*”⁸⁹. (emphasis added)

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, end with the slogans

⁸⁹ First Hamas Communiqué dated 14 December 1987 in Khaled Hroub, *Hamas*, opt. cit.

“And it is Jihad until victory or martyrdom”, “Glory and immortality for our martyrs” or “Victory for our Mujahid people” – reflecting both the growing militarisation 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’ martyrdom rhetoric shows a significant shift with literature from the first intifada containing only generic references to martyrdom and martyrs. In fact, earlier leaflets tended to provide directives for action via strike calls, prayers, rejection of settlements, the escalation of violence and generally encourage resistance activities. Martyrdom 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*”⁹⁰. (emphasis added)

⁹⁰ Hamas leaflet No. 74 dated 3 May 1991 in Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, *Speaking Stones*, opt. cit.

However, by the mid-1990s, this rhetoric is developed into a sophisticated narrative which not only extends legitimacy to suicide operations as a means of resisting occupation but also provides forceful propaganda for the organisation's military activities by listing the names of martyrs as well as detailed accounts of Israeli attacks and the organisation'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 realise 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*⁹¹. (emphasis added)

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 discernable 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 bombings being politically superior tools of propaganda as opposed to conventional armed attacks. Suicide operations are thus marketed specifically to highlight Qassam's military power while simultaneously being legitimised 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"⁹² 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"⁹³. 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 truthfus 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. The enemy experienced its bitterness in the

⁹¹ Hamas Communiqué dated 24 November 2001 in Yonah Alexander, *Palestinian Religious Terrorism*, opt. cit.

⁹² Military Communiqué issued by the Qassam Brigades dated 12 November 2001 in Yonah Alexander, *Palestinian Religious Terrorism*, opt. cit.

⁹³ Military Communiqué issued by the Qassam Brigades dated 26 October 2001. *Ibid.*

first test in Netanya 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"⁹⁴.
(emphasis added)

Hamas' spiritual leader Sheikh Yassin voiced this conscious legitimisation 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. 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"⁹⁵. 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"⁹⁶. Hence what is seen is a systematic use of political Islam by Hamas with the express purpose of legitimising and facilitating the enactment of suicide attacks within the Israeli-Palestinian landscape of conflict. The use of religious rhetoric explains how suicidal violence is absorbed under the rubric of jihad.

III. Political Islam, Jihad and Shahadat in Individual Statements

Apart from organisational 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

⁹⁴ Qassam Brigades' Military Communiqué dated 12 November 2001. *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Islam and Violence in the Modern Era* (Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 146

⁹⁶ Hamas Communiqué dated 21 December 2001 in Yonah Alexander, *Palestinian Religious Terrorism*, opt. cit.

widely publicised by Hamas suggesting at least a certain degree of acceptance and internalisation of Hamas rhetoric. Individual wills and last testimonies can either be found in the form of a document or more recently 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. 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 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. 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".⁹⁷ (emphasis added)

Muhammad Hazza al-Ghoul who executed the 18 June 2006 bus bombing at the Patt junction in Jerusalem killing twenty people and injuring fifty-two 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

⁹⁷ For the full text of the will see Mohammed M. Hafez, *Manufacturing Human Bombs: The Making of Palestinian Suicide Bombers* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2006), pp. 91-92

*sake, not to cry for my absence, for we will meet shortly in Paradise, God willing*⁹⁸. (emphasis added)

Shadi Sleyman al-Nabaheen who carried out a failed suicide operation on May 19, 2003 said 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”⁹⁹
(emphasis added)

The act of martyrdom then 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 realised my shortcomings and the shortcomings of Muslims in fulfilling our duty toward fighting in the path of God Almighty”¹⁰⁰ (i.e. in liberating the “land of *al-Isra' wal-Miraj*”). 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

⁹⁸ Ibid. pp. 90-91

⁹⁹ Mohammed M. Hafez, ‘Symbolic Dimension of Suicide Terrorism’ in Ami Pedahzur (ed.), *Root Causes of Suicide Terrorism: The Globalization of Martyrdom* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2006), p. 71

¹⁰⁰ Mohammed M. Hafez, *Manufacturing Human Bombs*, opt. cit., p. 43

obligation incumbent upon us, and we must carry it out. I sacrificed Muhammed as part of my obligation”¹⁰¹.

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 the 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 by ‘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 ...*”¹⁰²
(emphasis added)

Muhammad al-Habashi, who carried out his attack on September 9, 2001 near a train station in which three Israelis were killed and ninety 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*

¹⁰¹ Meir Litvak, ‘Religious and Nationalist Fanaticism: The Case of Hamas’, opt. cit.,

¹⁰² Christopher Reuter, *My Life is a Weapon*, opt. cit., p. 91

Muslims in Jerusalem and Palestine, and in all conquered Muslim lands...¹⁰³” (emphasis added)

These ‘living wills’ thus seem to echo Hamas’ jihad 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* (emphasis added). I ask God to bless his soldiers and give me the strength to sever the heads of Jews from their bodies”¹⁰⁴. Hamas martyrs, like their organisation, recognise 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”¹⁰⁵.

Similarly individual rhetoric also echo’s the organisational 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”¹⁰⁶. 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”¹⁰⁷.
(emphasis added)

¹⁰³ Mohammed M. Hafez, ‘Symbolic Dimension of Suicide Terrorism’, *opt. cit.*, p. 73

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* p. 71

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* p. 73

¹⁰⁶ Mohammed M. Hafez, *Manufacturing Human Bombs*, *opt. cit.*, p. 44

¹⁰⁷ For the full text of the will see Mohammed M. Hafez, *Ibid.* p. 90

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 August 4, 2002 which killed nine Israelis and injured forty 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*"¹⁰⁸ (emphasis added).

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"¹⁰⁹. 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 individual reasons for opting for suicide operations. All that can be said with authority is that the reasons can range from redemption to national responsibility.

However, what is amply clear is that a number of 'living wills' echo the rhetoric constructed by the Hamas in its literature thus reflecting the power Hamas exerts 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 emphasised that suicide bombers sometimes produce two testaments. One is the 'official' version that is

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. p. 45

¹⁰⁹ Ira Sharkansky, *Coping With Terror: An Israeli Perspective* (Maryland and Oxford: Lexington Books, 2003), p. 58

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 politicised than the private statements which are much more personal¹¹⁰. Other full texts of wills that could be accessed reflect a combination of personal and official statements and no longer reflect the political-personal divide. But because these testaments were posted on Hamas’ official website they might potentially have been edited to read as one text.

Yet what is 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’ 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. Firstly, the individual wills reflect the same combination of faith and nationalism as do Hamas leaflets. The excerpts reproduced above provide abundant verification of this. Secondly, the same sense of isolation that is evident in Hamas rhetoric is also prevalent in the language used by their martyrs. Thirdly, individual wills, like Hamas leaflets, also privilege martyrdom and self-sacrifice and indicate the successful framing of suicide bombings as martyrdom in the jihad against Israel, and not suicide. The end result is the successful manufacturing of the belief that martyrdom operations serve the cause of God and the nation. This framing provides the final pillar of the proposed theoretical framework of analysis and explains *how* suicidal violence is justified, legitimised and enacted specifically within the Palestinian milieu.

Yet despite attempting to make clear distinctions between suicide and martyrdom, made by both the organisation and the individuals who call these operations *amaliyat istishhadiyya* (martyrdom operations) or *amaliyya fida'iyya* (sacrificial operations) and attempting to align them with the Islamic legacy of *shahadat*, obvious tensions still exist within the Muslim community regarding the legitimacy of such attacks¹¹¹. Consequently a fierce debate has raged between Muslim scholars and theologians over the validity of suicide attacks and no firm societal consensus has been reached either. This tenuous support might be what push Hamas towards constructing such an elaborate martyrdom narrative. In

¹¹⁰ As an example of the differences between official and private wills and last statements see Appendix B for the wills of Ismail Masawabi.

¹¹¹ Israeli Arabic-language media prefer the term *amaliyya intihariyya*, i.e. a suicide operation.

various interviews Sheikh Yusef al-Qaradawi, one of the most significant contemporary Sunni scholars declared: 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 insists 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"¹¹². 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"¹¹³. Yet various *fatwas* also condemn such attacks. Such a 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 instead. In April 1996 Sheikh Muhammad al-Sayyid al-Tantawi, Grand Mufti at Cairo's al-Azhar University, also categorised suicide operations and the killing of innocent unarmed civilians as "evil"¹¹⁴. 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"¹¹⁵.

Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela believe that such denunciation and debate is what led Hamas' 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

¹¹² Christopher Reuter, *My Life is a Weapon*, opt. cit., p. 122

¹¹³ Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Islam and Violence in the Modern*, opt. cit., p. 145

¹¹⁴ Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas*, opt. cit., pp. 76, 211

¹¹⁵ Christopher Reuter, *My Life is a Weapon*, opt. cit., p. 124

tool with a sound historical and religious basis. The Palestinian religious establishment remained ambiguous and actively avoided issuing a definitive position or sanction to 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”¹¹⁶. Yet despite such ambiguity the debate has continued. 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. Thus he stressed: “such attacks are not part of the jihad, and I fear that they are just suicides plain and simple”¹¹⁷. While not a formal *fatwa*, this was a very powerful statement nonetheless and provoked a series of responses in return. Hamas' 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. It therefore seems that there is no single fixed position on suicide operations and Hamas uses this very ambiguity and fluidity in its favour when justifying such attacks. Even so, a great degree of debate regarding the legitimacy of suicide operations continues amongst both Muslim scholars as well as within popular discourse.

IV. Conclusion

Hamas' use of suicidal violence represents a conscious transgression of *jus in bello* principles, especially with regard to the means of war and non-combatant immunity. Therefore, suicidal violence becomes a total war in practice even though it continues to be justified as a jihad. This, as illustrated above, suggests that Hamas, deliberately and systematically, uses political Islam to facilitate the incorporation of the total war concept within the traditional ideal of jihad (which remains a just and limited war, even if it has religious roots, in classical Islam). The fact that this is an on-going process and one that occupies a contentious space in Palestinian Muslim society is perhaps best reflected by Hamas' construction of an elaborate jihad narrative which is systematically harnessed to the

¹¹⁶ Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Islam and Violence in the Modern Era* (Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 145

¹¹⁷ Christopher Reuter, *My Life is a Weapon: A Modern History of Suicide Bombing* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 123

Palestinian nationalist project. Within this narrative, both *ishtishad* and *amaliyat istishhadiyya*, are seen to occupy a central space. Hamas thus builds *ishtishad* as a key aspirational goal for the true believers in Palestinian society. In doing so, it justifies suicidal violence as part and parcel of the national struggle for liberation. Hamas seeks to justify and legitimise suicidal violence in a variety of ways.

First and foremost, Hamas justifies suicidal violence as a defensive jihad. This involves a complex weaving of just and limited war ideals with total war conceptions. Therefore, the cause of liberation which is presented to the Palestinian public is a just one and fulfils the most basic of *jus ad bellum* criteria. Hamas also justifies its jihad against Israel as a last resort mechanism in which its operatives are fighting for the *survival* of the Palestinian people against a disproportionately strong and brutal occupying force. However, the use of suicidal violence in the arena of confrontation violates the *jus in bello* principles of using just and limited means in war and, of course, of non-combatant immunity. Such a transgression violates the Western just war ideal which states that, “A justified war (sic) is not necessarily a just war. To be fully “just” a war must be characterized by both *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*. A war obviously cannot be just if one is unjustified in entering upon it in the first place, but neither can it be just, however just the cause and right the intention, if it utilizes indefensible means”¹¹⁸. However, it is this very transgression which needs to be comprehended if we are to understand how suicide bombings are justified, legitimised and enacted within the Palestinian setting.

However, as stated above, Hamas’ ideology, as that of a modern Islamist organisation’s, exists in constant interaction with modern secular concerns and realities. It is perhaps this interaction which forces Hamas to acknowledge, albeit tacitly, that suicidal violence violates human rights as per the standards established by international law. It is possibly this knowledge which forces it to formulate an intricate jihad narrative which consistently references back to classical Islam in order to facilitate a contemporary political agenda. For example, Hamas consciously uses the Qur’anic idea of ‘they are from them’ which is used to deny responsibility for the welfare of non-Muslim civilians (i.e. Israeli citizens), while waging a jihad. Muslim forces waging a jihad are *not considered to be responsible for the*

¹¹⁸ Robert L. Holmes. *On War and Morality*, opt. cit., p 175

welfare of non-Muslim civilians. Responsibility is instead devolved to those who, in their decision making capacities, have chosen to resist Islam and thereby placed these non-combatants under risk of attack.

Yet, at the same time, Hamas' justification for suicidal violence also reflects uneasiness with regard to international law ideals. In response, there is an almost unconscious over-compensation in the language used to justify suicide attacks, which addresses, very specifically, a set of concerns that feature prominently in international law. The issue of intentionality is, for example, acknowledged and circumvented by Yassin in various statements:

“In Islam, it’s always a question of intention...You can have the same actions but different intentions. So if a suicide bomber does not intend to hurt innocent people, he is blameless for their deaths”¹¹⁹.

Similarly, Hamas attempts to create conditions of supreme emergency when justifying suicidal violence. The idea of defensive jihad comes up repeatedly in statements made by both the organisation as well as its individual operatives. Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar, for example, summarised 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”¹²⁰.

The idea of non-combatant immunity is also a reoccurring theme. Hamas consistently categorises Israeli society as a military society in order to justify its targeting of civilian populations. It emphatically states that since all Israeli civilians, men, women and children, serve in the army, there are no real non-combatants/civilians in the Israeli state.

¹¹⁹ Joyce M. Davis, *Martyrs, opt. cit.*, p. 109

¹²⁰ Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine* (London and New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 1996), p. 186

Overall, we can locate key concerns of political Islam in Hamas' rhetoric and agenda. Most obviously then, Hamas, echoing other Islamist organisations, coalesces Israel with the West, and sees the traditional conflict between *dar al-islam* and *dar al-harb* in the rather stark terms of a confrontation between Islam and the West. A key shift that can be located in Hamas ideology and concerns is its nationalist political agenda. Hence, unlike its parent organisation and al-Banna, the state represents a key arena of contest for Hamas and its political, military and social programme is geared towards consolidating its position in the Palestinian political arena. In other words, Hamas' use of political Islam to justify suicidal violence as a key component of the jihad directed at establishing a free and Islamic Palestine, serves a distinctly modern, state-oriented agenda. Hamas' 'martyrdom operations' may therefore be seen as the declaration of a total, holy and just war – all justified and encompassed under the broad rubric of jihad by the use of political Islam.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

*"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-Nabaheen¹*

I. Main Findings and Conclusions

This work aimed at constructing a theoretical framework of analysis which could be applied to the study of suicidal violence as practiced by Hamas and its operatives in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The proposed framework of analysis attempted to answer why and how suicide attacks emerged, escalated and became a mode of engagement in the Israeli-Palestinian landscape of conflict from 1993 to 2006. The starting point of this thesis was, first and foremost, a rejection of the notion of a monolithic Islamist global threat of suicidal violence in favour of an in-depth analysis of a single empirical case-study. Such in-depth analysis enabled this work to generate specific answers to a particular manifestation of the phenomenon of suicide attacks in a given socio-political cultural setting. Empirical investigation revealed that the emergence and escalation of suicidal violence in the Palestinian territories was rooted in three interrelated factors, namely:

- (i) The expressive and instrumental rationality of suicide missions, which explains *why* suicidal violence *emerged* and is *used* as a mechanism of engagement with the Israeli state;
- (ii) The struggle for a national identity and the culturally entrenched norm of militant heroic martyrdom, which explains *how* suicidal violence *evolved* specifically within the Palestinian socio-political setting; and

¹ From the will of suicide bomber, Shadi Sleyman al-Nabaheen, in Mohammed M. Hafez, *Manufacturing Human Bombs: The Making of Palestinian Suicide Bombers* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2006), p. 90

(iii) The ideological framework of jihad as reinterpreted by political Islam, which explains *how* suicidal violence is *justified, legitimised and enacted* within the Palestinian milieu.

The thesis then sought to mesh these three interrelated factors with approaches and methods in international relations in order to formulate a theoretical framework of analysis which could be applied to study suicidal violence specifically in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Adopting aspects of constructivist grounded theory as its methodological approach enabled this work to use the empirical evidence with the clear intention of letting a theory emerge to explain these three key factors rather than fitting the data into a preconceived theoretical framework. At its core then, this work sought to question if concepts and methods in contemporary international relations theory could explain and understand the phenomenon of suicidal violence.

This work came to the conclusion that the only way one could answer *both* why and how suicidal violence emerged, escalated and became a mode of engagement in the Palestinian territories, was by simultaneously applying three very different theoretical methodologies/approaches in an analysis of this phenomenon. The three methodologies/approaches that were therefore used in this work are the rationality assumption (itself rooted in classical Rational Choice Theory), Social Constructivism and the Just War thesis. However, while each of these approaches had the potential to explain specific aspects of suicidal violence in the Palestinian scenario they occasionally had to be expanded and/or revised in order to be able to encompass and address the complexities of the chosen empirical case-study.

