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Palestinian Suicide Terrorism in the Second Intifada: Motivations and Organizational Aspects

ASSAF MOGHADAM

The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy
Tufts University
Medford, ME, USA

Suicide terrorism has developed into a widely used tactic, and arguably one of the major strateigc threats facing some countries. This article explores various issues related to Palestinian suicide terrorism by presenting a two-phase model to explain the processes and factors underlying the development of Palestinian suicide bombers, and the execution of suicide bombing attacks. The model is applied to the case of suicide attacks that have occurred in the course of the first 21 months of the Second Intifada, from September 2000 to June 2002. The assumptions of the model are tested by taking an in-depth look into the various motives leading individual Palestinians to volunteer for suicide missions, and by discussing the activities and major functions of the organizations that have employed this modus operandi in the specified time frame. It will be concluded that while a counter-terrorism strategy aimed at targeting terrorist organizations may offer short-term gains, in the long run Israel will need to identify ways of removing or reducing the incentives that lead some Palestinians to volunteer for suicide missions.

Since the 1980s, when Lebanon became the stage for several spectacular suicide terrorist attacks, suicide terrorism as a modus operandi has spread to a host of other countries, including Sri Lanka, Turkey, India, Pakistan, and other less publicized places, including Panama and Tanzania. However, few countries are more familiar with this tactic and its devastating consequences than the state of Israel.

Since the mid-1990s, suicide terrorism has developed into one of Israel's gravest strategic threats. Between 1993 and early August 2002, more than 135 Palestinian suicide bombers have detonated themselves in the vicinity of Israeli civilians or soldiers.[1] The majority of these suicide attacks have occurred during the current wave of Israeli–Palestinian hostilities, which erupted in late September 2000.[2] From the beginning of this latest round of violence until early August 2002, at least 260 Israelis have been killed, and over 2,200 wounded in suicide attacks (see Figure 1).[3] Although suicide attacks accounted for less than 1% of all Palestinian attacks since September 2000, almost 44% of all Israeli casualties that resulted from Palestinian attacks between September 2000 and August 2002 were killed in suicide terrorist attacks[4] (see Figures 2 and 3).
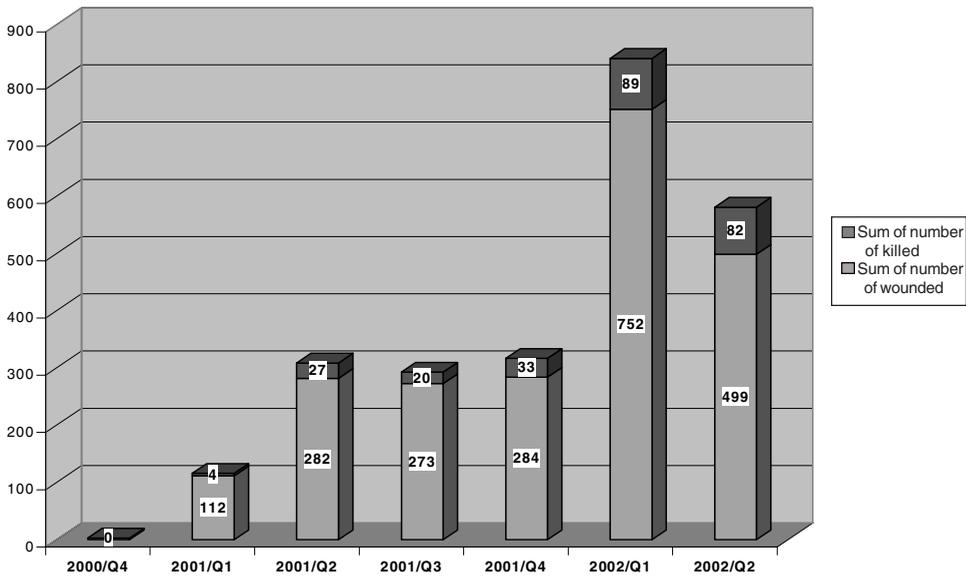
Figure 1. Killed and wounded in Israel, Jerusalem, and West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGS) by quarter.

In academic literature, the phenomenon of suicide bombings has enjoyed little prominence to date.[5] Most studies on suicide terrorism concern themselves with particular aspects of suicide terrorism, such as religious, cultural, or psychological considerations of the phenomenon. Little, if any, effort has been made to devise an analytical framework for understanding the processes and factors that underlie the development of the suicide bomber and the execution of suicide bombing attacks. This article is an attempt to fill this gap.

