

THE PALESTINIAN SHAHID:
MODEL 21ST CENTURY ISLAMIC TERRORIST

BENJAMIN T. ACOSTA

California State University-San Bernardino

Department of Political Science

National Security Studies M.A. Program

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GLOSSARY

Arabic

'amalyya istishhadiyya: “martyrdom operation”

da'awa: literally “calling”—meaning “proselytizing”

dar al-harb: literally “dwelling of war”

dar al-Islam: literally “dwelling of submission”

fard ayn: “individual obligation (to *jihad*)”

fard kafiya: “collective obligation (to *jihad*)”

fatwa: “(Islamic) edict” or “decree”

feda'i: literally “self-sacrificer”—meaning “one who risks his or her life”

fedayin: “self-sacrificers”—meaning “those who risk their lives”

hamula: “clan”

intifada: literally “shaking off”—meaning “uprising”

intihar: “suicide”

Islam: “submission”

Islamiyya: “political Islam”

istishhad: literally “martyrdom”—meaning “self-sacrifice for Allah’s sake”

istishhadi: literally “martyr”—meaning “one who intentionally commits martyrdom”

jahiliyya: “ignorance”—meaning “darkness without Allah”

jihad: literally “struggle”—meaning “holy war”

kafir: literally “infidel”—meaning “one who hides the truth”

Khalifa: literally “successor”—meaning “Islam’s highest living authority”

mufti: “(Islamic law) functionary”

mujahid: literally “struggler”—meaning “one who wages holy war”

mujahedin: literally “strugglers”—meaning “those who wage holy war”

al-Naqba: “the Catastrophe”

qowmiyya: “(Arab) nationalism”

sahwa: “awakening”

salafi: “(one who follows the ways of the) immediate successors”

Salafiyya: “Salafism”

sammid: “one who practices steadfastness”

sammud: “steadfastness” or “perseverance”

shahada: literally “witness”—meaning “professing one’s submission to Allah” or “death for Allah’s sake”

shahid: literally “(male) witness”—meaning “martyr”

shahida: literally “(female) witness”—meaning “martyr”

al-shahid al-hai: “the living martyr”

shari’a: “(Islamic) law”

sheikh: “(local) leader”

Shi’a: “partisan”

shuhada: literally “witnesses”—meaning “martyrs”

Sunni: “orthodox”

tawhid: literally “oneness”—meaning “monotheism”

um’ma: “(global) Islamic community”

waqf: “(Islamic) endowment”

INTRODUCTION

Shahid Fashions

When Israel routed a coalition of Arab armies in the 1967 Six-Day War, some in the Arab world realized that they could not defeat the Jewish state in a conventional land war. Palestinian Arabs, however, sought to lead the way in a different type of warfare against Israel. In 1968, Palestinian terrorist groups under the structural umbrella of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)¹ began using a myriad of different terror tactics against Israeli and Jewish targets in and outside the Middle East.² These groups ushered in the era of modern terrorism by launching spectacular attacks (e.g. symbolic airline hijackings),³ which were only made possible by assailants' willingness to sacrifice their lives. With the success of these shocking attacks, the PLO learned that operations using *fedayin* (self-sacrificers) had utility well beyond their apparent tactical advantages.

The PLO accordingly incorporated self-sacrificing operations into its overall political strategy. The new approach resulted in such romanticized creations as the Black September Organization, which with its horrific massacre of 11 Israeli Olympians at the 1972 Munich Games brought about the contemporary symbiosis between terrorism and the media. Garnering the spotlight of worldwide media attention, the PLO succeeded in arousing international sympathy and support for the Palestinian movement. These early Palestinian groups, however, neither truly harnessed nor exploited the strategic potential of suicide terrorism. Despite sending

¹ Established in January 1964 at a summit of Arab states, *Munazzmat al-Tahrir al-Filastiniyya* (the Palestine Liberation Organization) or PLO did not find widespread acclaim by Palestinians until its cooptation by Yasser Arafat's militant group Fatah. Meaning "conquest" in Arabic, *Fatah* is the inversion of the acronym *Harakat al-Tahrir al-Watani al-Filistini* (the Palestine National Liberation Movement).

² Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict 1881-2001* (New York: Vintage, 2001), 373-379.

³ Bruce Hoffman, "Modern Terrorism Trends: Reevaluation after 9/11," in *Post-Modern Terrorism: Trends, Scenarios, and Future Threats*, ed. Boaz Ganor (Herzliya, Israel: Publishing House, 2005), 40.

their *fedayin* on high-risk operations, which usually projected certain death, Palestinian leadership did not begin to promote laying down one's life intentionally as an end unto itself until years later.

Between the mid-1970s and early-1990s, a number of events affecting the Arab and Islamic worlds drastically changed the political atmosphere in the Middle East. A Sunni-Muslim *sahwa* (awakening) swept across Arab countries; Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini led an Islamic revolution in Iran, overthrowing Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi's pro-Western government; the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan; sectarian strife ravaged Lebanon in a bloody civil war; the Cold War's end, the first Palestinian *intifada* (uprising),⁴ and the Gulf War all fostered vast political and social change. Accordingly, as identities formed and new viewpoints took effect politically and socially, the manner in which organizations employed violence also fluctuated. As a by-product of the Iran-Iraq War and Hezbollah's⁵ guerrilla campaigns in Lebanon against the United States (U.S.), France and Israel, the Shi'a-Muslim world catapulted the concept of the *shahid* (martyr) to the forefront of militants' imaginations.

By framing the Iran-Iraq War as a "re-enactment"⁶ of the historic battle of Karbala in 860 between Hussein the leader of *Shi'at Ali* (Faction of Ali)⁷ and Yazid the Umayyad Caliph, Iran's Supreme Leader Khomeini directly shaped the way Iranian soldiers approached warfare against the advancing Iraqi army. Because the battle in 860 left Hussein dead and thus heralded by Shi'a Muslims as a great Islamic "martyr," Khomeini's framing invoked many Iranians to seek death

⁴ In Arabic *intifada* literally means "shaking-off." In the case of the two Palestinian uprisings, it refers to shaking off the "occupiers."

⁵ *Hezb'ollah* stands for the "Party of God" in Arabic. Although not officially founded until February 16, 1985, Iranian Pasdaran operatives set up Hezbollah in 1982, and operated it under the cover name Islamic Jihad Organization.

⁶ *The Cult of the Suicide Bomber*, prod. and dir. David Betty and Kevin Toolis, 1 hr. 35 min., Many Rivers Films, 2006; Ronnie Scheib, "The Cult of the Suicide Bomber," *Daily Variety*, 5 June 2006.

⁷ Initially, the Shi'a were simply a political faction that supported Mohammad's son-in-law and cousin Ali. The battle in 860 helped to "[transform] the Shi'a from a party to a sect." Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 22.

on the modern battlefield, so they too might reap the benefits of martyrdom as articulated in Shi'a tradition. Indeed, in 1980, amid a fire fight with Iraqi troops, a 13-year old Iranian named Hussein Fahmideh gathered explosives, attached them to himself, charged an Iraqi tank and detonated the explosives—disabling the tank while killing himself. Like that of his namesake, Hussein's act of self-sacrifice found widespread praise among Shi'a Muslims. Soon after, the Iranian government plastered his picture on billboards across Tehran; Hussein's martyrdom, like that of the Shi'a patriarch's, inspired countless others. By 1982, Khomeini harnessed the power of the Shi'a narrative of martyrdom, and began employing "human wave attacks," which regularly consisted of thousands of Iranian youth simultaneously rushing Iraqi positions, oftentimes protected by surrounding minefields. Armed usually with nothing more than clinched fists and a plastic key around their necks, which ensured their post-martyrdom entrance through the gates of paradise, Khomeini's "mine jumpers" helped turn the tide of the war.⁸

With significant success on the battlefields of the Iran-Iraq War, the Iranian Pasdaran,⁹ or Revolutionary Guard, sought to export Khomeini's martyrdom strategy to Lebanon. Engulfed in an overlapping sectarian-divided civil war and Israel-PLO war, Lebanon became the testing ground for suicide-homicide attacks as a tool of guerrilla warfare. In an ultimately successful effort to expel Western peacekeeping forces, the Pasdaran's Lebanese creation, Hezbollah, repeatedly attacked U.S. and French targets using suicide-homicide bombers. Hezbollah's campaign reached its zenith with the 1983 suicide-homicide attack on the U.S. Marines barracks, which left 241 American servicemen dead, and convinced U.S. President Ronald Reagan to

⁸ Christoph Reuter, *My Life Is a Weapon: A Modern History of Suicide Bombing* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 33-51.

⁹ Meaning "Guards" in Persian, *Pasdaran* is short for *Sepah-i Pasdaran-i Enqelab-i Islami* (the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps) or IRGC.

“redeploy” U.S. forces from Lebanon.¹⁰ Continuing to advance the tactic in its campaigns against the Southern Lebanese Army and Israel Defense Force throughout the 1980s, Hezbollah inspired numerous pro-Syrian Lebanese groups to use suicide-homicide bombers.¹¹ Deeming suicide-homicide attacks “martyrdom operations,” the Pasdaran and Hezbollah effectively convinced many that the *modus operandi* held legitimacy, particularly regarding Shi’a tradition.¹² Moreover, by concurrently galvanizing the Lebanese Shi’a population and expelling foreign militaries from Lebanon, Hezbollah made the symbolic and strategic utility of suicide-homicide attacks clear to its enemies and other militant organizations alike.

By 1986, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)¹³ began flirting with the idea of employing “exceptional martyrdom operations” against civilian Israeli targets.¹⁴ In 1989, Hamas¹⁵ similarly accepted the idea of using suicide-homicide attackers¹⁶; however, not seeing a strategic opportunity to carry out such “martyrdom operations” amid the first Palestinian *intifada* (December 1987 to early 1993), PIJ and its Islamist-counterpart¹⁷ Hamas refrained from deploying suicide-homicide attackers. However, as a rebuke to the PLO’s participation in

¹⁰ Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 71.

¹¹ These groups included: Amal, the Syrian Social-Nationalist Party, the Syrian *Ba’ath* (Renaissance) Party, and the Syrian Socialist-Nasserite Party.

¹² Not only does the Shi’a martyrdom narrative and Ashura holiday derive from the story of Hussein and his 72 faithful followers, who died with him, but the 12th Century Assassins also contribute to the tradition of Shi’a self-sacrifice, as they used daggers in suicidal assassination missions.