As each approach incorporated either a strategic, symbolic, social or ideological aspect of suicide bombings, this work concluded that only a synchronised application of all three could enable a more holistic and accurate understanding of suicidal violence in the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation. Such a coordinated application did not privilege one approach over another and also successfully allowed this work to incorporate multiple players into the analysis. While the theoretical framework focussed most overtly on the role of two levels of analysis, i.e. the organisation (Hamas) and the individual operative in suicidal violence, it simultaneously acknowledged and included the role played by Palestinian

society, which was seen to represent the broader socio-political-cultural milieu that generated both the organisation under study, as well as its operatives.

(i) The Strategic and Symbolic Aspect of Suicidal Violence

The first pillar of the proposed theoretical framework of analysis sought to answer *why* suicidal violence emerged and was *used* in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Chapter III explored this facet of the phenomenon in-depth. It was seen that both Hamas and its individual operatives viewed suicide attacks as a strategic choice which served multiple purposes. Both organisational and individual motives were seen as conflating 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 organisational manipulation and exploitation alone explain the increasing number of unaffiliated and loosely affiliated bombers, the drop in training and indoctrination times and satisfactorily answer *why* more individuals consistently, and repeatedly, volunteered for suicide missions. In other words, while organisational support was a crucial factor in the promulgation of suicide attacks individual motives also played an equally significant role in propelling the phenomenon. Thus the chapter stressed that the emergence and escalation of suicidal violence in the Palestinian territories could only be explained by studying the *dialectic* that existed between Hamas and its operatives.

Chapter III also stressed that suicidal violence clearly encompassed a rational logic for *both* levels of analysis, i.e. for both Hamas and the individual bomber. As such the rationality assumption was applied to study the phenomenon in a manner where individual rationality was not ignored and/or subordinated to organisational rationality. By refusing to privilege the organisation over the individual, while also refusing to disengage the rationalist approach from individual motivations, this work marked a clear break with both first and second generation scholarship in suicidal violence which, either regarded the phenomenon as irrational or concluded that rationalist explanations could account for an organisation's

decision to use suicide bombings, but not the individual's. In other words, this work marked a departure from studies which believe that one could not conflate individual motives with organisational goals. More recent readings of suicidal violence also tended to focus on the instrumental logic behind suicide bombings while ignoring its symbolic significance altogether. Further, these studies tend to disengage rationality from symbolic function, dispossess both individual motivations and symbolic action of *rationality* and also implicitly reject the notion that symbolic action may simultaneously possesses and/or serve a functional aspect for both the organisation and the individual. In doing so, these works create a false dichotomy between expressive and instrumental violence.

In sharp contrast, this chapter stressed that one could not disregard the rationality of symbolic action and non-material incentives and goals when analysing suicidal violence. In other words, unless and until both the individual and the symbolic logic were taken into consideration, in addition to the traditional organisational and the instrumental logic of suicidal violence, any analysis of the phenomenon in the Israeli-Palestinian scenario would remain incomplete and, as such, inaccurate. Chapter III therefore adopted an expanded reading of the traditional rationality assumption by acknowledging recent innovations in the rational actor model, which allow for the incorporation of non-material, 'selfless', symbolic or normative elements, such as a concern for ones reputation and social standing. This chapter then further added to this expanded understanding Durkheim's concept of 'altruistic suicide' and Mead's concept of an 'inter-subjective social reality' to account for both the increasing number of individuals repeatedly volunteering for suicide missions as well as the large increase in unaffiliated/loosely affiliated bombers.

On this basis, it was pointed out how suicide attacks are both acts of expediency and practical reason as well as acts that are simultaneously symbolic, ritualistic and communicative. In other words, suicide attacks were identified as a complex combination of expressive (i.e. symbolic) and instrumental (i.e. functional) violence practiced by both Hamas and its operatives in order to fulfill the core purposes of survival, retaliation and competition.

The chapter demonstrated how for Hamas, suicide operations overwhelmingly encompassed an instrumental rationality in that they were tactically economical, flexible

and had a powerful impact, both psychologically and strategically, upon target governments and populations. In addition, this chapter pointed out how Hamas used suicide operations in order to ensure, first and foremost, its *survival* in a political landscape that was dominated by two players – Israel and Fatah/PLO/PA. Hamas has thus had to constantly balance its own agenda and goals vis-à-vis these two external and internal players. All Palestinian groups, including Hamas, are under intense pressure to perform within the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation, where performance is intricately linked to the group's legitimacy within the Palestinian political arena and is a key determinant of support from the Palestinian 'constituency'. Violent action is seen to have been consistently used by various groups to garner public support. As such, Hamas' use suicide attacks has successfully garnered support from the Palestinian street and ensured its survival within the political arena.

Prior to 2000, Hamas used suicide operations intermittently and generally in conjunction with other armed attacks to raise group profile and assert a unique group identity. This intermittent pattern was primarily the result of Hamas still being a weak and nascent group. Hence, unable to pose a direct challenge, it tended to used suicide missions instead to compete with Fatah/PA in order to undermine its legitimacy and hinder the Oslo peace process. Hamas' suicide operations in the 1993-2000 period were also clearly a *retaliatory* response to Israeli policies and used to illicit a harsh Israeli response. This engendered an escalating tit-for-tat cycle of violence that steadily enabled Hamas to not only successfully justify suicidal violence as a defensive policy against Israeli punitive action but also portray itself as an able military successor to the now passive Fatah and PA. Over time as Hamas became more entrenched in Palestinian politics it was able to make the shift from being a social and military resistance party to one that was increasingly capable of challenging Fatah in the conventional political arena. At the same time it successfully maintained a unique identity by adhering to a dual policy of military and political activism with an equally strong social service base. That Fatah also began using suicide missions in 2002 indicates that Hamas not only successfully normalised suicidal violence in the Palestinian scenario but also the intense pressure the PA and Fatah faced vis-à-vis the more strongly established group. As such 2002 indicates the beginning of a period in which suicide bombings were used *competitively* by equally influential political factions (i.e. Fatah and Hamas) vying for power and supremacy within the Palestinian political landscape. Thus,

Hamas' use of suicide operations has an instrumental logic that can be located in its need for survival, competition and retaliation. The strategies it has used, alone or in combination with each other, to achieve any of these goals have been those of negotiated coexistence, controlled violence and finally full political integration.

For individuals, suicide operations encompass an overwhelmingly symbolic rationality because a significant number of Palestinian suicide bombers believe that their death will contribute to the *survival* of their society while simultaneously allowing them to *retaliate* against the Israeli state. As such the individual decision to opt for a suicide mission is rooted in altruistic motives and martyrdom becomes the mechanism by which the bombers assert their affiliation and integration with Palestinian society, while simultaneously delineating personal space and carving out a unique personal identity. The belief that these missions are crucial to their society's survival can explain the exponential rise in volunteers in direct correspondence with the failure of the peace process and Israel's increasing use of the policy of collective punishment. Furthermore, Palestinian society's increasingly ritualistic portrayals of its suicide bombers as heroic martyrs have also converted them into powerful role models and examples to be emulated. As self-sacrifice in increasingly honoured, celebrated and idealised it has become 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 has also become *competitive* over time, with each bombing also representing the stimuli triggering the one that follows in a self-replicating cycle. Thus a concept that was introduced and legitimised by Hamas has developed a certain momentum of its own and conditions of protracted conflict have created an environment where individuals can use their martyrdom, with or without organisational support, as a mechanism to ensure societal survival and retaliation on the one hand and enable competition on the other. For the individual then 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. As such 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.

(ii) The Social Aspects of Suicidal Violence

The second pillar of the proposed theoretical framework sought to address how suicidal violence had originated and evolved within the Palestinian socio-cultural setting. Chapter IV thus attempted to construct an understanding of how the specific, culturally-rooted concept of self-sacrifice/martyrdom was appropriated and rearticulated as suicidal violence by Hamas in the period after the first intifada. While the focus of this chapter was most overtly on the impetus supplied by the organisation 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 suicidal violence. The argument was essentially based on adopting a social constructivist approach towards the phenomenon and thereby attempting to account for the 'box' of Palestinian social reality in which suicide bombings operate. In doing so, this chapter identified Palestinian nationalism as a vital determinant in the emergence of suicidal violence. Within this context (of Palestinian nationalism) this work specifically located 'identity politics' and the 'notion of the other' as crucial elements which facilitated the emergence of a 'norm of militant heroic martyrdom'. This culturally entrenched norm was seen to have historically encouraged and lauded self-sacrifice for the national cause within Palestinian society. This work identified suicidal violence as a contemporary manifestation of this norm. Such an approach countered traditional explanations of 'brainwashing' and organisational manipulation/recruitment which are unable to account for the society's willingness to support suicide missions.