The analytical framework offered here attempts to provide an overall model for a better understanding of the underlying motivations of Palestinian suicide bombers on the
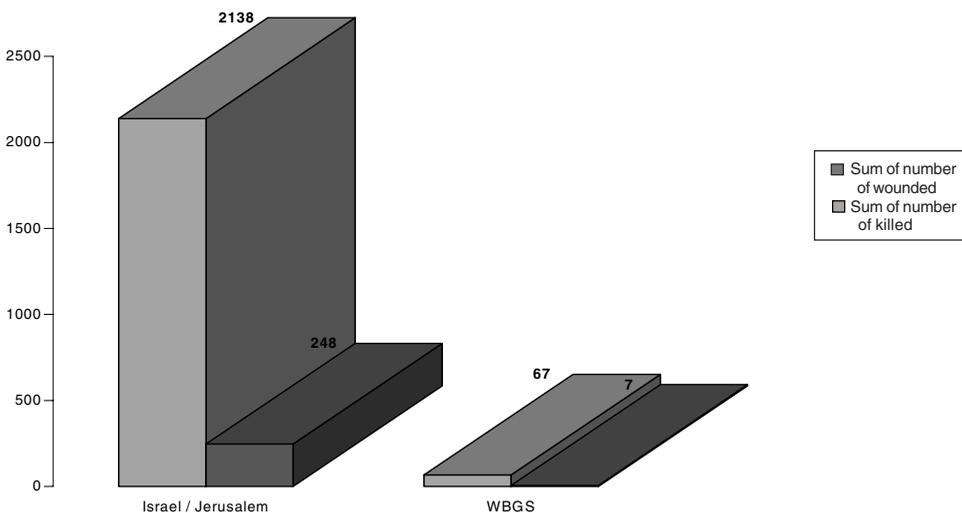

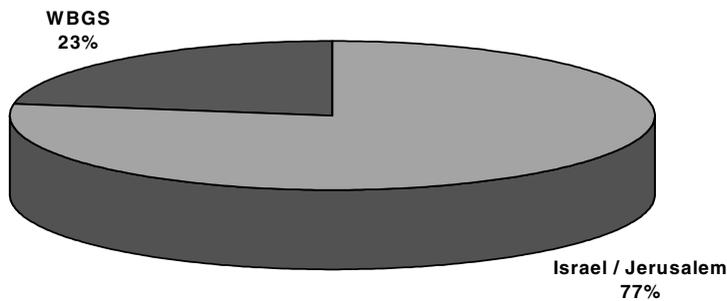**Figure 2.** Killed and wounded by region, October 2000–June 2002.

Figure 3. Percentage of suicide attacks by region, October 2000–June 2002.

one hand, and the process in which suicide bombings are executed on the other. The model assumes that such an attack is the result of a two-phase process. Broadly speaking, this model first traces the underlying motives that drive organizations and individuals to perpetrate acts of suicide terrorism. It then shows how, following the recruitment of the suicide candidate, organizations train and indoctrinate him or her into becoming a suicide bomber.

This study attempts to answer three central questions: (1) What instills individual Palestinians with a willingness to die, and which factors reinforce this mentality? (2) What motivates organizations such as Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), Fatah, and PFLP to organize suicide attacks, and what are their goals? (3) What methods do these organizations use to mold motivated Palestinians who are willing to die into actual suicide bombers, and how do organizations plan and execute acts of suicide terrorism?

The two major aims of this article can therefore be summarized as follows: first, to offer a framework of analysis for understanding suicide terrorism as an individual and organizational phenomenon; second, to apply this model to the case of suicide bombings by Palestinians during the Second Intifada.

The study is structured as follows. Following this introduction, the first part of the article will present this new framework of analysis in greater detail. The next part will examine the set of motivations—religious, personal, nationalist, economic, and sociological—that play a role in generating and reinforcing individual Palestinians' willingness to die—the precondition for his or her selection as a "martyr." The argument will be made that it is a combination of motives among this "pool of personal motivations" that leads to and reinforces the readiness of some Palestinians to die.

The final part of the study focuses on organizational aspects of Palestinian suicide terrorism. It consists of two main sections: first, an overview over the four organizations that were responsible for suicide attacks in the first 21 months of the Second Intifada—a section that will also contain a summary of statistical data about suicide attacks between October 2000 and June 2002. The second section will discuss how these same organizations recruit, train, and indoctrinate the suicide bombers, and plan and execute suicide attacks. The findings of this study are summarized in a conclusion.

Framework of Analysis

Two-Phase Model of Suicide Bombings

In the academic literature to date, the phenomenon of suicide terrorism has not received the attention it deserves. Of the rare studies conducted on this modus operandi, few have

emphasized the need to consider both individual aspects (i.e., what motivates the volunteer for the suicide mission) as well as organizational aspects (i.e., organizational goals and methods of training and indoctrination) of suicide terrorism.[6]

The framework of analysis offered here assumes that suicide terrorism is both an individual and an organizational phenomenon; in fact, it assumes that both aspects are integral and necessary parts of the process through which suicide attacks are organized and executed, and thus should be included in any discussion on suicide terrorism. The Israeli–Palestinian case shows that an individual Palestinian who is motivated to become a suicide bomber is likely to lack the resources, information, and organizational capacity needed to perpetrate such an act without the help of an organization. It is therefore not surprising that nearly all suicide bombings against Israeli targets are planned by one of several radical Palestinian organizations.[7] At the same time, it is clear that under normal circumstances, organizations themselves do not supply the pool of ripe suicide bombers from among their own ranks, but instead recruit individuals from outside the organization. It should also be kept in mind that the sheer fact that organizational leaders rarely put their own lives (or those of their relatives) at risk suggests that a clear distinction needs to be drawn between individual motives on the one hand, and organizational goals and motives on the other.