¹³ Some refer to *al-Jihad al-Islami fi Filastin* (The Islamic Jihad in Palestine) simply as *Jihad Islami* (Islamic Jihad). Others call it *Harakat al-Jihad al-Islami al-Filastini* (The Palestinian Islamic Jihad Movement), and Palestinian Islamic Jihad or PIJ.

¹⁴ Notes from International Institute for Counter-Terrorism seminar on “The Global Jihad,” given by Reuven Paz, in Herzliya, Israel (21 June 2005); Scott Atran, “Genesis of Suicide Terrorism,” *Science* 299, issue 5612 (7 March 2003): 1534-1539; Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, revised and expanded ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 151.

¹⁵ Meaning “zeal” and “courage” in Arabic, the acronym *Hamas* stands for *Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya* (the Islamic Resistance Movement).

¹⁶ Ami Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism* (Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 2005), 55.

¹⁷ “Islamist” refers to an individual or organization that subscribes to a political ideology based on the fundamental tenets of Islam. Furthermore, just as various interpretations of those tenets spawned a variety of Islamic sects, nearly an equally number of versions of Islamism or political Islam exist—whether, Salafi, revolutionary Shi’a, or otherwise. One could understand a “hardline Islamist” as an Islamic supremacist, who views political Islam as the only viable and righteous political ideology. An “Islamic fanatic” demonstrates a willingness to sacrifice his or her self-interest for a collective cause.

negotiations with Israel,¹⁸ Hamas and PIJ carried out eight suicide-homicide attacks in 1993 alone.¹⁹ By the mid-1990s, some Palestinians hoped for the success of the Oslo peace process, but many others put their faith in the continuation of violent resistance, as predominately carried on by Hamas and PIJ's *shahids*. From 1994 to 2000, the two Palestinian Islamist organizations carried out 25 suicide-homicide bombings against Israeli targets. As a result of political Islam's return to the forefront of Palestinian politics and the emergence of a complementary culture of martyrdom in Palestinian society, the *shahid* rose as the Palestinian movement's new icon—in effect replacing the *feda'i* (self-sacrificer), and making suicide-homicide bombings the operational mode of choice. With the failure of the Oslo peace process, Fatah sought to maintain popularity by joining the Islamist-Palestinian organizations in the suicide-terror industry and established al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade.²⁰ The early 2000s, thus, saw massive waves of suicide-homicide bombers targeting Israeli civilians in the joint terror effort of *al-Aqsa intifada*.²¹ From September 2000 to December 2005, Palestinian organizations successfully carried out 155 suicide-homicide bombings and launched at least 525.²²

Effectively convincing their own constituencies of the Islamic justifications for suicide-homicide attacks, Islamist organizations, particularly Hamas, gained widespread support within Palestinian society for carrying out such operations. Moreover, by targeting civilians *en masse*, Palestinian organizations transitioned suicide-homicide attacks from a guerrilla tactic, as

¹⁸ Rapprochement publicly commenced in October 1991 at the Madrid Conference, and began showing progress with the signing of the *Declaration of Principles* in September 1993, in which Israel and the PLO recognized one another diplomatically.

¹⁹ For a complete list of Palestinian suicide-homicide attacks carried out against Israeli targets from April 1993 to April 2008, see Appendix A in Benjamin T. Acosta, "The Palestinian Shahid and the Development of the Model 21st Century Islamic Terrorist" (M.A. thesis, California State University-San Bernardino, 2008), 225-233.

²⁰ Fatah created *Kataeb Shuhada al-Aqsa* (al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade) or AMB. However, the majority of its members come from *Tanzim* (meaning "squad" in Arabic), which operates Fatah's grassroots following. Furthermore, members of Force 17, Fatah's elite Presidential guard, often organize and conduct AMB's attacks.

²¹ Commentators also commonly refer to *al-Aqsa intifada* simply as the second *intifada*.

²² See Acosta, 225-233; and Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, *Anti-Israeli Terrorism, 2006: Data, Analysis and Trends* (March 2007): 51-55; accessed at <www.terrorism-info.org.il>.

previously used on a wide scale first by Hezbollah and later by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, to a weapon of terror. Additionally, by demonstrating that participation in a “martyrdom operation” marked the fulfillment of a personal goal, the Palestinian *shahid*/suicide-homicide bomber captivated mass media and sympathetic populations alike, especially in the Arab and Islamic worlds—eventually having effects stretching far beyond the pales of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Today, posters glorifying the latest *shahid* litter the walls of Palestinian cities, villages and “refugee camps” in the disputed territories²³ of the West Bank,²⁴ Gaza and East Jerusalem. Everyone from corner shop owners and cab drivers to the 20-something year olds drinking coffee at the local café extol past Palestinian terror leaders such as Chairman Yasser Arafat, Dr. Fathi Shaqaqi, Sheik Ahmad Yassin and Dr. Abdul Aziz al-Rantissi, along with the heinous terrorist acts they spent their days sponsoring. In Bethlehem, children argue in the street over whose turn it is to play the *shahid* in their casual game of a mock suicide-bomb attack. These sentiments expressed on the Arab streets of the disputed territories represent a popular culture of martyrdom,²⁵ which has gained and continues to strengthen a stranglehold on Palestinian society.

²³ The term “disputed territories” is used because the listed areas do not qualify as “occupied territories,” considering there has never been a “Palestinian” state. From the years 1967 to 1979 and 1967 to 1994, it could have been argued that the territories in question were “occupied Egypt” and “occupied Jordan,” respectively, since these were the nation-states that Israel captured the territories from during the Six-Day War; however, both the Egyptian and Jordanian governments have since relinquished all claims to the territories. Thus, they are not “occupied,” but, indeed, rather “disputed” between Israel and the Palestinian Authority—especially since the failure of the Oslo peace process has left a final status agreement on the territories indefinitely unresolved.

²⁴ A term coined during the British Mandate, “West Bank” collectively refers to the areas of Judea and Samaria.

²⁵ First used in explaining Palestinian society’s support for suicide-homicide bombers sometime after the initiation of the second *intifada*, a number of researchers, scholars and political analysts have since elaborated on the concept “culture of martyrdom” and its variations. See David Brooks, “The Culture of Martyrdom: How Suicide Bombing Became not just a Means but an End,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 289, no. 6 (June 2002): 18-20; Mohammed M. Hafez, *Manufacturing Human Bombs: The Making of Palestinian Suicide Bombers* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute for Peace Press, 2006); Anne Marie Oliver and Paul Steinberg, *The Road to Martyrs’ Square: A Journey into the World of the Suicide Bomber* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Barbara Victor, *Army of Roses: Inside the World of Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers* (Emmaus, Penn.: Rodale, 2003); Nat Hentoff, “The Poisonous Cult of Martyrdom; Palestinians with Legitimate Grievances Are Infected,” *The Washington Times* (8 April 2002); and Reuter, 79-114.

Identifiable by *shahid* worship and praise for terrorism, Palestinian society, however, no longer exclusively exhibits this culture of martyrdom. Cities from Jakarta to Baghdad and London have witnessed the fruits of this terror-breeding culture. Similarly, the rapid diffusion of suicide terrorism, geographically and across ideological lines, exemplifies how terror organizations have garnered the strategic utility of employing “martyrdom operations.” Furthermore, Palestinian developments in the evolution of suicide-homicide attacks have functioned as alerts of these various strategic components. Moreover, by setting a precedent among Sunni Muslims, and gaining legitimacy for attacking civilians from prominent Islamic authorities within the Sunni world, the Palestinian *shahid*/suicide-homicide bomber precipitated its own duplication in numerous other conflicts. Thus, to fully appreciate the implications of the Palestinian culture of martyrdom and *shahid*, one needs to understand the former’s social development, the latter’s doctrinal roots, and the influence the pair have had on terror campaigns outside the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Since the early 1990s, Palestinian terror organizations have drawn from many sources and incrementally refined the process of suicide terrorism. By making the *modus operandi* socially acceptable and at times even fashionable, Palestinian terror organizations have normalized the deployment of suicide-homicide bombers. In doing so, the progress individuals take from reasoning and justifying to rationalizing and actually committing suicide terrorism has been eerily optimized.²⁶ Consequently, Palestinian terror organizations have not only developed an extremely successful, if not strategic, weapon for their war with Israel, but also provided

²⁶ Optimization refers to the fact that one finds no shortage in Palestinian society of individuals willing to carry out suicide-homicide operations; potential *shahids* have become a sort of Palestinian natural resource, which terror organizations can extract from society at any given time.

Islamist-terror organizations such as those within the global al-Qaeda²⁷ network with the model 21st Century terrorist, as well as efficient methods to produce such individuals. By mobilizing mass support in the Sunni world and empowering the individual through the concepts of *jihād* and martyrdom, the *shahid*, as epitomized by Palestinians during *al-Aqsa intifada*, secured suicide terrorism's growing organizational partiality, ensured lethality, decreasing targeting discrimination, and frequency in the international arena. Thus, the phenomenon of the Palestinian *shahid* has become a driving force behind the increasing spread of suicide terrorism worldwide.

²⁷ Literally “the Base” in Arabic, *al-Qa’eda* additionally means “the Vanguard.” Abdallah Azzam established the organization in 1988 building off the well-established *Mektab al-Khadimat* (Office of Services), which served as a logistics base for *mujahedin* (holy warriors) in Afghanistan.

**THE PALESTINIAN CULTURE OF MARTYRDOM AND SHAHID:
PROVIDING THE MODEL FOR 21ST CENTURY ISLAMIC TERRORISM**

“I may never have experienced a centaur, but by imagining one,
I know that I can also imagine others that resemble this one and yet are different.”
-Leo Strauss

Over the last decade, the suicide-terror phenomenon has spread across the globe at astounding rates.²⁸ With attacks occurring everywhere from New York City to Bali, suicide terrorism has made its mark as a global epidemic. Most evident in its post-9/11 application of suicide terrorism, particularly in the battle for Iraq, al-Qaeda has incorporated *istishhad* (martyrdom) into its grand strategy.²⁹ Suicide-terror attacks have dominated the conflict in Iraq since major military operations ended there in late 2003.³⁰ Indeed, in Iraq alone suicide-terror attacks have reached levels surpassing almost all other similar campaigns combined.³¹ However, as one terrorism expert recognizes, “clearly suicide bombing in Iraq is largely an imported phenomenon.”³² Furthermore, the foreign fighters who predominately use this *import* did not develop it firsthand. Consistently coming from Saudi Arabia more than anywhere else, suicide-homicide bombers in Iraq have adapted the *modus operandi* and made it an important component

²⁸ “Terrorism” is the use of violence by a non-state actor against civilians and/or non-combatants for the purpose of political gain. “Suicide terrorism” for all intents and purposes refers to an act of terrorism, in which the perpetrator kills oneself while initiating the attack. Furthermore, operational success, whether tactically, symbolically or both, requires the perpetrator to take his or her own life. The term “suicide-homicide bomber” represents the two separate, albeit simultaneous, acts “martyrdom”-seeking individuals commit while carrying out their attacks: suicide and murder.