This understanding of the Palestinian national struggle and social reality enabled this work to successfully trace the trajectory of protest and violence in the Israeli-Palestinian interaction over nearly sixty years. Violence was contextualised as being intricately linked to Palestinian nationalism and directly related to the crystallisation of Palestinian national identity. Suicide violence was, in turn, identified as another step in this escalating scale of violence aimed at constructing Palestinian identity and attaining statehood. An analysis of the Palestinian struggle for national identity also revealed that the Palestinian narrative of selfhood was based on a complex combination of key themes which included oppression, emasculation, degradation, dispossession, humiliation, sacrifice, suffering and defeat. Each of these themes was seen to have evolved as a direct result of the Palestinian nation's

experience in the twentieth century vis-à-vis its most stable ‘other’, represented first by the early Zionist settlers and then by the state of Israel and its citizens.

As early as the late-1930s, violence was used to counter traditional themes of impotence and degradation and to raise morale and enhance self-esteem by glorifying the heroism of those slain in confrontations with the ‘other’. This narrative called upon the Palestinian people to participate and sacrifice themselves in the resistance for the homeland. As a result, in the early half of the twentieth century, *self-sacrifice* and *martyrdom* came to be venerated and juxtaposed against cowardice and moral degeneracy. The 1948-49 *nakba*, characterised by violence, fear, displacement and refugee flows, added the themes of landlessness, humiliation and suffering to the existing Palestinian narrative of selfhood, thereby engendering a Palestinian identity that was overwhelmingly one of the dispossessed and oppressed. This period also saw the 1930s narrative of self-sacrifice and martyrdom subordinated to that of humiliation, degradation and dispossession.

The next phase of Palestinian national activism was seen to evolve in the late-1950s and 1960s with the emergence of armed revolutionaries from refugee camps in Jordan and Lebanon. With this resurgence violent confrontation, struggle and heroic sacrifice once again emerged as the dominant theme in the Palestinian narrative of selfhood, as well as a mechanism to redress the loss of land and prestige. In addition, both the Arab defeat in the 1967 war and the Battle of Karamah in deeply impacted the evolution of Palestinian identity. The first fully consolidated the Palestinian narrative of disaster and a resistance-based Palestinian identity. The second gave birth to the mythification of the revolutionary (the *fedayeen*) and generated a renewal of self-confidence and hope within the Palestinians. After Karamah violence once again emerged as a means to infuse a broken Palestinian identity with vigour, pride and dignity. Most importantly, the symbolically resonant rhetoric of heroic martyrdom used by Fatah in its leaflets in the post- 1967 period shows striking similarities to, not only the literature from the 1930s Great Arab Revolt, but also, Hamas leaflets of the 1980s and 1990s. This seems to indicate that militant heroic martyrdom was firmly entrenched, and fully and consciously articulated, in Palestinian culture as a constitutive and regulatory norm by at least the 1960s, if not earlier.

The 1987 intifada, and the heavy-handed Israeli response to the same, created the immediate context in which the image of the militant heroic martyr, willing to die for his homeland, re-emerged. This cultural construction of heroic martyrdom enabled the Palestinians to capture the higher moral ground vis-à-vis the Israeli state and fuelled the dominant rhetoric surrounding Israeli occupation. Hamas used this opportunity to fully articulate a socio-political and religious justification to resort to an increasingly violent military struggle. By 1993, the *intifada* was significantly more militarised, as is evident by the appearance of the conflict's first suicide attacks. This seems to suggest that by 1993, Hamas had successfully appropriated and re-articulated the Palestinian norm of militant heroic martyrdom as a suicide operation. As a result, a historically developed and culturally entrenched norm was consciously and coldly escalated to a new level of violent self-sacrifice by Hamas.

This chapter therefore demonstrated that, depending on the time and circumstances, some of the key themes of Palestinian selfhood tend to play a more prominent role than others, which are temporarily subordinated. The core reason for the prominence and consistent re-emergence of the norm of militant heroic martyrdom was located in the sheer powerlessness experienced by Palestinian society in every period preceding a resurgence of this norm. Thus Palestinian nationalism, when examined in the *longue durée*, reflects a *cyclical pattern*, whereby powerlessness repeatedly engenders a renewal of armed struggle which enables the Palestinians to recapture agency (and therefore, power) and assert a proactive national identity. Self-sacrifice is identified as a core ingredient of Palestinian national identity and one which allows the Palestinians to maintain a sense of self-respect, honour and pride vis-à-vis the Israeli negative other. However, when agency is exercised in periods of resistance this ingredient of self-sacrifice assumes the active form of militant heroic martyrdom. The seizure of agency thus propels the evolution of Palestinian nationalism by regenerating the vital component of active identity creation. Once armed struggle loses momentum, as it inevitably does, the core national identity reverts back to the passive one of the powerless, dispossessed and degraded and the ingredient of self-sacrifice reverts, from its active militant variation, to its passive articulation as suffering and forbearance. This chapter therefore demonstrates how the basic narrative of Palestinian selfhood and history embodies the basic '*active-passive*' *cyclical dichotomy* of 'armed struggle/heroic martyrdom' and 'suffering/sacrifice'.

The chapter recognises that Hamas merely inserted itself into an established narrative framework instead of inventing one. Once this insertion was achieved Hamas channelised key themes of Palestinian selfhood into constructing a narrative which glorified and actively encouraged a new variant of militant martyrdom, thereby creating a conducive environment for the progressive normalisation of heroic martyrdom as suicide attacks. This conscious radicalisation of the 1987 intifada served to engender, at least temporarily, a climate of relentless violent struggle which opposed any form of negotiation or compromise. Further, the increased number of volunteers and unaffiliated bombers suggests that events did develop a dynamic of their own in the Palestinian territories which moved beyond organisational control and/or manipulation.

(iii) The Ideological Aspects of Suicidal Violence

The third and final pillar of the proposed theoretical framework of analysis aimed to analyse how suicide operations were justified and legitimised within, and enacted by sections of, Palestinian society. Suicidal violence is often described by Hamas as a jihad waged against the oppressive Israeli state. A segment of academic literature often translates this jihad as a declaration of a ‘holy war’, i.e. a religious war, against the state of Israel. However, traditionally in international relations, the Islamic concept of jihad is seen as closely aligned with, if not equivalent to, the Western just war tradition. This work therefore used just war theory as the most logical entry point to address these contradictions and to analyse Hamas’ use of suicidal violence in the Israeli-Palestinian context. Yet while it is commonly accepted that the Islamic tradition of jihad is equivalent to the Western just war tradition (in both *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* principles), classical Islam does not make exactly the *same distinctions* between just and unjust grounds for war. Hence, the modern Islamic concept of jihad accepts religion as just grounds (i.e. *jus ad bellum*) for waging war, and thereby blurs the boundaries between, what are in the Western understanding, the traditionally irreconcilable concepts of “just war” and “holy war”. Even so, in classical Islam a war rooted in religious causes must still be just and waged with restraint. Jihad is therefore used as an umbrella term, which simultaneously refers to, and incorporates, the concepts of just war, holy war and limited war.

It was seen in Chapter V that Hamas' justification of declaring a jihad on Israel tended to echo criteria associated with the traditional just war concept. However, the very nature of a suicide attack violated core *jus in bello* principles, most notably those of restraint on legitimate weapons in the arena of war and non-combatant immunity. As a result, this 'jihad' of suicidal violence practiced by Hamas and its operatives violated classical Islamic parameters and more closely resembled the Western conception of a holy war (which is how so many academics who study the phenomenon classify it), which rooted in religious causes tended to degenerate into a war without limits, i.e. into a total war (used as a philosophically descriptive category). This work argued that Hamas uses political Islam to incorporate suicidal violence into the traditional concept of jihad. This is because political Islam facilitates the expansion of the concept of jihad to include the even more contradictory conception of 'total war', understood in this work as a philosophically descriptive category. It is this inclusion of the total war idea within this broad rubric that enables Hamas to successfully justify, legitimise and enact suicidal violence as a modern-day jihad against the Israeli state.