With this key assumption in mind, the framework of analysis offered here focuses on two sets of motives: those of the individual Palestinian, and those relating to organizations.[8] Individual motives may include the desire to reap expected benefits in the afterlife, the urge to seek revenge for the death or injury of a close friend or family member, or the real or perceived humiliation brought about by Israeli occupation. The second set, which defines those goals and motives that lead organizations to plan suicide attacks, includes political aims of and tactical considerations for the use of suicide bombings (see Figure 4).

These two sets of motives converge at the recruitment stage, when organizations identify and mobilize individuals who have professed a willingness to die. At this stage, the two necessary conditions for suicide bombings merge: on the one hand, a willingness
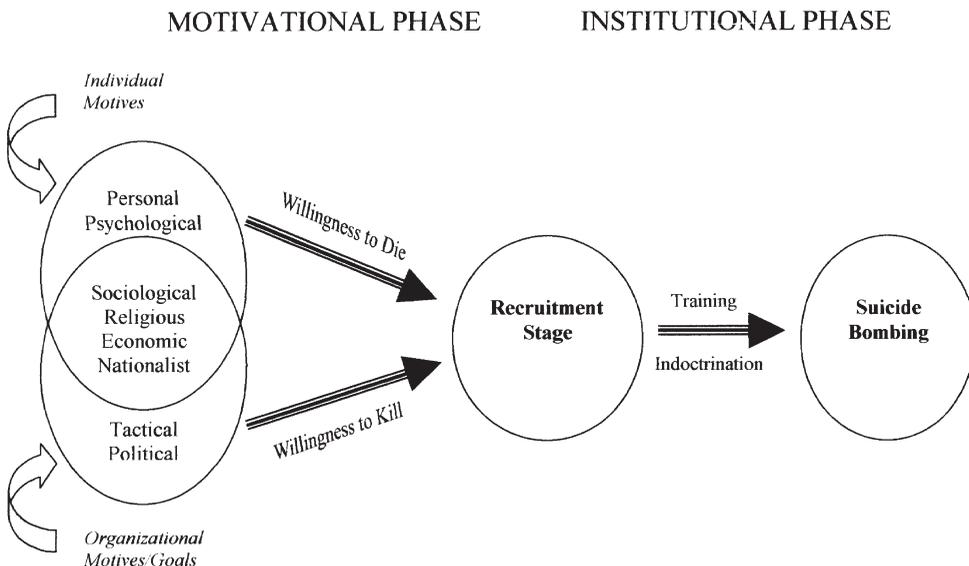

Figure 4. Two-phase model of suicide bombings.

to kill that may stem from the individual or from the organization; and, on the other, a willingness to die on the part of the recruited individual. It is at the recruitment stage when the first phase, termed here the "Motivational Phase," ends, and where the second phase, the "Institutional Phase," sets in.

During the Institutional Phase, the "volunteer for martyrdom" comes entirely under the control of the organization. During this phase, the volunteer is indoctrinated and trained by the organization, which molds the individual who is ready to die into a highly committed "living martyr." The goal of the organization at this phase is to take all measures necessary to assure the individual's commitment to perpetrate the act—in fact, to morally bind the volunteer to his commitment and to make sure that he will not change his mind. To achieve this goal, the organization, during this phase, will use several techniques, including peptalks, group pressure, and extrications of personal and public commitments from which the candidate will find it difficult, if not impossible, to turn back.[9] Toward the end of this phase, the volunteer for martyrdom reaches a "point of no return," to use Ariel Merari's term, and becomes a living martyr.[10] This Institutional Phase, which usually stretches over a number of days, culminates in the execution of the actual suicide terrorism attack.

The Motivations of the Suicide Bomber

Religious Motives

It is doubtful that a profound religious belief alone will generate a person's willingness to die. Similarly, it is doubtful whether other motivations taken alone—be they nationalist, economic, or personal—can shed light on the phenomenon without being considered in sum**.** If religious fervor alone could explain the phenomenon of suicide terrorism, then acts of suicide terrorism should be expected to occur more frequently in countries where deep religious belief, let alone religious fundamentalism, is a powerful force. Similarly, if economic motives alone could explain the phenomenon, then more occurrences of suicide terrorism in much of the developing world would be expected. Because this is not the case, it will be argued here that a combination of some or all of the motives discussed in the following section are required to convince ordinary people that the benefits of martyrdom outweigh the costs.

Within this gamut of intentions, religious motives seem to play a comparatively important role.[11] Spokespeople for Hamas and PIJ, for example, confirmed to Nasra Hassan, a Pakistani journalist who interviewed nearly 250 "volunteers for martyrdom," that each of them was deeply religious. She was also told that all volunteers for a suicide mission have to be convinced of the religious legitimacy of the act.[12]

When assessing Hassan's reports, however, the statements about the deep piety of the candidates deserve some qualification. First, as Islamist groups, Hamas and PIJ only re-cruit deeply pious individuals in the first place, and thus exclude secular Palestinians who might be equally ready to become *shaheeds*, or martyrs. Second, after 2002, most suicide attacks were organized by Fatah, a secular Palestinian group, whose members need not necessarily be religious (see Figure 5).