²⁹ Yoram Schweitzer and Sari Goldstein Ferber, “Al-Qaeda and the Internationalization of Suicide Terrorism,” *Memorandum No. 78* (Tel Aviv: Jaffe Center for Strategic Studies, 2005), 8.

³⁰ See Nir Rosen, *In the Belly of the Green Bird: The Triumph of the Martyrs in Iraq* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

³¹ Mohammed M. Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq: The Strategy and Ideology of Martyrdom* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute for Peace Press, 2007), 3.

³² See Martha Crenshaw, foreword to *Suicide Bombers in Iraq*, ix.

of al-Qaeda's strategy against coalition forces and Iraq's democratic government.³³ With its operational roots in Shi'a Iran,³⁴ the sectarian and ideological nemesis of Saudi Arabia, the suicide-homicide attack went through a lengthy evolution process before finding widespread legitimacy in the Sunni-Muslim world. The now infamous import thus required significant preparation before its exportation to Iraq.

The United States (U.S.)-led War on Terror has decreased al-Qaeda's capability to launch spectacular attacks and forced the international network to focus more acutely on its next structural metamorphosis in order to continue advancing towards its long-term goals.³⁵ Al-Qaeda started as a battlefield collection of "Afghan Arabs," who in a few years transformed themselves into a global-spanning organization that in less than a decade mutated into an international network with countless tentacles. But, Usama bin Laden and Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri have not finished transforming al-Qaeda; they have not kept discretion about al-Qaeda's next metamorphosis, either—that being, into a "popular trend,"³⁶ wherein al-Qaeda would largely rely on the world's Sunni-Muslim population to rise up and carry out operations without direct hierarchal command and control. So, where has al-Qaeda found a *model* to present bin Laden's grandiose jihadi design to the *um'ma*? Whom does al-Qaeda's prototype member or adherent resemble? What qualities does he or she seek to possess? What personal goals does he or she

³³ Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman, *Al-Qa'ida's Foreign Fighters in Iraq: A First Look at the Sinjar Records* (West Point, New York: Combating Terrorism Center, 2007), 19; Richard A. Opiel Jr., "Foreign Fighters in Iraq Are Tied to Allies of U.S.," *The New York Times*, 22 November 2007; Mia Bloom, "Grim Saudi Export," *Los Angeles Times*, 17 July 17 2005; Susan B. Glasser, "'Martyrs' in Iraq Mostly Saudi," *Washington Post*, 15 May 2005.

³⁴ The first occurrence of an assailant strapping explosives to his chest and killing himself to kill others happened in 1980 during the Iran-Iraq War, when a 13-year old Iranian named Hussein Fahmideh strapped explosives to himself and detonated them while charging an Iraqi tank. Ayatollah Khomeini went on to use "martyrs" to clear Iraqi minefields and the Iranian Pasdaran subsequently exported the *shahid* concept to Lebanon in 1982.

³⁵ Al-Qaeda's long-term goals include: reinvigorating Islam to the extent of its "golden era." For this to happen, however, al-Qaeda argues the Islamic world must come out of its new *jahiliyya* (godless dark-age) and the caliphate has to be reinstated.

³⁶ Ely Karmon, "Who Bombed Northern Israel? Al-Qaida and Palestine," *International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT): Articles* (1 January 2006): accessed at <www.instituteforcounterterrorism.org> on 28 January 2007.

hope to fulfill by participating in al-Qaeda’s “World Islamic Front for Jihad against Jews and Crusaders?”

In short, the Palestinian *shahid* (martyr), whose glorification in the disputed territories exceeds that of a pop star’s in America, offers the ultimate guide. The *shahid* carries out the most terrifying of all terrorists’ *modus operandi*: the suicide-homicide attack. As both a physical and symbolic act, the suicide-homicide attack marks an effective tool of warfare, optimal method of propaganda, and additionally fulfills a culturally defined religious duty. This makes the *shahid* the perfect weapon for al-Qaeda, which seeks to maximize the willingness of unaffiliated individuals to pursue the ideological precepts of bin Laden and al-Zawahiri. Accordingly, al-Qaeda understands that using the *shahid* minimally provides twofold utility—tactical and strategic³⁷—both of which, as in the Palestinian case, effectively prod the internal and external audiences. Already, as foci of inspiration, the Palestinian culture of martyrdom and *shahid* have contributed significantly to suicide-homicide bombers enjoying a fashionable status globally among Islamic fanatics.³⁸ Thus, by paving the way for massive Sunni suicide terrorists, the Palestinian culture of martyrdom and *shahid* have instrumentally aided al-Qaeda in advancing its long-term goals.

Exporting the Palestinian Shahid

The exuberant amount of international media coverage on the Arab-Israeli conflict allots Palestinian terror organizations a paramount forum for their operations. Media attention plays a central role in any guerrilla or terror campaign, or as scholar Walter Laqueur once suggested:

³⁷ Schweitzer and Goldstein Ferber, 26.

³⁸ The intended use of the term “fanatic” here is, as philosopher Lee Harris defines, “someone willing to make a sacrifice of his own self-interest for something outside himself.” See Lee Harris, *The Suicide of Reason: Radical Islam’s Threat to the West* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), xx.

“[the media is] the terrorist’s best friend.”³⁹ With terror attacks, the media often functions as a tool for organizations to disseminate external and internal propaganda. Thus, when coupled with the added media coverage suicide-homicide attacks generally receive in any context, the sustained employment of suicide-homicide bombers within the forum of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, especially during *al-Aqsa intifada*, brought Palestinian organizations perhaps more media attention than any other previous terror campaign, including al-Qaeda’s pre-9/11 attacks. The media coverage of *al-Aqsa intifada* increased the various Palestinian organizations’ prestige, notoriety and, most importantly, power vis-à-vis one another, Israel, and within the international audience.

In combination with prime exposure, the strategic victories provided by suicide terrorism gave Palestinian terror organizations an even higher level of prestige among international terror organizations and networks. Palestinian terror organizations have always maintained a high, if not the highest, level of respect in the international terror community.⁴⁰ The efforts of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) to derail the Oslo peace process, the daily suicide-homicide bombers of *al-Aqsa intifada* and Israel’s subsequent retreat from Gaza brought renewed praise and admiration from those with shared values and beliefs. Accordingly, this prestige has transitioned into imitation of the Palestinian *shahid* (usually in the form of a suicide-homicide

³⁹ Walter Laqueur quoted in Assaf Moghadam, “The Roots of Suicide Terrorism: A Multi-Causal Approach,” in *Root Causes of Suicide Terrorism: The Globalization of Martyrdom*, ed. Ami Pedahzur (New York: Routledge, 2005), 95.

⁴⁰ Regarding the Palestinian terror legacy, scholar Bruce Hoffman contends: “Between 1968 and 1980, Palestinian terrorist groups were indisputably the world’s most active, accounting for more *international* terrorist incidents than any other movement. The success achieved by the PLO in publicizing the Palestinians’ plight through the ‘internationalization’ of its struggle with Israel has since served as a model for similarly aggrieved [identity groups].” Simply put, the Palestinians *revolutionized* revolutionary violence. Hoffman goes on to credit the PLO not only with “internationalizing” terrorism, but also providing ethno-nationalist terrorist organizations with a “model,” as well as establishing the Palestinians as revolutionary terror “mentors.” Hoffman concludes, “the attention that the PLO has received, the financial and political influence and power that it has amassed, and the stature that it has been accorded in the international community continues to send a powerful message to aggrieved peoples throughout the world.” Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, revised and expanded ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 64 and 71-79.

bomber) and its supplementary culture of martyrdom. Initially gaining widespread notoriety through its use by the Shi'a Hezbollah in Lebanon, it was never a given that suicide-homicide attacks would find acceptance in the Sunni world. Indeed, over 11 years passed from the time al-Da'awa 17, an Iraqi-Shi'a group, launched its first suicide-homicide operation and Hamas's first successful suicide-homicide attack.⁴¹ Ultimately, Palestinian terror organizations evolved the *modus operandi* of suicide-homicide bombers in two concurrent yet specific ways, setting important precedents that precipitated al-Qaeda's strategy of relentless suicide terrorism in Iraq.

First, Palestinians legitimized suicide-homicide attacks, as "martyrdom operations," in the Sunni-Muslim world. The Palestinian cause has always functioned as a galvanizing Islamic issue, particularly for Sunni-Arab countries. As a result, the Palestinian use of suicide terrorism before and during *al-Aqsa intifada* had a direct effect on the general population of the Sunni-Arab world concerning how it viewed the "martyrdom operation." As support for martyrdom operations in Palestinian society increased, they accordingly found wide support across the Sunni-Arab world (as well as in the Islamic world in general). By 2002, as one analyst recognized, "[m]artyrdom [had] replaced Palestinian independence as the main focus of the Arab media."⁴² Palestinian terror organizations effectively utilized the media to spread acceptance of a *modus operandi* that had previously been used in the Islamic world exclusively by Shi'a organizations,⁴³ and which deployed suicide-homicide attackers minimally and cautiously.⁴⁴ The

⁴¹ Hezbollah launched its first suicide-homicide attack 11 months after Da'awa 17—a group that attacked Iraqi government targets, and most likely did so with the aid of the Pasdaran, similarly to Hezbollah in its campaigns against Western forces.

⁴² David Brooks, "The Culture of Martyrdom: How Suicide Bombing Became not just a Means but an End," *The Atlantic Monthly* 289, no. 6 (2002): 19.

⁴³ Moreover, martyrdom has traditionally played a much larger role in Shi'a Islam than Sunni Islam. For example, Shi'a Muslims celebrate Ashura, which commemorates the "martyrdom" of Hussein at the Battle of Karbala in 860.

⁴⁴ In the late 1980s, Hezbollah began to downplay its promotion of martyrdom within the population in Southern Lebanon. Hezbollah's spiritual advisor, Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah even issued a *fatwa* (Islamic decree) authorizing martyrdom operations "only on special occasions" due to a fear of over "exaggerated use [by] over-

Sunni world's acceptance of the Palestinian twist of semantics that presents suicide-homicide attacks as "martyrdom operations" directly opened the door for all other militant-Sunni organizations' imitation.