Identifying these linkages enabled the author to construct what can be best described as a *spectrum* of violence in which the moderate pole was characterised by a just war which was waged with restraint while the opposite pole was characterised by a holy war that was total and unrestrained in its conduct. It was suggested that the complexity of modern jihad, and thus the key to understanding how suicidal violence can be justified and legitimised as a jihad, resides in its polyvalent nature and the fact that it can move between and encompass aspects of both poles in this spectrum of violence. Indeed it is this fluid, non-static nature of jihad that blurs the lines between the traditionally opposing, and hence compartmentalised, concepts of just war and holy war in international relations. This allows Hamas to legitimately encourage Palestinian society to use force to oppose the Israeli 'occupation forces' and yet use indiscriminate violence against non-combatants by implementing the tactics of a suicide attack. In short, the act of 'martyrdom' merges just grounds for war with the use of total force in the conduct of that war. Hence the cause of freedom, as presented to and subsequently internalised by the larger public and the suicide operatives, is just. However, while this would traditionally imply, at least in theory, limiting damage in war, the tools used on the ground, i.e. suicide bombings, extend the idea of just cause into the

realm of total, and hence unlimited, conduct. In fact, a suicide attack represents the *exact point of interstice* between the concepts of “just war” and “total war”.

Hamas’ militant jihad against Israel and its positioning of Islam as an ideological, political and military mode of struggle against Israeli occupation also enables it to present itself as an alternative to the secular national movement. Political Islam therefore provides Hamas with its oppositional discourse and is used to create a unique identity for the group through a key set of reoccurring concerns, namely: (i) the challenge of Zionism and the Jewish-Israeli state; (ii) the crisis within both the Palestinian and wider Muslim community and concurrently the challenge posed by the secular nationalist opposition; (iii) the sanctity of Palestinian land and the predicament of foreign occupation in Jerusalem; (iv) the defence of Palestinian national aspirations as a legitimate Islamic goal and the establishment of a Palestinian Islamic state; (v) the declaration and justification of jihad as a legitimate strategy to accomplish specifically nationalist goals; and (vi) the defence of martyrdom as a legitimate Islamic tool of struggle within this jihad against oppression and occupation. Each of these themes contributes to Hamas’ step-by-step Islamisation of the national struggle and allows it to construct an overarching rhetoric that can justify the use of jihad and suicidal violence, as the very epitome of self-sacrifice and martyrdom, in the struggle against Israel.

Hamas’ narrative brings together concepts of Zionism, Islam, nationalism, the Palestinian *waqf* and jihad, which allow it to frame martyrdom operations as a fulfillment of sacred imperatives in the fight against occupation. Hamas’ literature in the first intifada contained only generic references to martyrdom and martyrs. However, by the mid-1990s this rhetoric is seen to have developed into a sophisticated narrative which not only extends legitimacy to suicide operations as a means of resisting occupation but also provides forceful propaganda for the organisation’s military activities by listing the names of martyrs, detailed accounts of Israeli attacks and also the organisation’s vows of revenge. Hamas Military Communiqués are even more unique in that they detail and claim responsibility for specific military actions and demonstrate a qualitative difference between descriptions of those who die in shelling, grenade and other armed attacks versus those who specifically conduct martyrdom operations. Suicide attacks are thus ‘marketed’ specifically as more honourable acts of resistance and legitimised using political Islam.

For the bombers the act of martyrdom then becomes the vehicle by which they demonstrate and fulfil individual commitment to God who urges true believers to fight persecution and never fear death. A significant number of their last wills and testaments reflect, amongst other emotions, a deep profession of faith as well as a sense of national responsibility. 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 families. Martyrdom operations thus seem to be regarded, even at the individual level and societal levels, as religious tools that can be implemented to achieve explicitly political ends, suggesting the *internalisation* of Hamas' jihad rhetoric in the territories. Martyrdom thus allows 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 becomes a mechanism to end injustice, seek liberation and vengeance. These last wills reflect an intricate weaving of a militant revenge rhetoric with the ideas and language of nationalism and religiosity. Finally, the chapter stresses that while dominant themes can be traced for Hamas operatives it is still much more difficult to pin down the wide range of reasons which motivate individuals to opt for suicide operations. However, a number of bombers clearly echo the jihad rhetoric constructed by Hamas thereby reflecting the power the group exerts over the imagination of an entire nation.

II. A Composite Theoretical Framework of Analysis

To reiterate, the strategic and symbolic aspects of suicidal violence were seen to converge along the lines of survival, retaliation and competition for both Hamas and its operatives. Both these aspects were suitably explained through the application of a neo-utilitarian choice-theoretic methodology which, upon the incorporation of non-material incentives, provided a cost-benefit analysis of suicidal violence for both the organisational and individual levels of analysis. Hence, instrumental and expressive imperatives of suicidal violence were seen as harnessed to Palestinian identity formation and notions of active self-sacrifice in the national cause.

Social constructivism enabled this work to identify and account for the 'box' of Palestinian nationalism within which the norm of militant heroic martyrdom operated. Clear linkages were made between the choice-theoretic methodology, used in chapter III and constructivist

approaches, applied in chapter IV. Hence this work located how the culturally entrenched norm of militant heroic martyrdom (with suicidal violence as its latest manifestation) was used historically in Palestine, as part of the national struggle, as a mechanism of survival, competition and retaliation. In other words, MHM was not only a means of ensuring the survival of the Palestinian nation but, as the proactive expression of self-sacrifice, it was also an avenue of exercising agency, expressing discontent and retaliating against the occupying power. The element of competition was also evident in this process as the national narrative constructed the ‘true’ patriot as a heroic martyr who was willing to die for the national cause. By lauding militant self-sacrifice this narrative created the context for competitive emulation – i.e. a case of ‘if he/she can do it, why cannot I?’ Hamas was identified as appropriating and rearticulating this norm of MHM, as suicidal violence, in order to ensure its own survival in the Palestinian political arena. This work also highlighted how Hamas was able to use this norm to compete with other, more established, political players for the leadership of the Palestinian national movement and how its successful re-articulation of the norm facilitated its use as a competitive tool between political rivals by the beginning of the Al-Aqsa intifada.

Hamas’ political ambitions were also identified as specifically state-oriented in this work and the political language of religion, in this case of political Islam, was seen to be used systematically to grant legitimacy to the movement by facilitating the use of its key mechanism of amassing support and legitimacy, i.e. suicidal violence. In other words, the ideological aspect of suicidal violence was also seen to be clearly linked to the three core purposes of survival, competition and retaliation. The expanded understanding of jihad established by this work enabled it to illustrate how political Islam was instrumentalised to facilitate the necessary shifts between the two poles of violence, i.e. between ‘just and limited war’ and ‘holy and total war’, both of which were encompassed by the polyvalent concept of jihad. This explained how suicide attacks were qualified and justified by Hamas as a jihad against the Israeli state. This work therefore located jihad as a central theme in the political Islamic rhetoric adopted by Hamas. Further, it demonstrated how the build up of this rhetoric in the occupied territories has facilitated the reinterpretation of the norm of militant heroic martyrdom as suicidal violence. In other words, Hamas used political Islam to harness religion to the cause Palestinian nationalism which demanded heroic self-sacrifice. The jihad of national struggle was thus waged to ensure the survival of the

Palestinian *umma*, retaliate against the occupiers of the land of *al-Isra' wal-Miraj* and also created a unique identity for the group within the national struggle. On the individual level this narrative was seen to have been internalised to the point that the suicide operative was willing to die as a *mujahidin* to ensure the survival of his/her nation, retaliate against those who pollute the sacred land of the first *qibla*, and compete with others to attain the social and religious status of an *ishtish'hadi*.

Overall then this thesis consolidated what were three very different approaches into one holistic framework of analysis and in doing so provided fresh ways of looking at and analysing Hamas' use of suicidal violence within the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation. The common link between these approaches was provided by the three core incentives of survival, competition and retaliation, for both Hamas and its operatives. Suicidal violence was identified as being used consciously and systematically, by both levels of analysis, to achieve these core incentives.

III. Some Limitations, Thoughts and Future Directions

The primary limitation of this research was the quality of the sources used. This thesis relied on various databases of suicide missions, translated Hamas leaflets and military communiqués and interviews (both personally conducted as part of primary data collection in Israel and the Palestinian territories and also those reproduced in other academic and non-academic works) in order to empirically analyse suicidal violence in this conflict. However several difficulties were encountered while using these sources.

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 categorising 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, at times attacks conducted by vehicles carrying explosives are categorised 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 and only cover approximately 70 percent of the total².

This work circumvented some of these inconsistencies by adopting a series of measures. First, the thesis used ICT as its main database primarily for its precision in categorising 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 categorising 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 Hafez³. Hafez’s compilation was favoured over any other source because it utilised the ICT as a key source and thereby applied the same standards (though there were some discrepancies in the casualty figures between Hafez’s dataset and that of the ICT). 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

² Luca Ricolfi, ‘Palestinians, 1981-2003’ in Diego Gambetta (ed.), *Making Sense of Suicide Missions* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005)

³ See Appendix A, Palestinian Suicide Bombings Since 1993, in Mohammed M. Hafez, *Manufacturing Human Bombs: The Making of Palestinian Suicide Bombers* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2006)

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 since 1993.