To this day, Islamic scholars continue to debate whether suicide attacks against Israelis are legitimate. The religious among those who believe them to be a legitimate form of resistance, those who organize the attacks, and those who eventually carry them out, are usually associated with the radical Islamist branch of the Muslim tradition. Islamist
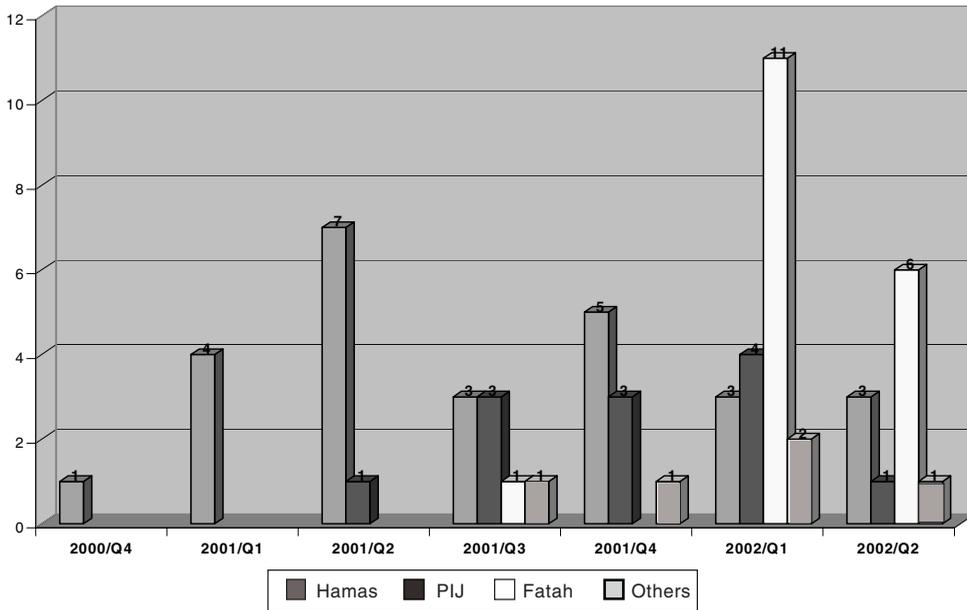
Figure 5. Suicide attacks in Israel, Jerusalem, and WBGS by organizations—time series.

groups and radical secular groups alike consistently use the terms *shaheed* and *istishhad* (martyrdom) when referring to suicide attackers and suicide attacks, respectively, since ordinary suicide (*intihar*), that is, suicide caused by personal distress, is expressly forbidden in Islam.

The Islamist Interpretation of Jihad. Central to the religious motivation that plays a role in pushing some Palestinians to volunteer for suicide missions is the notion of Jihad, which carries two basic meanings that refer to the two fundamental struggles of the Muslim. *Jihad al nafs,* often described as "the struggle for one's soul against one's own base instinct," is an explanation that has been rejected by Islamists as heretical. *Jihad bi al saif* is the military struggle, the "holy war by means of the sword."[13] According to Islamists, the military fight against the nonbelievers is the real "Greater Jihad." To support their claims, they invoke only those Quranic sections that equate warfare with the duty of the faithful Muslim.

The Perception of the Enemy as an Infidel. Islamists in general perceive the West, and in particular the United States and Israel, to be at the forefront of an anti-Islamic conspiracy that tries to undermine the religion, culture, and values of the Islamic world. The perceived threat to Islamic culture that emanates from the West and Israel leads the Islamist movement to claim that the Jihad is an act of self-defense against the "enemies of God." Thus suicide bombings and other violent acts are regarded as legitimate means of self-defense. In the words of the former spiritual leader of Hizballah, Sheikh Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, those who commit such activities "are not preachers of violence . . . Jihad in Islam is a defensive movement against those who impose violence."[14]

Islam versus Judaism. More radical Islamists—many of whom can be found in territories under Palestinian control—consider the conspiracy against Islam to be spearheaded by

Israel and by Judaism. The Israeli counterterrorism expert Reuven Paz argues that "after the establishment of Israel and the renaissance of the Islamist groups since the 1960s and 1970s," the perceived anti-Islamic conspiracy spearheaded by the West and Israel "came to be viewed as a constant and perhaps eternal struggle between Judaism and Islam."[15] Indeed, Palestinian rhetoric during the Second Intifada has been as anti-Jewish as it has been anti-Israeli in character.