Second, by turning the suicide-homicide *modus operandi* into a weapon of terror,⁴⁵ Palestinian organizations demonstrated the strategic pros of attacking soft targets, as well as garnered Islamic legitimacy for doing so. Suicide-terror attacks on Israeli civilians took the *modus operandi* to a new level. Audaciously outdoing the previous campaigns that used suicide-homicide operations, which specifically attacked military targets,⁴⁶ Palestinian organizations made it overt policy to target Israeli civilians *en masse*. Due to the religious undertones of its conflict with Israel, Palestinians received approval by Islamic authorities not only for launching "martyrdom operations," but also for targeting civilians.

The support for suicide terrorism from important Islamic authorities across the Sunni-Arab world served to solidify the legitimacy of such acts in the eyes of millions of people. Notably, the *fatwa* (Islamic decree) issued by Sheikh Yousef al-Qaradawi, a leading Sunni cleric,⁴⁷ supporting the use of suicide-homicide attacks on civilians, worked not only to buttress Palestinian employment of suicide-homicide bombers against Israeli civilians,⁴⁸ but also to

zealous youth." See Rafael Israeli, "A Manual of Islamic Fundamentalist Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 14, no. 4 (2002): 30.

⁴⁵ Recognized by Robert Baer in *The Cult of the Suicide Bomber*, prod. and dir. David Betty and Kevin Toolis, 1 hr. 35 min., Many Rivers Films, 2006.

⁴⁶ Prior to Palestinian use of suicide terrorism, Hezbollah and Amal in Lebanon and the LTTE in Sri Lanka used suicide-homicide attacks emphasizing military targets, with exceptions made for politicians.

⁴⁷ Al-Qaradawi is the Head of the European Council for Fatwa and Research, as well as the President of the International Association of Muslim Scholars.

⁴⁸ Referring to the importance of al-Qaradawi's role in legitimizing suicide terrorism, Hamas's current leader Khaled Mash'al states: "[Qaradawi's] unequivocal fatwa, the sheikh, may Allah reward him, considered martyrdom operations to be the most noble level of jihad. That was unparalleled support for the people of Palestine, because, brothers and sisters, you cannot imagine how difficult it is psychologically for a young Palestinian man or woman to sacrifice themselves or what is most dear to them, only to encounter a conflict in their minds and hearts as to whether they are on the path of righteousness, or whether they are committing a religious violation." See Khaled Mash'al, Al-Jazeera TV on 16 July 2007, trans. in Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), *Special Dispatch Series* No. 1672 (2007): accessed at <www.memri.org>.

somewhat close the debate within the greater Sunni world.⁴⁹ Recently, at a conference honoring him, al-Qaradawi recalled his role in providing Islamic legitimacy for suicide terrorism:

I support the Palestinian cause. I support the resistance and the jihad. I support Hamas, the Islamic Jihad, and Hizbullah...I support martyrdom operations, and this was the straw that broke the camel's back... Our brothers in Palestine were forced to resort to martyrdom operations. The divine destiny is just, and so it gave these brothers something the enemy lacks... Their enemy is bombing them from above and below...and all they want is [to sacrifice] their own lives. The Palestinian man or woman booby-trap themselves—they turn themselves into human bombs—and sacrifice themselves for the sake of Allah, in order to strike fear in the hearts of their enemies.⁵⁰

Additionally, the endorsement of suicide-homicide attacks by countless other prestigious Islamic authorities,⁵¹ and moreover the subsequent widespread acceptance of suicide-homicide bombers as shahids, effectively precluded other (Sunni) Islamic figures from offering any serious rebuttals. As a result, those that propel global-Islamist⁵² ideologies, particularly al-Qaeda, have taken note of the Palestinians' successes in employing suicide terrorism—regarding both strategic and political victories, as well as their greater propagandistic value among Muslims. Consequently, al-Qaeda has sought to adapt both the suicide-terror tactic and *istishhad* strategy for its own goals.

⁴⁹ Hafez notes: "Yussuf al-Qaradawi [has] declared jihad in Palestine as the individual obligation of every Muslim on many occasions during his weekly program on al-Jazeera entitled *al-Sharia wal-Haya* (Islamic Law and Life). His religious rulings regarding "martyrdom operations" aired on 23 December 2001 in a show entitled *al-Amaliyat al-Istishhadiyya fi Falastin* (Martyrdom Operations in Palestine) and on 31 May 2004 in a show entitled *al-Muslimun wal-Unf al-Siyasi* (Muslims and Political Violence). Yussuf al-Qaradawi's blessing for suicide bombings can be found in interviews with the Kuwaiti-based weekly, *Majallat al-Mujtama'a*, no. 1201 [1996] and the London-based monthly, *Falastin al-Muslima*, March 2002. In the latter, he rules that it is permissible for women to engage in suicide bombings. His religious rulings and publications can be found on his web site www.qaradawi.net." See Mohammed M. Hafez, "Dying to Be Martyrs: The Symbolic Dimension of Suicide Terrorism," in *Root Causes of Suicide Terrorism: The Globalization of Martyrdom*, ed. Ami Pedahzur (New York: Routledge, 2005), 77.

⁵⁰ Sheikh Yousef al-Qaradhawi, Al-Jazeera TV on 16 July 2007, trans. in MEMRI, *Special Dispatch Series* No. 1672 (2007): accessed at <www.memri.org>.

⁵¹ Hafez notes: "[in the book *al-Amaliyat al-Istishhadiyya fi Mizan al-Fiqhi* (Martyrdom Operations in Islamic Jurisprudence), Nawaf Hayel al-Takrouri] cites at least thirty-two religious ruling (fatwas) by Islamic scholars around the Muslim world supporting 'martyrdom operations' in Palestine." Hafez goes on to explain: "This is one of the most important books to be published on this subject...[because the author] cites historical and contemporary Islamic scholars that affirm that martyrdom is dependent on religious faith and [jihad] in the path of [Allah]. See Hafez, "Dying to Be Martyrs," 76.

⁵² "Islamist" refers to an individual or organization that subscribes to a political ideology based on the fundamental tenets of Islam. Furthermore, just as various interpretations of those tenets spawned a variety of Islamic sects, nearly an equally number of versions of Islamism or political Islam exist—whether, Salafi, revolutionary Shi'a, or otherwise.

Direct Links and al-Qaeda's Palestinian Aura

Contrary to popular belief, al-Qaeda's connection to the Palestinian cause and people is nothing new.⁵³ After all, al-Qaeda's founder, Sheik Abdallah Azzam (al-Filastini) came from a village outside Jenin in the disputed territories. Al-Qaeda's pre-9/11 chief of operations, Abu Zubaydah, who sits in U.S. custody at Guantanamo Bay for his role in the 9/11 attacks, is Palestinian. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi pulled most of Tawhid wal-Jihad's⁵⁴ original lieutenants from Palestinian groups operating in the Levant.⁵⁵ Even al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian-born Bedouin, claimed his *hamula* (clan) originated from the Jerusalem area.⁵⁶ Predating al-Qaeda's founding, the first known PIJ suicide-homicide bomber plot in 1986 called for using a bomb built by an "Afghan-Alum" *mujahid*.⁵⁷ On April 30, 2003, al-Qaeda and Hamas launched a co-sponsored suicide-terror attack against a popular Israeli pub in Tel Aviv, killing three and wounding over 50.⁵⁸ These are just a few examples of Palestinians involved with al-Qaeda or vice versa. However, the connection goes beneath the surface, and past the superficiality of individual members and network-affiliated groups. A Palestinian aura has embedded itself deep within the al-Qaeda ideology, organization, network and most importantly its burgeoning movement.

Al-Qaeda intends to mimic the Palestinian experience with *jihad*, *istishhad* and ultimately strategic success, yet on a macro-global level. Al-Qaeda recognizes that making *jihad* and *istishhad* the crux of its strategy can set the foundation for realizing a durable global movement. Before 9/11, al-Qaeda saw its main purpose as training and financing like-minded Islamists to

⁵³ Many terrorism analysts frequently comment on al-Qaeda's supposed disconnect from the Palestinian issue.

⁵⁴ Meaning "Monotheism and Holy War," *Tawhid wal-Jihad* eventually transitioned into al-Qaeda in the Land of Two Rivers—also commonly called al-Qaeda in Iraq.

⁵⁵ Alexis Debat, "Osama bin Laden's Heir," *National Interest* 80 (2005): 155-157.

⁵⁶ Karmon.

⁵⁷ Notes from ICT seminar on "The Global Jihad," given by Reuven Paz, in Herzliya, Israel on 21 June 2005.

⁵⁸ See Appendix A in Benjamin T. Acosta, "The Palestinian Shahid and the Development of the Model 21st Century Islamic Terrorist" (M.A. thesis, California State University-San Bernardino, 2008), 225-233.

wage *jihad*.⁵⁹ Since 9/11, bin Laden and al-Zawahiri have simply sought to motivate as many as possible within the general *um'ma* (global Islamic community) to participate in terrorism, if not a “martyrdom operation.” Al-Qaeda expert Rohan Gunaratna summarizes: “Bin Laden directed the attack on America’s most outstanding landmarks to inspire and incite the wider Muslim community and to show the way to the other Islamist movements.”⁶⁰

With its ability to strike on a spectacular scale greatly reduced, al-Qaeda’s post-9/11 attacks have increasingly resembled more the *modus operandi* of the Palestinian suicide-homicide bomber than the Hezbollah-inspired simultaneous and large-scale attack, which characterized al-Qaeda’s own style from August 1998 to early 2003.⁶¹ The July 2005 attacks in London bore resemblance to components of both methods, as they included four simultaneous suicide-homicide bomber attacks, yet targeted common transportation systems. In Iraq, al-Qaeda’s campaign has almost entirely looked Palestinian in mode—numerous individual bombers attacking average civilians on a seemingly daily basis. Sometimes the influence is explicit. For example, on the eve of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, a leader of al-Qaeda’s female suicide-homicide bomber squads stated: “We are preparing for the new strike announced by our leaders, and I declare that it will make America forget...the September 11 attacks. The idea came from the success of martyr operations carried out by young Palestinian women in the occupied territories.”⁶²

⁵⁹ Rohan K. Gunaratna, “The New al-Qaida: Developments in the Post-9/11 Evolution of al-Qaida,” in *Post-Modern Terrorism: Trends, Scenarios and Future Threats*, ed. Boaz Ganor (Herzliya, Israel: Publishing House, 2005), 47.