A second limitation regarding the quality of the sources used was the un-verifiability of Hamas leaflets, military communiq  s and second-source interviews used. Translations of the leaflets and military communiq  s were accessed from two main sources that were authored by either American or Israeli scholars. Hence, this while this work recognised that there may be inadvertent biases in these sources they could not be cross-checked. The same issue presented itself when interviews and reproduced last wills were used from secondary sources. In addition, in personally conducted interviews while every effort was made to quote only statements that were repeated by more than one source at the same time issues of language, and less often of gender, were acknowledged as potential barriers in gleaning the full meaning of statements. Once again these limitations were circumvented to a certain degree by recognising that this work still successfully identified the key sentiments conveyed by these statements and in doing so traced broad trends to arrive at cohesive and conclusive findings.

Finally, while limitations of space have forced this work to ignore regional and international linkages between Hamas and other Islamist groups, the author certainly recognises that such connections exist and play a role in the development of events within the Israeli-Palestinian landscape of conflict. In addition, it is believed that an account of economic considerations would also contribute significantly to the analysis presented here. This would include researching aspects such as the international sources of funding that Hamas has access to, economic assistance it receives through specifically religious avenues, e.g. *zakat* (the obligatory Muslim tax) at the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, as well as probing how the funding of its social services network (especially of orphanages and schools) contribute to its active membership, etc. However, once again, due to limitations of space this aspect had to be more or less excluded from this framework of analysis.

This work has opened up numerous avenues for future research. First and foremost, in approaching the phenomenon of suicidal violence in the Palestinian territories from a theoretical perspective it has attempted to bridge the gap that exists between empirical

research and theory in the field of terrorism studies. It is hoped that this work will form a stepping stone towards more research which attempts to do the same. In addition, it hoped that this work will engender further research which will contextualise and theorise suicidal violence in specific socio-political settings, study the role of suicidal violence in various conflicts in the Middle East and beyond, and also explore the role of such violence in processes of political transitions. The theoretical framework constructed here, while providing a more holistic analysis of suicidal violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, is also a very broad model. At the same time this framework has enabled this work to consciously move away from the overwhelmingly strategic focus that is prevalent in terrorism studies and incorporate other approaches. As such, a key avenue for future research would be to expand each theoretical approach in order to formulate a greater understanding of the roles played by nationalism, national identity formation, political Islam and political violence in this specific arena of conflict.

The famous journalist, Robert Fisk once asked the head of the Lebanese Hizballah movement, Sayed Hassan Nasrallah, if he could explain to him, as a Westerner, how a man could immolate himself. It was Nasrallah's first interview for Western television and he responded with a rather original metaphor:

"There are qualities which our fighters have. He who drives his truck into the enemy's military base to blow himself up and to become a martyr, he drives in with a hopeful heart, smiling and happy because he knows he is going to another place. Death, according to our belief, is not oblivion. It is not the end. It is the beginning of a true life. The best metaphor for a Westerner trying to understand this truth is to think of a person being in a sauna bath for a long time. He is very thirsty and tired and hot and he is suffering from the effects of the high temperature. Then he is told that if he opens the door, he can go into a quiet, comfortable room, drink a nice cocktail and hear classical music. Then he will open the door and go through without hesitation, knowing that what he leaves behind is not a high price to pay, and what awaits

him if of much greater value. I cannot think of another example to explain this idea to a Westerner”⁴.

This thesis has attempted to explain what elements form the walls of such a high pressured sauna and why so many Palestinians are willing to immolate themselves in the belief that understanding is the first step towards providing mechanisms of engagement with, and redressal and control of, the suicidal violence phenomenon in the occupied territories. This work believes that unless the core concerns of a deep-rooted discontent are understood and addressed ‘the room on the other side’ will remain an attractive option, and segments of the Palestinian population will continue passing though that ‘door’ with hopes of altering prevailing socio-political realities.

⁴ Robert Fisk, *The Great War for Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East* (London: Harper Perennial, 2006), p. 587

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): 05 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, Organisational Psychologist: 28 December 2004, Jerusalem

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

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

Dr. Eitan Azani, Deputy Executive Director, the International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism at the Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya: 20 January 2005, Herzliya, Israel

Hafez Barghouti, Editor, Al-Hayat Al-Jarida: 01 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: 06 January 2005, Birzeit, West Bank

Pierre Bessuges, Humanitarian Affairs Officer, Deputy Head of Office and Field Coordination Manager, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): 08 January 2005, Jerusalem

Dr. Anat Berko, Criminologist, the International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism at the Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya: 27 December 2004, Ramat 'Gan, Israel

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 Institute for Counter-Terrorism at the Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya: 20 January 2005, Herzliya, 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*: 03 January 2005, Ramallah, West Bank

Prof. Manuel Hassassian, Executive Vice President, Middle East and International Relations Specialist, Bethlehem University: 04 January 2005, Bethlehem, West Bank

Dr. Norma Hazboun, Associate Professor, Social Science Department, Bethlehem University: 04 January 2004, Bethlehem, West Bank

Dr. Jamil Hilal, 08 January 2005, Ramallah, West Bank

Omar Ishtaya, Shotokan & Fitness Center, Nablus: 19 January 2005, Nablus, West Bank

Dr. Islah Jad: 03 January, 2005, Ramallah, West Bank

Dr. Ely Karmon, Senior Research Scholar, The International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism at The Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya: 21 December 2004, Herzliya, Israel

Mu'taz Khdeir, Project Coordinator, One Voice Palestine, Ramallah, West Bank

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

Dr. Riad Malki, General Director, Panorama (The Palestinian Center for the Dissemination of Democracy and Community Development): 01 January 2005, Ramallah, West Bank

Tamar Malz, Jafee 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

Ibrahim Qettami, Field Coordinator, One Voice Palestine, Ramallah, West Bank

Andrea Recchia, Humanitarian Affairs Officer, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Jerusalem: 08 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): 02 January 2005, Ramallah, West Bank

Ziad Abbas Shamrouch, Co-Director, Ibdaa Cultural Center, Dheisheh Refugee Camp, Bethlehem: 04 January 2005, Dheisheh Refugee Camp, West Bank

Aram M. Shrif, P.R. Coordinator, One Voice Palestine: Ramallah, West Bank

Salim Tamari, Director, Institute of Jerusalem Studies: 07 January 2005, Ramallah, West Bank

Dr. Lisa Taraki, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Birzeit University: 01 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 Hasan Yusuf, Hamas political leader and spokesperson in the West Bank: 03 January, 2005, Ramallah, West Bank

Appendix B: An Example of the Public and Private Last Will of a Hamas Suicide Bomber

The following is the last will and testament of Ismail Masawabi, from Khan Yunis who committed a suicide operation on 22 June 2001 at the edge of a nearby Israeli settlement. Masawabi, who was disguised as a Jew with the traditional head-cover (*kippa*), was instructed to drive his explosive-laden car into the settlement. But his vehicle got stuck in the sand close to the gate of the settlement. When two IDF soldiers appeared, Masawabi called for help in Hebrew, and the soldiers thinking he was a settler approached to assist at which point Masawabi detonated the explosives, killing both himself and the two soldiers.

The documents reproduced below are taken from Christopher Reuter's, *My Life is a Weapon*¹, and are a fairly accurate representation of most last wills publicly released by Hamas. What is however, both key and interesting to note, is the differences between the personal and public statements made by Ismail Masawabi. The first, i.e. the 'official' statement, is the one that is released for publication. The second, 'unofficial' statement is the one that he left behind for his family.

I. The Public Statement of Ismail Masawabi

"Thanks be to God who brings about the *mujahidins'* victory and the dictators' defeat, and praise be to Muhammad, the faithful, honourable Prophet Muhammad, and all his friends, and all those who have followed in his footsteps.

Dear Muslim youth the world over: I greet you with the blessed greetings of Islam; greetings that I send to all of you who fight in the name of religion and the nation; greetings to all those who are convinced fighters and martyrs.

Dear Muslim youth: I wish to let you know that I hold those of you in particularly high regard who were always first to come to the mosque for prayers.

Dear brothers: there is no doubt about the situation prevailing in the Muslim Umma, the Muslim nation. This situation is clear to everyone, old and young. It's a situation that makes us weep and makes our hearts ache because of what has happened to the Muslims. We are truly grieved about it.

Before we had power, then we became weak. We live in humiliation, when we once lived in dignity. We are ignorant where we were once wise. We are now bringing up the world's rear, where we were once its leaders.