The effect has been a drastic rhetorical escalation throughout the course of the Second Intifada, which has often resulted in calls to murder Jews. On 3 August 2001, for instance, Sheikh Ibrahim Madhi held a Friday sermon at the Sheikh Ijlin Mosque in Gaza, where he said that "[t]he Koran is very clear on this: The greatest enemies of the Islamic nation are the Jews, may Allah fight them. . . . The people who are the most hostile toward the believers are the Jews and the Polytheists. . . . Nothing will deter them except for us voluntarily detonating ourselves in their midst."[16]

Glorifying Death and Seeking Martyrdom. Martyrdom has a long tradition in Islam, not only since the Ayatollah Khomeini declared no command "more binding to the Muslim than the command to sacrifice life and property to defend and bolster Islam."[17] Since the first suicide bombing by an Islamist Palestinian group in the West Bank on 16 April 1993, and especially since the beginning of the Second Intifada in late September 2000, more and more Palestinians have expressed their wish and willingness to become martyrs by perpetrating martyrdom operations against Israelis.[18] Interviewed by Nasra Hassan, one leader of the Al-Qassam Brigades, the military arm of Hamas, said that "it is easy for us to sweep the streets for boys who want to do a martyrdom operation. Fending off the crowds who demand revenge and retaliation and insisting on a human bomb operation—that becomes our biggest problem."[19]

Juxtaposing Western Cowardice with Muslim Courage. During the Second Intifada, the mufti of Jerusalem, Ikrama Sabri, was quoted as saying "The Muslim embraces death. . . . Look at the society of the Israelis. It is a selfish society that loves life. These are not people who are eager to die for their country and their God. The Jews will leave this land rather than die, but the Muslim is happy to die."[20]

The mufti repeated a widely held belief that people in the West, including Israelis/ Jews, fear death. Islamists juxtapose this perception of the death-fearing infidel with the readiness to die that is said to prevail among the true Muslim. Statements like the mufti's are highly prolific in Gaza and the West Bank, and are connected to the belief that the West, including the Israelis/Jews are—despite their military strength—morally corrupt, seeking the pleasures of the good life, "protect[ing] their lives like a miser protects his money,"[21] and thus are cowards.

Such a mode of thinking may prompt the shaheed to prove to the hedonist that, unlike the infidel, the shaheed is not afraid to lose his life. In the words of Reuven Paz, the members of the Islamist groups must show the enemy "that they are truly brave, because the ultimate bravery and heroism lie in seeking out death, thus showing the enemy as cowards and themselves as heroes."[22]

Personal Motives

Although religion seems to play an important role for many suicide bombers, there is no reason to assume that the shaheed's decision to embark on a martyrdom operation is entirely selfless. Although the literature describing the characteristics of an afterlife in

paradise has flourished since the 1991 Gulf War, most original references to the benefits the martyr reaps in paradise can be found in *hadiths*—sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad that supplement the Quran as the source of Islamic law.[23] These benefits are said to include the forgiving of the martyr's sins; the redemption from the torments of the grave; security from the "fear of hell"; a crown of glory featuring a ruby "worth more than the world and all that is in it"; marriage to seventy-two huris, or black-eyed virgins; and the ability to extend these heavenly privileges to seventy relatives.[24]

Paradise seems to offer the martyr pleasures and benefits that he can only dream of in real life. If the shaheed, therefore, is convinced that he will enjoy these benefits in the afterlife, then candidates for martyrdom are confronted with a powerful incentive to swap the little they possess for the luxuries they are promised.

The Suicide Bomber's Elevated Status after Death. An additional incentive to the suicide bomber is provided by the elevation of his status after the suicide mission is completed—an elevation that is given significant impetus by a virtual cult of the suicide bomber among many Palestinians.

This rise in social status after the suicide bomber's death seems all the more appealing when one considers that the Palestinian shaheeds are raised in a culture where honor and dignity are highly treasured, maybe even "in the nature of Islam," as one senior Hamas official put it,[25] and where becoming a martyr is among the highest, if not *the* highest, honor.

The elevated stature of the shaheed among Palestinians finds many expressions, beginning with the circulation of posters and leaflets carrying his name and picture. Perhaps most importantly, every attack is followed by a rally commemorating the suicide bomber, where the number of participants may reach into the thousands.

It is not difficult to imagine many a young Gazan looking at the glorification of this martyred Palestinian hero with a mixture of admiration and jealousy, and perhaps even hoping to reach the same kind of transcendent fame himself. In fact, he might rightfully regard martyrdom as the only way to attain a similar status, given his circumstances.

Benefits to the Suicide Bomber's Family. A suicide bomber's mission will provide his family with both tangible and intangible rewards. After the suicide attack, both the material and the social status of the shaheed's family improve significantly. The family usually receives a cash payment of between $1,000 and several thousand dollars from Hamas, the PIJ, and sometimes from third parties, such as Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.[26]

One journalist who visited the family of Ismail al-Masawabi, who killed himself and two Israeli sergeants on 22 June 2001 with a suicide device, described the material improvement of the family in an article in the *New York Times Magazine*. The Al-Masawabis, who used to live in a squalid refugee camp prior to the bombing, now live in an apartment that is "spacious by Gaza standards. . . . Everything in it looked new—the appliances, rugs and stuffed furniture, the gaudy wall clocks, even the bracelet and rings Ismail's mother was wearing."[27]

Revenge. An additional motivation to volunteer for a suicide mission may be for the shaheed to avenge the death or injury of a close friend or family member. Due to the tiny size of the area ravaged by decades of conflict, an extremely high population density, and high casualty and injury rates especially during the Second Intifada, scarcely any Palestinian has remained untouched by the violence, and many Palestinians—as well as Israelis—personally know someone who has been injured or killed during the conflict. As a result, calls for revenge have been extremely common on both sides of the conflict.