⁶⁰ Gunaratna, 43.

⁶¹ One should not downplay the influence Hezbollah has had on al-Qaeda’s style in simultaneously attacking multiple symbolic targets. The primary contention here is that Palestinian shahids paved the way for Sunni groups to target civilians using suicide-homicide attackers. Al-Qaeda’s current reduced capability, however, has led it to look closer at the Palestinian model on a tactical/operational level.

⁶² “Um Osama” quoted in “Bin Laden Has Set Up Female Suicide Squads: Report,” *Arab News* (Dubai), 13 March 2003, cited in Mia Bloom, “Female Suicide Bombers: A Global Trend,” *Dædalus* (Winter 2007): 99.

The shift in method, however, goes to the top. Bin Laden has sought to strategically redirect tactical approach and return to al-Qaeda's rhetorical roots. In May 2008, bin Laden released a tape stating:

To Western nations...this speech is to understand the core reason of the war between our civilization and your civilians. I mean *the Palestinian cause*...[which] is the major issue for my (Islamic) nation. It was an important element in fueling me from the beginning and the 19 [9/11 hijackers] with a great motive to fight for those subjected to injustice and the oppressed [emphasis added].⁶³

Bin Laden's statement demonstrates a refocusing of al-Qaeda's attention; moreover, it echoes the distant words of Abdallah Azzam, who once stated:

Our presence in Afghanistan today, which is the accomplishment of the imperative of jihad and our devotion to the struggle, does not mean that we have forgotten Palestine. Palestine is our beating heart, it comes even before Afghanistan in our minds, our hearts, our feelings and our faith.⁶⁴

Marking the sixth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, bin Laden called on righteous Muslims to participate in the "caravan" of martyrs.⁶⁵ Playing off Azzam's pamphlet, *Join the Caravan*, which called on Muslims to join the Mujahedin's *jihad* in Afghanistan, bin Laden's call demonstrates al-Qaeda's commitment to a new *istishhad*-based strategy, replacing Azzam's *jihad*-based strategy. In effect, al-Qaeda has shifted focus from the *mujahid* to the *shahid*.

Reminiscent of the Palestinian movement's own shift away from the *feda'i* to the *shahid*, al-Qaeda intends to duplicate a major play from the Palestinian playbook. It seeks to empower the individual.⁶⁶

⁶³ "Usama bin Laden: Al Qaeda Will Continue Holy War Until Liberation of Palestine," *Associated Press*, 16 May 2008.

⁶⁴ Quoted in Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 147, cited in Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 3.

⁶⁵ Lee Keath, "Bin Laden Wants 'Caravan' of Martyrs," *Associated Press*, 11 September 2007.

⁶⁶ The *mujahid* and the *feda'i* both represent Islamic fighters who do not actively seek to die during *jihad*; the *shahid* does. Additionally, the *mujahid* and *feda'i* represent more of a participation in a group, whereas the *shahid* stands for any individual willing to answer Islam's call to *jihad*.

The “Occupation” of Dar al-Islam, Defensive Jihad and Fard Ayn

Today, al-Qaeda’s ideology and strategy revolve around the individual.⁶⁷ Since its founding, al-Qaeda has presented *jihad* through the ideological tenet of *fard ayn* (individual obligation). Lacking a real-world method that truly lived up to its abstract ideation, deliberate “martyrdom,” as expressed through a suicide-homicide attack, offers such an outlet to express the undeniable fulfillment of one’s individual obligation to an Islamic calling to *jihad*. As researchers Yoram Schweitzer and Sari Goldstein Ferber note, “The concept of sacrificing one’s life in the name of Allah (*istishhad*) became a supreme organizational ideal within al-Qaeda and then spread to its operatives and affiliates in what might be described as a self-reproducing, self-disseminating virus.”⁶⁸ Remote and mostly disconnected from the wide variety of affiliated organizations within its global “network of networks,”⁶⁹ al-Qaeda maintains a small core leadership hierarchy. Furthermore, bin Laden and al-Zawahiri, most likely camped out in the tribally administered areas of North West Pakistan, do not intend on overseeing their war with the West and the secular leaders of the Islamic world to its finish. Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri understand that they lead a war of patience, resolve and ultimately one that pits the will of the individual Muslim against that of various nation-states and the world’s remaining superpower.

In order for individuals to receive social support for waging *jihad*, it requires establishing the necessary interpretation of Islam. Al-Qaeda has thus promoted the stance that its war with the West represents a defensive *jihad*, which makes participation in it, whether physically or financially, a *fard ayn* of each and every Muslim. Going back to the teachings of al-Qaeda’s founder, Abdallah Azzam, *fard ayn* has played a central role in al-Qaeda’s temperament concerning “occupied” Islamic lands; Azzam argued, “jihad will remain an individual obligation

⁶⁷ Schweitzer and Goldstein Ferber, 11 and 40.

⁶⁸ Schweitzer and Goldstein Ferber, 9.

⁶⁹ CIA’s Counter-Terrorism Center coined this term in the late 1990s. Gunaratna, 48.

until all other lands which formerly were Muslim come back to us and Islam reigns within them once again. Before us lie Palestine, Bukhara, Lebanon, Chad, Eritrea, Somalia, the Philippines, Burma, South Yemen, Tashkent, Andalusia.”⁷⁰ Localized social reinforcement of these interpretations has therefore become paramount to al-Qaeda effectively executing its global strategy.

Like al-Qaeda, the Islamist-Palestinian organizations view *jihad* as *fard ayn*.⁷¹ While Azzam and before him Muslim Brotherhood-ideologue Sayyid Qutb articulated the notion of *fard ayn*, Hamas and PIJ more than others put the doctrine into practice beginning in 1993 and reaching its quintessence during *al-Aqsa intifada*. Serving as an example of an individual’s obligation to free the land of *dar al-Islam*—further even, to one’s ultimate sacrifice for the cause—Palestinian shahids/suicide-homicide bombers opened the floor to al-Qaeda’s own shahids.

Indeed, al-Qaeda did not begin employing suicide-homicide operations until its August 1998 attacks on the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Al-Qaeda’s first operations inside the U.S., the assassination of popular Rabbi and former-Israeli Knesset member Meir Kahane in November 1990 and the first attempt to destroy the World Trade Center in February 1993, did not involve suicide terrorists. During the 1990s, al-Qaeda’s modes of operation remained in their formative state.

The Palestinian introduction of the *shahid* as a suicide-homicide bomber to the Sunni world during the mid-1990s surely had an impact on al-Qaeda’s decision to start using them in 1998. After all, at this time, most of al-Qaeda’s top leadership had been in the *jihad* business either before or since the Afghan-Soviet war, yet suicide-homicide attacks did not occur during

⁷⁰ Quoted in Kepel, 147, and cited in Sageman, 3.

⁷¹ Mohammed M. Hafez, *Manufacturing Human Bombs: The Making of Palestinian Suicide Bombers* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute for Peace Press, 2006), 36.

that conflict, or directly after it when al-Qaeda first began operating as an international-terror organization. Al-Qaeda designed its attacks in the late 1990s and early 2000s to shock, yet they did not occur relentlessly.

Uniting organizational strategy with the motivations of individuals requires coordinating social forces and securing cultural accommodation. To launch suicide-terror attacks on a large scale, massive interaction with the related constituency has to exist. Scholar Ami Pedahzur contends:

In cultural terms, suicide terrorism can thus be described as a result of a spiraling feedback process between an organization and its constituency. In order to sustain a suicide campaign, every terrorist organization needs the support of the community. Raising such support depends upon the organization's success in instilling ideas among members of the society about the importance of martyrdom and glorifying these notions by religious, nationalistic or other means.⁷²

Palestinian suicide-terror campaigns against Israel received international Sunni support for targeting Israeli civilians. Thus al-Qaeda in its macro-scale suicide-terror war had to gain the same type of support for targeting a broader defined enemy.

Al-Qaeda's Adaptation of the Culture of Martyrdom

A related culture of martyrdom rests as the sole variable distinguishing organizations that employ suicide-homicide attacks from those that do not.⁷³ Furthermore, the social sustenance a suicide-terror campaign receives from an affiliated culture of martyrdom stands as a general testament to the support a constituency gives to its representative body. The symbiosis between organizations and individuals ultimately is communicated through cultural symbols and by the social accommodation in motivating and sanctioning behavior. Palestinian Media Watch director Itamar Marcus identifies three components imperative to motivating suicide terrorism: create an

⁷² Ami Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism* (Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 2005), 163.

⁷³ Assaf Moghadam, "The Roots of Suicide Terrorism: A Multi-Causal Approach," in *Root Causes of Suicide Terrorism: The Globalization of Martyrdom*, ed. Ami Pedahzur (New York: Routledge, 2005), 98.

enemy, legitimate killing the enemy, and motivate a willingness to die while killing the enemy.⁷⁴ Concurringly, researcher Assaf Moghadam recognizes, “two sets of motives [must] converge...a willingness to kill...[and] a willingness to die.”⁷⁵ The Palestinian culture of martyrdom perpetuates and ensures the function of these three components. First, the culture of martyrdom alters the defined ‘other’ to represent an explicit ‘enemy.’ Second, the culture of martyrdom legitimizes the killing of this enemy by framing its intentions as specifically threatening to the Palestinian collective identity and generally sinister in its dealings with the world. Third, the culture of martyrdom motivates and sanctions the willingness of individuals to die in the process of killing the sinister enemy.

Installed in various mosques and Islamic centers in urban areas of European cities, within underground political organizations in Middle Eastern capitals, and infested in South Asian madrassas alike, Islamic fanatics have decentralized the culture of martyrdom, just as al-Qaeda has done to its organizational structure. In contrast to the original Palestinian version, al-Qaeda’s international jihadi-Salafi culture of martyrdom is less overt. Rather it operates in the shadows of Western and Islamic societies, and flourishes more as a satellite culture of martyrdom and virtual culture of martyrdom, wherein adherents can turn on an Arabic-language news outlet or enter an online Islamist chat-room to get a dose of an Islamist worldview. Indeed, global communications and media have redrawn the boundaries of cultural enclaves. No longer are cultures society-specific, but instead oftentimes function as transnational forces in their own right.

⁷⁴ Notes from ICT seminar on “Modern and Post-Modern Terrorism Strategies,” given by Boaz Ganor and Itamar Marcus, in Herzliya, Israel on 9 June 2005).

⁷⁵ Assaf Moghadam, “Palestinian Suicide Terrorism in the Second Intifada: Motivations and Organizational Aspects,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 26, no. 2 (2003): 68-69.