The wish to become a martyr dominates my life, my heart, my soul and my feelings. When I hear the Qur'an's verses I become sad because I'm doing nothing to change the situation....Our nation has become so weak, and people just help themselves to whatever they want. We are a nation living in disgrace and under Jewish occupation. This happened to us because we didn't fight them; we didn't fight for God.

¹ Christopher Reuter, *My Life is a Weapon: A Modern History of Suicide Bombing* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 90-93

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 – and a blazing fire to burn to death the enemy of God. Just standing there and watching out Muslim people being slaughtered [by the Jews] and not taking any action to change the situation is a dirty game I will not tolerate....Therefore, in the name of Jerusalem and the Al Aqsa Mosque, in the name of God on earth, I prefer to meet God and leave humankind behind. Therefore I have told myself that I will be with the Prophet Muhammad and his followers tomorrow

God will not forgive you if you accept such a life. The alternative is the true life. God will not forgive you if you accept humiliation and don't fight to put an end to the situation and to strengthen Islam.

My brothers and my family: I shall be in Paradise, where everything will be mine. So don't be sad that you've lost me. In Paradise I shall be immortal, so you should be glad I'm 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.

I have decided to take up arms and follow the brigade of Izz al-Din al-Qassam martyrs in order to make the Jews feel some of the suffering and devastation they subject my people to everyday, and have subjected them to for a long time.

Greetings from a martyr who wishes to see you all again one day in the Paradise of God, the creator of heaven and earth. Greetings to everyone who knew me and loved me, and who loves the way of jihad and the *mujahidin*.

I hope that God accepts me as a martyr".

II. The Personal Statement of Ismail Masawabi

"Dear Mama, dear Papa,

You who have taken such trouble with my upbringing; you who woke at night in order that I might rest and sleep; you who brought me up as a Muslim: you are as dear to me as my eyes and my heart. You did your very best to turn me into an adult human. You helped me enormously, and may Allah reward you for it in the best possible manner. I can't find the right words to thank you for everything you've done for me, but I ask God the Almighty to unite us in Paradise.

My beloved parents, I know that it's hard and difficult for you to lose me, but don't forget that we will see each other in Paradise. This is God's promise. What a wonderful and lovely promise if we all see each other again there.

Dear Mama: be patient and happy and pray to God to thank him for giving you a martyr as a son. And think of al-Khansaa,² who gave her four sons as martyrs for

² A mother from Islamic history who lost four sons in the war but was reputed never to have lost her patience.

God because she knew they would all meet again in Paradise and that she would also get there one day, too.

Dear, good father: please forgive me. Forgive me for not fulfilling your dream of seeing me complete my university studies and of being proud of me for getting a job. But you should be content. Your son will not, it is true, receive the *Shihada*³ - but will instead receive the great *Shahada*⁴. You should be proud of that.

You are the one who taught me to be a man in every situation. You are the one who raised a lion in his house, who taught me the enemies of God and the Muslims fear. Forgive me, dear father, if you are surprised to receive the news of my martyrdom. For I know that you're just waiting for me to finish my studies any day now – but this is what I have to do in the present situation. And we will see each other in another life.

My beloved brothers: I have loved you from the bottom of my heart. Be good to father and mother.

My dear fellow believers, dear Muhammad, Ahmed and Mahmud, you are the youth of the future. When I am dead, please be good to my parents. Help my father with his work, and my mother at home. And go to the Mosque regularly. Don't make bad friends. Read the Qur'an.

My beloved, good sisters: I was always happy to see you and to talk to you. When I visited you, you welcomed me with a friendly smile and warm words. Be patient and thank God, and please forgive me if I have made a mistake".

³ The standard diploma

⁴ The honour of being a martyr

Appendix C: 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	-
04-Oct	-	1	0	0	Suleyman Zadan	-
1994						
06-Apr	- / Afula	1	8	44	Raed Abdullah Zakarna	QB claimed responsibility
13-Apr	Bus Stop/ Hadera	1	5	30	Amar Amarna	QB claimed responsibility
19-Oct	Bus/ Tel Aviv	1	22	46	Hassan Abd al-Rahman al-Suway	Bus No. 5 exploded on Dizengoff St.; 1 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	-

DATE	TARGET AND LOCATION	NO. OF BOMBERS	NO. OF VICTIMS		NAME OF BOMBER	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
			KILLED	INJURED		
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 hitch-hiking post
03-Mar	Bus / Jerusalem	1	19	6	Ra'id Sharnubi	-
1997						
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	Intersection/ 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	-

DATE	TARGET AND LOCATION	NO. OF BOMBERS	NO. OF VICTIMS		NAME OF BOMBER	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
			KILLED	INJURED		
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 Marmash	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 2 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	-

DATE	TARGET AND LOCATION	NO. OF BOMBERS	NO. OF VICTIMS		NAME OF BOMBER	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
			KILLED	INJURED		
01-Dec	Pedestrian Mall/ Jerusalem	2	11	188	Osama Mohammed Abed Baher and Mohammed Nabil Jamil Abu Halabiyeh	The 2 different bombs were detonated at different points along the mall at the end of Jewish Sabbath. A car bomb also exploded 40 meters 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	Maher 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 Hajah	Hajah 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 soldier
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	-

DATE	TARGET AND LOCATION	NO. OF BOMBERS	NO. OF VICTIMS		NAME OF BOMBER	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
			KILLED	INJURED		
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	Asif 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 Takturi	-
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

DATE	TARGET AND LOCATION	NO. OF BOMBERS	NO. OF VICTIMS		NAME OF BOMBER	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
			KILLED	INJURED		
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	Ahmed Qawasmeh and Nassim Subhi Jabari	-
2005						
18-Jan	- / -	1	1	7	Omar Tabash	-
2006						
23-Nov	- / -	1	0	3	Fatima Omar Mahmud al-Najal	Hamas's second female and oldest suicide bomber. Al-Najal was 57 years old and is popularly known as the 'grandmother bomber'

Appendix D: A Select List of Hamas' Key Leadership¹

Yahya Ayyash

Yahya Ayyash was born on March 6, 1966 in Rafat near Nablus. He completed his secondary school education in Rafat with excellent grades which qualified him to study engineering at Beir Zeit University (West Bank). Ayyash received a Bachelor's degree of electrical engineering in 1988 and became active in the ranks of the Qassam Brigades in the beginning of 1992, where he specialized in making explosives from raw materials available in the Palestinian territories. Ayyash became one of the chief bomb-makers for Hamas and earned the nickname "the Engineer." He is credited with planning a number of suicide bombings against Israeli soldiers and citizens. He was killed by the Israeli Shin Bet on January 5, 1996 following a massive manhunt. Israeli agents were able to compromise one of Ayyash's contacts, who gave him a cell phone full of explosives. When they confirmed Ayyash was using it, the Shin Bet detonated it, killing him instantly.

Ismail Haniya

Ismail Haniya was born in 1962 in the Shati refugee camp which is located to the west of Gaza City, after his parents fled their homes near what is today the Israeli town of Ashkelon during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. Haniya studied Arabic Literature at the Islamic University of Gaza, where he became involved in the Islamist movement. Haniya graduated in 1987, just as the first intifada erupted in Gaza. He was detained by the Israeli authorities for participating in protests soon afterwards, though his prison sentence was short. In 1988, with Hamas coming to the fore in Gaza as a leading resistance movement, and imprisoned for six months. The next year, with Israel unable to quash Palestinian resistance, Haniya was arrested yet again and sentenced to three years in prison. Following his release in 1992, Israel deported Haniya along with senior Hamas leaders Rantisi and Zahhar and over 400 other activists to South Lebanon. Haniya returned to Gaza in December 1993 and was appointed dean of the Islamic University. After Israel released Sheikh Yassin from prison in 1997, Haniya was appointed his assistant. The two men's close relationship led to Haniya gaining increasing prominence within the movement and he became the group's representative to the Palestinian Authority. Haniya was chosen to lead Hamas' campaign for the 15 January 2006 election in which his party won 76 seats out of 132 in the Palestinian Legislative Council. He is the current Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority.

Abu Hanud

Mahmud Abu Hanud, former Military Commander of the Qassam Brigades (West Bank), was born in 1967 and graduated from Islamic College in Jerusalem. He was an active member of the 1987 intifada, being wounded by an Israeli bullet in 1988. In 1992, he was deported to Marj al-Zahur in Lebanon where he is believed to have acquired military training. Following his return to the Palestinian Territories, he became the West Bank commander of Hamas' 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam brigades. In 1994, he was arrested by the Palestinian Authority for firing on settler vehicles near Nablus, though he was released soon after his arrest. Israel attempted to assassinate him in Asira al-Shamaliyya in September 2000. He surrendered to Palestinian Authority forces and was detained until

¹ The information provided here is compiled and/or reproduced from various news articles and the MIPT (Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism) Knowledge Base, which can be accessed at: <http://www.tkb.org/Home.jsp>

May 2001 when Israel bombed his prison in Nablus. He was finally killed on 23 November 2001 in Nablus when an Israeli missile hit his van.