On the Palestinian side, revenge is often called for during funeral processions of Palestinians killed by Israeli forces.[28] Although a recent Israeli assessment found that revenge alone is seldom a motive,[29] and although those who train the shaheeds insist that revenge alone is not acceptable before Allah as a reason for seeking martyrdom,[30] it is not hard to fathom that many, if not most, suicide bombers share a desire to seek revenge. In addition, some suicide bombers have admitted that revenge was their primary motive. Nafez al-Nether, who detonated himself, killing several Israeli soldiers on 9 July 2001, said he wanted to avenge the blood of Palestinians killed by Israel. One of those Palestinians was Nafez's brother Fayez, who was killed during the First Intifada in clashes that took place in the Jabalya refugee camp.[31]

Dignity versus Humiliation. There are numerous indications that a sense of humiliation, and the need to regain some pride through a dignified act, might also motivate a suicide bomber. There is no dearth of references to the humiliation felt by most Palestinians who continue to live under Israeli occupation, and to how this feeling motivates them to commit an act of terrorism. *Al Majallah*, a London-based, Saudi-owned Arabic weekly conducted an interview with a so-called living martyr—a volunteer for martyrdom who has been recruited and is currently undergoing training. The person, who identified himself as Ahmad, told the correspondent that "martyrdom is a duty and a right. There is no humiliation like that of living under the occupation."[32] In a similar statement, an Islamic Jihad operative told a reporter from the *Christian Science Monitor* that the Palestinians' "main objective is to satisfy God's will by undertaking Jihad." The other is to regain the Palestinians' "stolen land and dignity."[33] Hamas co-founder Abdul Aziz Rantisi agrees that dishonoring someone is the worst act that can be done, the only remedy being the regaining of one's dignity.[34]

The Expectation of Sexual Benefits. Islamic scholars disagree over whether Islamic texts refer to sexual pleasures awaiting the martyrs, and an extensive discussion of the subject is beyond the scope of this article.[35] Ultimately, however, the question of whether Islamic texts promise sexual pleasures to the martyr is less important than establishing whether religious leaders and operatives of Islamist and other radical groups attempt to and succeed in convincing young Palestinians that they will indeed attain such benefits in the afterlife. Statements collected by the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), as well as other sources, clearly indicate that not only do some operatives and religious scholars promote this belief, but a large number of youth are convinced they will attain future pleasures as a reward for martyrdom.[36]

Sixteen-year-old Bassam Khalifi, for instance, told Western journalists, "I know my life is poor compared to Europe and America, but I have something awaiting me that makes all my suffering worthwhile. . . . Most boys can't stop thinking about the virgins."[37]

In an even more compelling example, the Israeli daily *Ma'ariv* reported that one suicide bomber, Mahdi Abu Malek, whose attempt to commit an attack was foiled by the IDF, had wrapped toilet paper around his genitals. He evidently wanted to protect his genitals, given their importance in enjoying the pleasures of the Garden of Eden.[38]

In addition, the Palestinian press often prints death announcements of martyrs in the form of wedding announcements, corroborating the suspicion that martyrs expect to marry the "huris"—the "black-eyed virgins"—soon after their martyrdom. One representative "wedding announcement" read: "With great pride, the PIJ marries the member of its military wing . . . the martyr and hero Yasser Al-Adhami, to 'the black-eyed.' "[39]

Nationalist Motives

Many Palestinian suicide bombers appear to flock to Hamas, PIJ, and Fatah for nationalist reasons. Videotapes of suicide bombers, as well as statements of volunteers, living martyrs, or families of suicide bombers clearly suggest that many Palestinians perceive a deep injustice done to them by a "Zionist entity" that deprived Palestinians of their land and continues to deny them a worthy existence on what they regard to be Palestinian soil.

Most suicide bombers express a willingness to avoid the repetition of the 1948 *nakba*, that is, the "catastrophe" of the creation of the State of Israel, and clearly express their readiness to "die in defense of their land."[40] It should be kept in mind here that in the Middle Eastern tradition, the notion of territory, including the house, is extremely significant. The house is where the family is based—a social unit whose members are treated with utmost respect, and whose dignity and honor must be preserved at all costs. Considering that the house connects the victimized Palestinian resident to the territory of which he or she was deprived, it becomes an imperative to defend what little is left against any continued infringement on the part of the Israeli enemy.