Framing Conflict

As noted above, motivating a willingness to die while killing first entails defining the enemy and explaining why those that comprise it need to die. Thus, while political value provided by suicide-homicide attacks ultimately works as the greatest catalyst to organizations' continued use of the *modus operandi*, motivating individuals to carry out such operations requires continuous framing of "social ills." Commenting on the required preparation for launching effective campaigns, Hafez notes:

Mobilizing collective action consists of more than calling on people to rise up or take to the streets; it involves framing social ills as threats and opportunities for action, networking among activists and their constituencies, building formal and informal organizations, forging collective identities and alliances, making claims against opponents and states, and motivating individuals to assume personal costs when the benefits of success are not readily apparent.⁷⁶

In this regard, connecting the individual to the collective identity marks step one. Step two entails converging the individual obligation to fixing the social ills.

Most Islamist denominations commonly frame the world as though it teeters on the brink of an apocalyptic struggle between the forces of Islam and a sinister "Zionist-Crusader" alliance. Al-Qaeda's rhetoric has shaped up no differently, often warning that Muslims must defend their religion against Zionist-Crusader aggression. In 1998, the World Islamic Front for Jihad against Jews and Crusaders, an umbrella network headed by al-Qaeda, stated:

The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies—civilians and military—is an obligation incumbent upon every Muslim who can do it and in any country—this until the Aqsa Mosque [in Jerusalem] and Holy Mosque [in Mecca] are liberated from their grip, and until their armies withdraw from all the lands of Islam, defeated, shattered, and unable to threaten any Muslim. This is in accordance with the Word of the Most High—"fight the pagans all together as they fight you all together" [Qur'an 9:36] and..."Fight them until there is no more tumult or oppression, and [all] religion belongs to Allah [Qur'an 8:39].⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq*, 16.

⁷⁷ *The World Islamic Front's Declaration to Wage Jihad against the Jews and Crusaders* in Raymond Ibrahim, ed. and trans., *The Al-Qaeda Reader* (New York: Broadway Books, 2007), 13.

Such statements from al-Qaeda's leadership, commonplace since 9/11, clearly articulate who their enemy is, why they are an enemy, when victory against this enemy will be apparent, and a divine obligation for all Muslims to participate in bringing about victory. Simply, al-Qaeda seeks to energize as many individual Muslims as possible to fight the Christian, Jewish and other non-Muslim peoples that "threaten" Islam. Regarding the "occupation" of *dar al-Islam*, Israel, the U.S., Spain, Russia, India, Christian Lebanon, the Philippines and other non-Muslim nation-states controlling "Muslim land" become the obvious targets. At the forefront, however, sit the U.S. and Israel. Al-Qaeda suggests that the U.S. designs its foreign policy to "serve the Jews' petty state, [and divert] attention from its occupation of Jerusalem and the murder of Muslims there."⁷⁸ Islamists have elevated the supposed Jewish threat to a more severe status. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, coupled with various Qur'an suras and Hadith sayings that promote anti-Jewish beliefs,⁷⁹ has allowed Islamists to frame all of the Islamic world's problems within the context of a Jewish "conspiracy," in which the U.S. maintains a key supportive position.⁸⁰

Islamist entities like al-Qaeda understand the important part the "other" plays in solidifying a collective identity—in this case, an Islamic identity as represented by the *um'ma*. Judaism, one of Islam's earliest foes, additionally fills this role today for Islamists. In March 2003, bin Laden warned to his fellow Muslims:

One of the most important objectives of the new Crusader attack is to pave the way and prepare the region, after its fragmentation, for the establishment of...the Greater State of

⁷⁸ In Ibrahim, 12.

⁷⁹ For example, one Hadith saying quotes Mohammed: "The last hour would not come unless the Muslims will fight against the Jews and the Muslims would kill them and until the Jews would hide themselves behind a stone or a tree and a stone or tree would say: Muslim, [oh] the servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me; come and kill him." In Ram Swarup, *Understanding the Hadith: The Sacred Traditions of Islam* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2002), 215. See also Qur'an 5:64 on page 19 of this paper.

⁸⁰ In December 1998, bin Laden argued: "The Jews have succeeded in obligating American and British Christians to strike Iraq...all the biggest [U.S] officials are Jews—have led the Christians to clip the wings of the Islamic world." See in Ibrahim, 276. On 18 October 2003, bin Laden released a tape to al-Jazeera that stated: "[Bush] is carrying out the demands of the Zionist lobby that helped him into the White House—that is, annihilate the military might of Iraq because it is too close to the Jews in occupied Palestine...he is [also] concealing his own ambitions and the ambitions of the Zionist lobby in their desire for oil." In Ibrahim, 211.

Israel, whose border will include extensive areas of Iraq and Egypt, through Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, all of Palestine, and large parts of the Land of the Two Holy Places...What is happening to our people in Palestine is merely a model that the Zionist-American alliance wishes to impose upon the rest of the region: the killing of men, women and children...People [there] live in perpetual fear and paralyzing terror, awaiting death at any moment from a missile or shell that will destroy their homes, kill their sisters, and bury their babies alive...The founding of "Greater Israel" means the surrender of the countries of the region to the Jews...⁸¹

Again, Sheikh Qaradawi has lent his authority to confirming the Islamist viewpoint; on the conflict with Judaism, he argues:

We do not disassociate Islam with war...We are fighting in the name of Islam... They fight us with Judaism, so we should fight them with Islam. They fight us with the Torah, so we should fight them with the Koran. If they say "the Temple," we should say "[the] Aqsa Mosque." If they say: "We glorify the Sabbath," we should say: "We glorify the Friday." This is how it should be. Religion must lead the war. This is the only way we can win.⁸²

Referring to Islamic suicide terrorism, expert on Islamist movements Reuven Paz contends that

[t]he perception of the struggle between Islam and Judaism is actually the main justification for the general use of terrorism, and particularly for suicide bombing... The core perception of the Islamist Arab groups is that they face a global conspiracy against the Islamic world... [A]fter the establishment of Israel and the renaissance of the Islamist groups since the [1960s] and [1970s] this conspiracy came to be viewed as a constant and perhaps eternal struggle between Judaism and Islam.⁸³

Giving credence to his conspiratorial rants among his Muslim audience, bin Laden employs

Qur'an suras to buttress his evidence against Judaism. For example, he states:

The Jews have lied about the Creator, and even more so about His creations. The Jews are murderers of the prophets, the violators of agreements...These are the Jews: usurers and whoremongers...Allah said of them: "Have they a share in [Allah's] dominion? If they have, they will not give up so much [of it] as would equal a spot on the stone of a date" [Qur'an 4:53].⁸⁴

⁸¹ In Ibrahim, 276-7.

⁸² Sheikh Yousef al-Qaradawi, Qatar TV on 25 February 2006, trans. in MEMRI, *Special Dispatch Series* No. 1102 (2006): accessed at <www.memri.org>.

⁸³ Reuven Paz, "The Islamic Legitimacy of Palestinian Suicide Terrorism," in *Countering Suicide Terrorism*, updated ed., ed. Boaz Ganor (Herzliya, Israel: ICT, 2007), 61-62.

⁸⁴ Usama bin Laden, "Sermon for the Feast of the Sacrifice," Al-Jazeera TV on 16 February 2003, trans. in MEMRI, *Special Dispatch Series* No. 476 (6 March 2003), <http://www.memri.org>. I would like to thank Dr. Richard Saccone for identifying this sura as Qur'an 4:53.

By designating an incorrigible enemy, whom even Allah condemns, and consistently articulating this enemy's sinister goals, al-Qaeda intends to create a sense of dire urgency among Muslims to defend Islam, so that they seriously contemplate the prospects of participating in *jihad*, if not pursuing *istishhad*.

Like its role in the operational advancement and legitimization of suicide terrorism, Palestinian organizations and society have helped to construct the commonly accepted anti-Jewish narrative that currently exists in the Islamic world. For example, Hamas touts the traditional anti-Semitic line in its 1988 Charter, stating that

[the Jews] stood behind the French Revolution, the Communist Revolution, and most of the revolutions we have heard and hear about, here and there... [I]t has become common knowledge that [they caused] World War I...[and] World War II... [They also] inspired the formation of the United Nations and the Security Council instead of the League of Nations, in order to rule the world through them. No war broke out anywhere without [Jews'] fingerprints on it.⁸⁵

Predating al-Qaeda's similar practice by a decade, Hamas goes on to quote the Qur'an, citing sura 5:64: "So often as they shall kindle a fire for war, Allah shall extinguish it; and they shall set their minds to act corruptly in the earth, but Allah loveth not the corrupt doers."⁸⁶ To connect the Quranic passages to present-day, Hamas makes statements such as: "The Nazism of the Jews includes [even] women and children; it terrorizes everyone. These Jews ruin people's livelihoods, steal their money, and their honor."⁸⁷ Hamas, like al-Qaeda, seeks to arouse a sense of duty among average Muslims. Hamas declares: "jihad [in Palestine is] an individual obligation for every Muslim. In the confrontation with the usurpation of Palestine by the Jews, we must raise the banner of Jihad."⁸⁸ With the massive media exposure that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict receives across the Islamic world, Hamas and Fatah's beliefs and rhetoric commonly get

⁸⁵ Hamas charter in Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 189-190.

⁸⁶ Hamas charter in Mishal and Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas*, 190.

⁸⁷ Hamas charter in Mishal and Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas*, 188.

⁸⁸ Hamas charter in Mishal and Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas*, 184-5.

dispersed along with breaking news. Their views of Israel, Jews and Zionism accordingly reach countless households across the Arab and Islamic worlds.

Establishing a nexus between the potential jihadi and the ‘larger than life’ struggle of the *um’ma* provides an opportune way to increase the amount of new jihadis—particularly within communities already disaffected by one of the defined enemies of Islam. Furthermore, contrasting Western society with an idealized Islamic one, gives those Muslims, who might find the West disillusioning, immoral or corrupt, an additional impetus for participating in something that aims at “correcting” these ills. However, Israel’s “occupation” of *al-Aqsa* Mosque in Jerusalem, the third holiest site in Islam, and the U.S. “occupation” of the Holy Mosque in Mecca, the holiest site in Islam, stand as the two most prominent Islamist grievances that arouse interest and motivation among nascent jihadis. Without surprise, an overwhelming majority of al-Qaeda’s attacks have targeted either U.S. or Jewish/Israeli interests.⁸⁹ Ultimately, al-Qaeda has learned from Islamist Palestinians how to shape its arguments to best direct the individual to the decision that one must personally defend Islam at all costs—even if it means paying the price with his or her own life.