Izz el-Deen al-Sheikh Khalil

Until his death in September 2004, Izz el-Deen al-Sheikh Khalil was allegedly the Hamas military commander for areas outside of the Palestinian territories. Khalil was killed when an explosive detonated in his car in the early morning of September 26, 2004. Reports state that the bomb had been placed under Khalil's driver's seat. Khalil was 42 years old at the time of his death in Damascus, Syria.

Musa Abu Marzuq

Musa Abu Marzuq was born in 1951 in Gaza. He studied engineering at Ayn Shams (Cairo) and worked in the United Arab Emirates until 1981. He studied in the United States from 1981-1991, receiving his PhD and gaining residency rights. After returning to the Middle East, he became the head of Hamas' Political Bureau (originally based in Jordan). Marzuq was the first Hamas leader to publicly accept Israel's right to statehood. Marzuq was expelled from Jordan in July of 1995. He was arrested at New York's JFK airport though the US dropped all charges against him in 1997, allowing him to return to Jordan. Marzuq was expelled again from Jordan in August 1999 when Hamas' offices in Jordan were closed. Marzuq is now a Yemeni national and operates out of Damascus, Syria. He has been cited as an important figure in cases against businesses and charities in the United States accused of raising money for Hamas.

Khaled Mishal

Khaled Mishal was born in 1956 in the Silwad neighbourhood of Ramallah. He moved with his family to Kuwait and lived there until the 1990 Gulf War. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Physics from Kuwait University. He led Islamist Palestinians at Kuwait University, challenging the dominance of Arafat's PLO on the Kuwait University campus and participated in the foundation of the Islamic Haqq Bloc, which also competed with Fatah's blocs on leading the General Union for the Palestinian Students in Kuwait. When Iraq invaded Kuwait, Mishal moved his family to Jordan and began his work with Hamas as one of its founders. He has been a member of the Hamas Political Bureau since its inception and became its chairman in 1996. On September 25, 1997, Israeli Mossad agents tried to poison him, provoking a crisis in Israeli-Jordan relations. Jordan later expelled Mishal to Qatar when Jordan's relationship with Hamas deteriorated. Mishal then moved to Damascus (Syria), from where he heads and runs Hamas' Political Bureau.

Dr. 'Abd al-Aziz Rantisi

'Abd al-Aziz Rantisi, founding member and former spokesperson of Hamas (in Gaza), was born in 1947 in Yabna and grew up in the Khan Yunis refugee camp. He was educated as a medical doctor (paediatrician) at Alexandria University (1972, 1974-1976) where he first came into contact with the Muslim Brotherhood. He helped establish the Islamic Centre in Gaza in 1973 and joined the Muslim Brotherhood in 1976. He worked at Khan Yunis hospital as head of paediatrics but was dismissed by Israel in 1983 and was imprisoned multiple times. He led Hamas after April 1989 but was deported by Israel to Marj al-Zuhur in Lebanon in 1992. In Lebanon, he served as the spokesperson for the deportees. On his return, he was rearrested by Israel in December 1993 and held until April 1997. He was then held by the Palestinian Authority in detention for 21 months until February 2000. He was arrested again in July 2000 after calling the Palestinian participation in the Camp

David talks an act of treason. He was released in December 2000 but has been rearrested multiple times since 2000. He currently operates out of the Shaykh Radwan area of Gaza City where he served as the Gaza spokesman for Hamas. Following the killing of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, Hamas' founder, Rantisi was elected as the group's leader. Rantisi was killed by an Israeli missile strike on April 17, 2004.

Ismail Abu Shanab

Ismail Abu Shanab, Hamas' former spokesperson (in Gaza), was born in 1955. He was educated as a construction engineer at Colorado State University, where he received his Masters degree. He taught engineering at Gaza's Islamic University and served as deputy to Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the spiritual leader of Hamas. As Yassin's deputy, he functioned as Hamas' leader in Gaza. For his involvement in Hamas, he was imprisoned for 7 years. After his release in 1996, he served as Hamas' observer to the PLO Central Council (PLO-CC) and served as Hamas' representative to the Committee of National and Islamic Forces. In 1997, he indicated his acceptance for a two-state solution with Israel. He served as the Hamas representative to the 2002 talks in Gaza on creating a united Palestinian program. He was killed in an Israeli attack in Gaza on 21 August 2003.

Sheikh Salah Shehada

Salah Shehada, a founding member of Hamas, was born in Gaza on 24 February 1953. He obtained a secondary school certificate but his financial circumstances did not allow him to pursue his university education, although he was admitted to study medicine and engineering in Turkish and Russian universities. He studied in the Higher Institute for Social Service in Alexandria where he first became affiliated with Islamic organizations. He was arrested in 1984 on suspicion of anti-Israel activities and was jailed for two years. After being released in 1986, he worked as director of student affairs at the Islamic University until Israeli authorities closed the university during the first Palestinian intifada. Salah continued to work at the university and was arrested again in August 1988. Shehada was the founder of the first military apparatus of Hamas, known as "Palestinian Mujahidoun." Shehada was killed in an Israeli missile strike on his residence in the Daraj neighbourhood of Gaza city in July 2002.

Sheikh Ahmad Isma'il Yassin

Sheikh Ahmad Yassin was born in the late 1930s. He became paralyzed from the neck down as a result of a childhood accident. After 1948, he was a refugee in Gaza where he was influenced by Muslim Brotherhood teachers in his youth. He received no formal religious education and worked in Gaza restaurants and trained as a teacher in Cairo. In the late 1960s, he began efforts to encourage religiosity and ritual observances among Gaza youth. He was briefly imprisoned by Egypt in 1966 and abandoned political activities in the late 1960s following Israel's occupation of Gaza. In 1969-1970, Yassin revived Muslim Brotherhood activities in Gaza. In 1973, he founded al-Mujamma' al-Islami (Islamic Centre), an umbrella organization overseeing Muslim Brotherhood activities in the Gaza Strip. He was arrested in 1983-1984 after an arms cache was discovered and was given a 13-year sentence. He was released in May 1985 following a prisoner exchange. He was arrested again in May 1989 and sentenced to life imprisonment. He was released from prison in October 1997 as part of a deal between Jordan and Israel following Israel's failed assassination attempt in Amman of Khaled Mishal, chairman of Hamas' Political Bureau. The Palestinian Authority tried to place Yassin under house arrest in December 2001, leading to widespread clashes.

Known as the spiritual leader and founder of Hamas, the paraplegic and nearly blind Sheikh Yassin was, till his arrest in May 1989, the hub of the organisation. He was responsible for a number of Hamas activities, such as writing leaflets, managing and arranging finances, liaising with organisations abroad, and supervising day-to-day activities on the ground. He was involved with and potentially orchestrated the activities of Hamas' political, military and social wings. Yassin established Hamas' broad and effective organisational network during the first intifada. Following his release in 1997, Yassin resumed the leadership of Hamas in the territories, though not with the same degree of control he had exercised prior to his arrest. He was assassinated by an Israeli helicopter gunship in March 2004.

Sheikh Hasan Yusuf

Sheikh Hassan Yusuf is a school teacher and imam. He is a senior Hamas leader and the most prominent spokesperson of Hamas' Political Bureau in the West Bank. He has been in and out of Israeli custody and continues to be an important leader and spokesperson in the West Bank when outside prison.

Mahmud al-Zahhar

Mahmud al-Zahhar is one of Hamas' founders and most senior political leaders. He was born in 1945 in the Zeitoun neighbourhood of Gaza City. He served as chairman of the organisation's parliamentary bloc through its surprise victory in the 2006 Palestinian Authority elections. He has since taken a post in the government as foreign minister. Educated as a surgeon in Cairo's Ain Shams University, al-Zahhar served as a lecturer at the Islamic University's Medical Department in Gaza. He became Hamas' spokesperson in Gaza in April 1989. He then served as Hamas' unofficial representative to the PLO from January 1990. He was deported to Marj al-Zahhar in Lebanon in December 1992. Al-Zahhar was the target of an unsuccessful Israeli assassination attempt in September 2003 in Gaza City. The raid killed his son and bodyguard and injured members of his family. He became a member of the "collective leadership" of Hamas in 2004 after Sheikh Yassin and Abdel-Aziz Rantisi were assassinated by Israel. With Hamas' victory in the 2006 Palestinian elections, al-Zahhar joined the government as foreign minister. His first major initiative was a tour of several neighbouring Arab countries.

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