Statements by Palestinian political leaders reflect the centrality of Palestinian nationalism as a motive. Reacting to the suicide bombing in front of Tel Aviv's Dolphinarium, top Hamas official Al-Rantisi told Al-Jazeera *TV* that Palestinians "will never approve of the occupation of [their] homeland."[41]

Without a doubt, these nationalist motives are intimately linked to and strengthened by the overwhelming sense of humiliation Palestinians have experienced over the five decades of Israeli occupation. Unlike in the First Intifada, which erupted in December 1987, Palestinians today live under Palestinian Authority rule. Nevertheless, the continued lack of territorial contiguity and the persistent division of clusters of autonomous Palestinian areas by Israeli roadblocks and army checkpoints generate frustrations similar to those Palestinians felt over a decade ago. In their seminal account of the First Intifada (1987–1993), Israeli journalists Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari described the expressed motives of some Palestinians detained by the IDF at the beginning of the First Intifada:

> All of them cited much the same motive: the feeling that they had suffered a grave personal injustice at the hands of their Jewish employers or colleagues. Each prisoner had his own story to tell, but the gist of their experiences was similar: at one time or another they had been subjected to verbal and even physical abuse, cheated out of their wages, set to work under inhuman conditions, and exposed to the sweep of the dragnet that followed every act of terrorism. All complained of the insult and humiliation repeatedly suffered at army roadblocks and checkpoints: the nasty tone in which they were addressed, the body searches accompanied by shoves and shouts, the derision they were forced to endure in front of family and friends.[42]

Apart from feelings of humiliation, an additional catalyst for the Palestinian resistance against the Israeli occupation is what may be termed the "national Jihad"[43]—a struggle that serves to strengthen a Palestinian national entity and form a national heritage.

Fighting the national Jihad serves several purposes. It generates a sense of pride and belonging to a national group that fights a seemingly invincible enemy. This struggle can be fulfilling in the sense that the Zionist enemy's sense of invincibility is shattered, which in turn humiliates the enemy and provides the shaheed with a tremendous sense of achievement.

Suicide terrorism fulfills two tactical roles here. First, it is a highly effective tactic

used in the asymmetric warfare against Israel. This is due in part to the fact that suicide bombings are a form of psychological warfare. As such, they fuel the belief that the enemy can be worn down over time, whereas the Palestinian nation is strengthened. In the process, Israeli society is instilled with fear. Following one suicide bombing, for example, one 19-year-old Palestinian laborer asked a journalist from the Associated Press, "Did you see how the Jews were crying on television? I want to become a martyr like that to scare the Jews, to send them to hell."[44]

Economic Motives

Living in economic distress can be an additional underlying motive in the formation of a willingness to die among many Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, though this motive is neither essential nor central. In the occupied territories, the most pressing economic and demographic problems are high population density and a high rate of unemployment, the result of which is a low standard of living,

The economic hardship that prevails in the Palestinian-controlled areas resulted from the post-1967 Israeli economic domination, which made any improvement in the Palestinian standard of living conditional on some direct connection to the economy in Israel proper. In addition, for most of the Israeli occupation, Palestinians have faced a stubborn and paralyzing Israeli bureaucracy. In the words of Schiff and Ya'ari, "the Palestinians found themselves completely at the mercy of the [Israeli] Civil Administration in every sphere of economic life. Each request for a permit, grant, or dispensation entailed an exhausting wrestle with a crabbed bureaucracy of mostly indifferent but sometimes hostile clerks and officials—a veritable juggernaut of 400 Jewish mandarins managing thousands of Arab minions bereft of all authority."[45]

Today, the Gaza Strip is home to roughly 1.2 million people—about half of whom are fourteen years old or younger—all sharing an area that is approximately twice the size of Washington, D.C.[46] In the early 1990s, unemployment in the West Bank and Gaza combined was under 5%, but it jumped to over 20% by the mid-1990s. From 1997 until September 2000, the economic situation in the Palestinian areas has generally improved, partly due to Israeli policies aimed at reducing the impact of closures and other measures. As a result, GDP in 1998 and 1999 grew by 5% and 6%, respectively, until the last quarter of 2000, when the outbreak of the Second Intifada led to renewed Israeli closures and the disruption of labor and trade movement in and out of the Palestinian self-rule areas.[47]

The Second Intifada has drastically worsened the economic plight of the over three million Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza. According to a report by the United Nations Special Commissioner on the Occupied Territories (UNSCO), unemployment rose to 25% one year after the beginning of the Second Intifada, while the underlying jobless rate in Gaza alone was as high as 50%.[48]

The UNSCO report said that the cost of the Second Intifada to the Palestinian economy after one year lay at between $2.4 and $3.2 billion. At the same time, revenues of the PA plummeted by 57% in the first nine months alone. Real incomes decreased by an average 37%, resulting in 46% of Palestinians living below the poverty line—twice as many as prior to the Second Intifada.[49]

Given these harsh economic realities prevalent in Gaza and the West Bank, some Palestinians may feel hopeless and desperate. Economic distress may also drive Palestinians to seek revenge against those they hold responsible for the conditions in which they find themselves. One elderly resident of the West Bank town of Jenin urged a journalist, "Look around and see how we live here. Then maybe you will understand why there are

always volunteers for martyrdom. Every good Muslim understands that it's better to die fighting than live without hope."[50]

Economic deprivation in and of itself, however, is an insufficient explanation for the emergence of a widespread willingness to die among large parts of the Palestinian population. Not only have these harsh economic conditions existed before the emergence of suicide attacks in Israel, but some of the suicide bombers have come from relatively well-off families. Thus it seems that economic motives for the evolution of a willingness to die must interact with other motives in order to result in the use of suicide bombings by a particular group.