Social Networks

In both the Palestinian and jihadi-Salafi cases, social networks have played increasingly prominent roles in facilitating suicide terrorism, largely because they provide a social space for immersing individuals in the concepts of *jihad* and *istishhad*. For Palestinians, the culture of martyrdom has influenced general society to the point that organizations, since the late 1990s, no longer seek potential shahids but instead select them from a long line of willing and eager candidates. Pedahzur notes: “[today,] suicide bombers are not recruited, nor do they undergo a

⁸⁹ While many acknowledge the U.S. as a primary target of al-Qaeda attacks, many analysts fail to recognize that al-Qaeda has consistently targeted Jewish targets around the world (e.g. its attacks in Tunisia, Turkey, Morocco, Kenya, etc.).

training process. They are peripheral figures in the network who join the ranks ad hoc from the environment close to the network, for the purpose of carrying out a suicide attack.”⁹⁰ Similarly, al-Qaeda shahids are usually not recruited per se. Rather, a future *shahid* joins a social network,⁹¹ which provides space that immerses the individual in the jihadi lifestyle—where one learns its beliefs, values, attitudes, goals, rhetoric, argumentation and puts him or her in contact with a dispatcher. Initially lured in by identity-based religious, political and social issues, the individual over time⁹² accepts the ideological framing, solutions and prescriptions of those around him or her. Eventually, if needed, the individual volunteers for a martyrdom operation. The culture of martyrdom, often within the confines of a social network, succeeds in awakening the individual’s *duty* to take matters into his or her own hands.

The Palestinian Legacy Today: Suicide Terrorism as a Global Phenomenon

Since the onslaught of *al-Aqsa intifada* in September 2000 and the 9/11 attacks a year later, suicide attacks have dramatically increased. Palestinians launched more suicide-terror attacks than any other movement until al-Qaeda in Iraq surpassed them in late 2005.⁹³ Today, organizations affiliated with al-Qaeda’s global *jihad* continue to comprise the majority of those launching such attacks. While many credit al-Qaeda’s 9/11 attacks with inspiring these affiliated organizations to continue bin Laden’s war after the U.S. began its campaign against the core Afghan/Pakistan-based al-Qaeda organization,⁹⁴ many fail to recognize the role Palestinians played in highlighting the *shahid*/suicide-homicide bomber’s various utilities.

⁹⁰ See Ami Pedahzur and Arie Perliger, “The Changing Nature of Suicide Attacks: A Social Network Perspective,” *Social Forces* 84, no. 4 (2006): 2000.

⁹¹ Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 121-124.

⁹² One should note, in the Palestinian case social networks are usually based around the *hamula* (clan).

⁹³ See Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, *Anti-Israeli Terrorism, 2006: Data, Analysis and Trends* (2007): 51-55, accessed at <www.terrorism-info.org.il>; see also Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 327, note 33; Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq*, 3.

⁹⁴ Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, 116.

Without the precedents set by Palestinians, al-Qaeda's global *istishhad*-based *jihad* would have required much more preparation. Palestinian organizations perfected the process of deploying suicide-homicide bombers, as they went from recruiting to selecting *shahid* candidates within a decade. Palestinian organizations convinced not only Palestinian society, but also large portions of the greater Sunni world, that suicide-homicide attackers truly embody “martyrs” and thus suicide-homicide attacks are really “martyrdom operations.” Similarly, Palestinians garnered international support from prestigious Islamic authorities—ultimately, leading to the Sunni legitimization of suicide-homicide attacks against civilians, i.e. suicide terrorism. Furthermore, by demonizing Israelis and Jews, Palestinian society helped foster conspiracy theories, and other forms of conflict framing, that encouraged Muslims' violent response.

In formulating a unique *modus operandi*, al-Qaeda synthesized Hezbollah's symbolic and simultaneous targeting with the Palestinians' mass targeting of civilians. However, one finds it highly unlikely that Hezbollah has functioned as the primary organizational inspiration for Sunni suicide terrorists, considering the great disdain such individuals regularly have for Shi'a Islam—particularly the followers of al-Qaeda's movement in Iraq. Characterized by suicide-homicide bombers attacking Israeli-civilian buses, cafés, malls and other pedestrian targets, the Palestinian *shahid* became a premier icon in the Sunni world. The Palestinian *shahid*, ingrained in the mind of anyone who viewed Arabic-language satellite television, particularly during *al-Aqsa intifada* (2000-2005), surely offered an important inspiration on its own. Additionally, the 9/11 attacks, which did not involve suicide-homicide bombers, but rather suicidal hijackers and suicide-terror pilots,⁹⁵ exemplify the grandiose-jihadi terror attack. But, for the smaller, localized groups that carried out most of al-Qaeda's post-9/11 operations, the Palestinian *shahid* offered a more tenable model.

⁹⁵ One could argue that only the pilots committed suicide during the 9/11 attacks.

Ultimately, the Palestinian suicide-homicide bomber, as the icon of *al-Aqsa intifada*, symbolized the Palestinian cause and people, and in doing so produced a micro-scale prototype for terrorist organizations such as those within al-Qaeda's international network. Thus, the triumph of Palestinian suicide-homicide bombers has had anything but an isolated effect. Terrorism, and particularly suicide-homicide attacks, stand as continuous learning processes for the global-terror community. Accordingly, since the early Palestinian suicide-terror campaigns in the mid-1990s, popular Islamic concepts of martyrdom and jihadi suicide terrorism have maintained a continuous escalation toward a marriage of the synonymous. Already, al-Qaeda has adopted the socio-cultural and religious lessons put into practice by Palestinians (e.g. *fard ayn*, conflict framing, etc.) and merged them with bin Laden's universal message, which has rapidly disseminated across the *um'ma* via satellite television, the internet and other means of contemporary mass communication. Al-Qaeda's shift in focus from *jihad* to *istishhad* represents a Palestinianization of the international jihadi-Salafi movement. Moreover, it signals that the advancements in suicide terrorism made by the Palestinian *shahid*/suicide-homicide bomber and its complementary culture of martyrdom will likely continue to inspire and foment imitation and therefore remain having reverberating effects for years to come.

CONCLUSION

Suicide Terrorism as a Fixture of the 21st Century?

Through its reemergence as a significant force in the Islamic world, political Islam returned various concepts to the forefront of social discourse and practice, including violent ones like *jihad*, *fard ayn* and *istishhad*. These notions have notably produced violent phenomena such as suicide-homicide bombings, suicidal hijackings and beheadings. While Shi'a-Muslims initially developed the suicide-homicide *modus operandi*, and some nominally secular organizations have employed such attacks,⁹⁶ nearly forty Sunni-Muslim organizations have used suicide-homicide attacks since the Palestinians started doing so in 1993.⁹⁷ Moreover, following the precedents set by Palestinian organizations, Sunni militants and terrorists today carry out the overwhelming majority of suicide-homicide attacks in an increasing number of locations and with a decreasing level of targeting discrimination. That suicide-homicide attacks originated with Shi'a Muslims and currently the Shi'a in Iraq have not resorted to suicide terrorism further demonstrates that the *modus operandi* has nearly become an exclusively Sunni phenomenon.

Indeed, without Sunni organizations, suicide terrorism would probably arouse minimal international concern. The Palestinians' *al-Aqsa intifada* would not have had the impact that it did; the wall separating Israel from the disputed territories surely would not stand, and Hamas would not enjoy the popular support that it currently does among Palestinians and other Arabs and Muslims. Al-Qaeda's embassy, USS Cole and 9/11 attacks would not have happened in the

⁹⁶ The Shi'a Muslim employers of suicide-homicide attacks include Iranian soldiers, the Iraqi Da'awa 17 and Hezbollah and Amal in Lebanon. The "secular" employers of suicide-homicide attacks include the Syrian Socialist-National Party, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), Fatah, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine; one should note, however, all of these organizations have employed some kind of religious or cultic symbolism in attracting individuals to carry out attacks. Fatah and PFLP even set up new Islamist "brigades," to launch suicide-homicide attacks on their behalves.

⁹⁷ For a comprehensive list of suicide-homicide attacks worldwide from December 1981 to June 2005, see Ami Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism* (Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 2005), 241-253.

manner that they did, if at all. Iraq's reconstruction would not face the severe challenges that it does, as Sunni suicide-terror attacks (e.g. Golden-Dome Mosque attack and Ashura festival attack) have led to major sectarian clashes. The United Kingdom (UK) would not have faced the horror of British citizens killing themselves in order to murder fellows Britons. Seemingly endless, one could go on with scores of examples, as Sunni organizations have launched numerous attacks in Indonesia, Russia, Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, Morocco, Spain, Tunisia, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the Philippines, Singapore, Croatia and elsewhere. Disregarding the work of Sunni organizations over the last 15 years, suicide-homicide attacks have struck only in Lebanon, Kuwait, Sri Lanka, India, Argentina and on the battlefields of the Iran-Iraq War.⁹⁸ With an international-Sunni culture of martyrdom shadowing the dispersal of suicide terrorism across the globe, a high likelihood exists that the *modus operandi* will continue to play a part in Islamist behavior in the foreseeable future. The Palestinian shahid's suicide terror 'MO' has made its mark, and al-Qaeda intends to duplicate it across the globe. Countering suicide terrorism therefore will require well thought-out strategies that employ a collection of responses that correspond to the varying facilitators and perpetrators of the *modus operandi*.

The Three Pillars of Suicide-Terror:

Individuals' Ends as Organizational Means to Collective Goals

Recently on February 4, 2008, two Palestinian suicide-homicide bombers launched an attack on a small shopping center in Dimona, Israel, killing a woman and wounding 40. A day later, *al-Hayat al-Jadida* (The New Life), the official newspaper of Palestinian Authority (PA) praised the terrorists, stating: "The perpetrators of the operation died as shahids." The two other newspapers under PA control similarly hailed the suicide terrorists as shahids, publicly

⁹⁸ One can add Turkey to the list if one counts the PKK as secular, despite its solely Sunni membership.

bestowing upon them Islam's highest honor.⁹⁹ Considering that proponents of "peace" regularly deem PA President Mahmoud Abbas and his Fatah party the "moderates" within the Palestinian political arena, one should not expect popular Palestinian support for suicide terrorism to decrease anytime in the near future. Accordingly, Israel, like the United States (U.S.) in its fight against global jihadis, ought not patiently wait on "moderates" to correct the ills of "extremists," particularly when the two are oftentimes indistinguishable.

Nations-states targeted by suicide terrorism must work proactively to disable the utility of such attacks. Israel has sought to geographically disconnect itself from potential threats, yet it has done so at the cost of territory and principle, which in the long-run could have unimaginable consequences. Rather, Israel's "pre-separation Wall" counter-terrorism strategy represents a more strategically geared response to suicide terrorism: targeted assassinations of organizational leaders, dispatchers and bombmakers, demolition of the homes of suicide-terror perpetrators, and measures aimed at hindering collective support for terrorism in general and shahids/suicide-homicide bombers in particular.

Regarding the suicide-terror phenomenon, organizations function as the serial killer, individuals act as the killing instrument, and the sanctioning society/collective as the little voice that sounds off in both of their heads—encouraging them to go through with their murderous intentions. The *shahid* stands as a product of Palestinian collective identity/society, organizations/social networks, and individuals all which seek at various levels to pursue the goals of Palestinian *sammud*—namely, the destruction of the state of Israel via the return of "refugees" and the "liberation" of the Dome of the Rock and *al-Aqsa* Mosque. Similarly, international jihadis work under leadership and with the support of a transnational community. Not unlike Palestinian fanatics, international jihadis desire a complete retreat of infidel-states

⁹⁹ Yadid Berman, "PA Glorifies Dimona Terrorists," *Jerusalem Post*, 6 February 2008.

that “occupy” *dar al-Islam*. They too refuse to moderate their goals even slightly, instead choosing to “resist.” Palestinian shahids, in a sense, do their “death work” as performance artists in the presentation of *sammud*. Al-Qaeda-affiliated shahids do theirs in a macro-version of the same signaling game—pursuing political extortion via a war of attrition.

Employing suicide terrorism entails three imperative components: organizational strategic necessity, motivated individuals and a complementary culture of martyrdom. These multiple forces behind suicide terrorism accordingly necessitate distinct responses. Disabling the three pillars of suicide terror, both at the localized and international levels, thus requires *detering* the collective, *preempting* organizations and *preventing* individuals from carrying out their distinct roles.

Countering Pillar One: Preempting Terror Organizations

When dealing with terrorist organizations, negotiation never represents a forward-looking counterstrategy. Caving to terrorists’ demands only “invites more attacks.”¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, negotiating with organizations that once employed, but no longer use or advocate, terror tactics similarly sends a message that terrorism can one day provide profitable gains for those who use it. Negotiation therefore cannot exist with organizations that either currently, previously or prospectively might use terror tactics to advance their strategy. Rather, nation-states afflicted by terror tactics need a proactive preemption policy that promises to either capture or kill terror leaders prior to or directly after a terror attack. Hafez notes:

Given that suicide bombings are a strategic choice by militant organizations aiming to coerce opponents into making concessions, it would be a mistake to grant major political concessions during a campaign of suicide attacks. Such compromise confirms the viability of this strategy...Only after Israel refused to make major concessions and escalated its counterinsurgency against the militants did Palestinian factions begin talking about a cease-fire.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Mohammed M. Hafez, *Manufacturing Human Bombs: The Making of Palestinian Suicide Bombers* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute for Peace Press, 2006), 70.

¹⁰¹ Hafez, *Manufacturing Human Bombs*, 70.

But, even if a nation-state seeks a “cease-fire,” any truce should not mark recognition or the initiation of normalization. Nation-states that recognize organizations that have once employed terrorism will do so only to their detriment, as well as to the disservice of other states in similar positions.

Countering Pillar Two: Deterring Collective Support for Suicide Terrorism

As demonstrated by the Palestinians, terror organizations often work as the voice of a people. Accordingly, terror organizations rely on the support of the population in order to function. Thus, if the costs put on the sanctioning society/collective reach a high enough point to remove support for organizations that use suicide-terror attacks, then it will force organizations to recalculate the value of launching such operations. Because organizations rely on domestic support, counter-terrorism strategists need to direct deterrence policy against the accommodating population rather than the specific terror organization, whose members should be marked for termination or capture anyhow. In *Maoian* terms, the goal here is to make the “sea” an unwelcome environment for the “fish,” while counter-terrorists simultaneously fish for the fish.

A collective punishment policy does not have to suffocate a population, but it surely needs to send a message, as well as work toward a functional goal. In the disputed territories for example, Israel usually increases security at times of heightened alert or during an ongoing suicide-homicide bombing campaign; this commonly results in added roadblocks and checkpoints that slow the daily functions of Palestinian society. A more severe punishment, and pointed message, might include measures like the cutting off of power or wide scale searches—both of which a nation-state can pointedly execute in problematic areas—implementing a *targeted* collective punishment. A disclaimer of exactly why the society has to pay the costs of

an organization's actions, however, must accompany any collective punishment, so as to prevent the loss of its message.

Nevertheless, many nation-states' security circumstances do not mirror those of Israel, which has brought suicide terrorism to near cessation by physically separating itself from the population deploying suicide-homicide bombers. Indeed, as demonstrated by the UK's 7/7 and 7/21 bombers, sometimes a nation-state's suicidal enemy comes from its own citizenry. Various attacks in Jordan, Spain, Turkey, North Africa and elsewhere demonstrate similar instances. In such cases, nation-states should make a concerted effort with local communities to expose exactly who and what social-networking institutions may or may not have accommodated specific individuals in not only launching terror attacks but also supporting them. For example, accommodating behavior includes the glorification of suicide terrorists as "shahids" or heroes, and nation-states should afford individuals and institutions that participate in such behavior zero tolerance. Nation-states should make the monitoring of social networks likely associated with Islamic fanaticism of utmost concern to domestic security agencies.

Countering Pillar Three: Un-Motivating Individuals to Commit Suicide Terrorism

Verifying one's existential worth requires the ability to make an impact. Individuals accordingly look for any number of ways to affect the world before them. Given the right circumstances, terror campaigns provide individuals with an outlet to channel their desires 'to make a difference.' Suicide terrorists participate in terrorism for reasons identical to other terrorists: political ones; but, they commit suicide for a variety of reasons, often unrelated and customized, if not completely personal. Palestinian shahids usually seek to kill Israelis out of vengeance and a sense of religious and cultural duty, yet they kill themselves for a number of reasons, both externally and domestically provoked. For many, participation in a greater cause assuages the individual's desire to "contribute" and thus "confirms" the importance of one's

existence. But, beyond pursuing glory, fame or mere recognition, adherence to Islamic duties can also obscure the betrayal of Arab social norms. Sometimes suicide terrorists just want to die, yet need a “legitimate” way to do so. Murdering others in the name of the cause, while killing oneself provides this socio-religious legitimacy. Whether for Allah, “Palestine,” the *um’ma* or all three, individuals can rationalize and legitimize their escape from society via vengeance.

Thus, counter-terrorism strategies need to look at the bigger picture and attach themselves to larger foreign and domestic policies. Quelling not only the individual’s motivation to kill but also the motivation to kill oneself over social discontentment suggests that vast social reforms need to occur in the locales that produce suicide terrorists. That most suicide terrorists come from societies under the rule of authoritarian leaders or live as second or third generation Muslim-immigrants in Western Europe indicates that both environments require vast reform. *Un-*motivating individuals to commit suicide-terror attacks means thorough democratic reform in the greater Arab and Islamic worlds, and concerted integration and acculturation of Muslim immigrants into Western societies. In recent years giant leaps have been made in the former, and many have awakened to the necessity of the latter; however, both problems lie far from resolution, and awareness of the problems does not always translate to progress in the right direction. Nevertheless, Western policymakers need to remain focused on democratic reformation in the Islamic world and acculturation of Muslim immigrants living in Western societies.

Undercutting Istishhad with Individuality

An Old West/gunslinger adage suggests that when signs of the end of the world appear, men react in three different ways. The first man seeks all the worldly joy he can muster— whiskey, prostitutes, etc. The second man heads to the mission and prays with the priest. The third man, however, gathers his resolve and revolvers and looks for the way to *finish* the game—

that is, on some suicidal mission, he seeks to do his part in one last effort for a greater cause.¹⁰²

Political Islam's promoters of martyrdom have converged the paths of these men into one; taking the holy man, the egotistical man, and the resolute man and synthesizing them into the perfect confronter of the world's end—thereby optimizing the capacity to produce vast numbers of apocalyptic perpetrators of violence. Ultimately, without access to alternative belief systems, and deprived of the opportunity to participate within a modern society based on the tenet of *individuality*, the apocalyptic *istishhadi* ideologies will continue attracting marginalized Muslim subjects and disaffected Muslim immigrants. However, ideologies such as those that promote *istishhad* never self-correct. Like with Nazism and Soviet Marxist-Leninism, freedom will have to push them out of existence.

Thus, acquiescing to suicide terrorism, or any form of terrorism for that matter, represents the most lethal mistake any nation-state could make. Acquiescence extends legitimacy to those who employ terrorism—granting their causes and ideologies justifications for continued violence and setting precedents for others to mimic. The U.S. pullout from Lebanon in 1984, Israel's 2000 withdrawal from its buffer zone in Southern Lebanon and its 2005 unilateral disengagement from Gaza, all established significant victories for the strategies of guerrilla warfare and terrorism. Furthermore, these retreats verified the strategic utility of suicide-homicide attacks, and encouraged their continued utilization. More importantly, however, the continued recognition by international powers, including the U.S., of such organizations as the Palestinian Fatah legitimate the terror tactics and strategies that they have employed over the years. The U.S. makes serious contradictions when it condemns al-Qaeda in Iraq yet continues to fund and buttress Fatah's position within Palestinian politics, as both organizations continue to launch suicide-homicide

¹⁰² Paraphrased from an explanation in *Young Guns II*, prod. Paul Schiff and Irby Smith, dir. by Geoff Murphy, 1 hr. 43 min., Morgan Creek/Warner Bros., 1990, DVD.

attacks against civilians. Neither the Palestinian nor the jihadi-Salafi facilitators of suicide-terror attacks will decide to end their campaigns in the foreseeable future, primarily because their goals, which define their existence, remain untenable. Organizations usually pursue their end-goals as best to their capabilities—therefore demonstrating rational behavior. Analysts and policymakers, however, should not assume this rationality would transmit to these actors moderating their end-goals. Why would they, particularly if they refuse to even “moderate” their means? How much reliance then can targeted nation-states put on their enemies’ more “moderate” constituencies and representative bodies? When innocent lives are at stake, the answer should always be “zero.” It rests then on targeted nation-states to abrasively end their foes’ suicide-terror campaigns and provide them with nothing less than a Carthaginian peace.

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