Sociological Aspects of Suicide Bombings

Sociological and psychological aspects of terrorism and violence may help shed further light on the phenomenon of suicide terrorism in general, and among Palestinians in particular.

Mark Juergensmeyer points out that, as is the case in many other societies, young Palestinians between the ages of 16 and 22 are in a "liminal state between two life stages," where they are neither children in their parents' families, nor have they created their own families. This stage can serve as a source of problems especially in societies that are built around family units. In such circumstances, religious movements may help fill the vacuum that the youth faces, and often provide a home and an extended kinship. This situation renders the youth "vulnerable to the voices of powerful leaders and images of glory."[51] Juergensmeyer's explanation seems particularly fitting for the West Bank and Gaza, where Palestinian youth are strongly influenced by religious authorities, and istishhad is glorified by many.

Another social phenomenon is the support that the volunteers for martyrdom receive among the Palestinian population. In the summer of 2001, popular support for suicide bombings among Palestinians reached an all-time high, with over 70% of Palestinians expressing their support for such attacks, according to a poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion.[52] When the same poll was conducted in the summer of 2002, support for suicide bombings had dropped slightly, but martyrdom operations were still supported by over two thirds of the respondents.[53]

Another sociological aspect relates to the harsh demographic realities of Gazan society described earlier. In one of the world's most densely populated regions plagued by economic difficulties, achieving any degree of economic or personal "success" may seem impossible. Becoming a martyr, on the other hand, may well present a remedy to this predicament by providing an opportunity to stand out of the crowd and become, literally, a celebrity. The shaheed is endowed with a sense of individuality that he is unlikely to achieve in any other way.

Organizational Aspects of Suicide Bombings

Organizations play a critical role in the recruitment stage, planning, and execution of a suicide attack. They provide the many resources and services necessary to sustain a prolonged and "effective" campaign of suicide terrorism, including fund-raising; the procurement of weapons and the technical know-how for their assembly and use; the recruitment, training, and indoctrination of the shaheed; overall decision making and strategic planning; intelligence-gathering; target selection; and public relations.[54]

Organizational Goals and Motives

Apart from the motives of the Palestinian individual, the execution of a suicide attack also requires organizational motives—a concept that is closely linked to the goals of organizations in general. In the following section, several concepts relevant to organizational motives will be briefly discussed.[55]

Martha Crenshaw argues convincingly that terrorism can at times be understood as an expression of a political strategy. A group possesses collective preferences, or values, she writes, and "selects terrorism as a course of action from a range of perceived alternatives." Crenshaw is careful to add that strategic calculation is only one element "in the decision-making process leading to terrorism. But it is critical to include strategic reasoning as a possible motivation, at a minimum as an antidote to stereotypes of "terrorists" as irrational fanatics."[56]

Organizational theorists and terrorism analysts generally agree that the overarching goal of any organization is its own survival.[57] Apart from this overall goal, organizational theorists are distinguishing between "official" goals on the one hand, and "operative" goals on the other. Official goals tend to be more general because they provide a focus for the organization as a whole, whereas operative goals are more concrete goals that "focus attention on the issues that require effort on the part of specific units and particular employees."[58]

Applying these distinctions to Hamas, for example, one could distinguish between Hamas's official goal of destroying Israel,[59] and operative goals such as derailing the peace process, enhancing its prestige among Palestinians vis-à-vis the PA or other groups, increasing its appearance as a legitimate opposition, promoting ties with the Islamic world, and defying the Israeli enemy's real or perceived strength. It then becomes clear that Hamas may choose to employ a strategy of suicide bombings to fulfill either its official or its operative goals.

Intensifying the psychological warfare against the target audience, including through the media, is an additional operative goal of organizations. Terrorist organizations are well aware of the fact that "terrorism and the media are bound together in an inherently symbiotic relationship," to use Bruce Hoffman's description.[60] At times, the sheer manipulation of their target audience may become an operative goal. Hamas, for example, often announces a series of ten or more suicide bombings in order to increase the psychological pressure on Israelis.[61]

Palestinian Organizations Employing Suicide Terrorism

Hamas—Izz-al-Din al-Qassam. Since the outset of the Second Intifada, no other Palestinian group has executed as many suicide attacks, or generated as many casualties among Israelis, as the radical Islamic organization Hamas, and in particular its military wing (see Figures 6 and 7).

Hamas asserts that its political and military wings are separate, with no direct links between the two[62]—a claim that appears to be justified.[63] The first squads of Hamas's military wing, *Izz-al-Din al-Qassam,*[64] were formed in early 1991, following a crackdown on Hamas' military infrastructure by Israeli security forces.

Izz-al-Din al-Qassam is responsible for most of the terrorist attacks executed in the name of Hamas since 1992. On 13 April 1994, the Brigades planned and executed the first major suicide bombing at the central bus station in the coastal Israeli town of Hadera, in which five people were killed.[65] The initial activities of Izz-al-Din al-Qassam had an
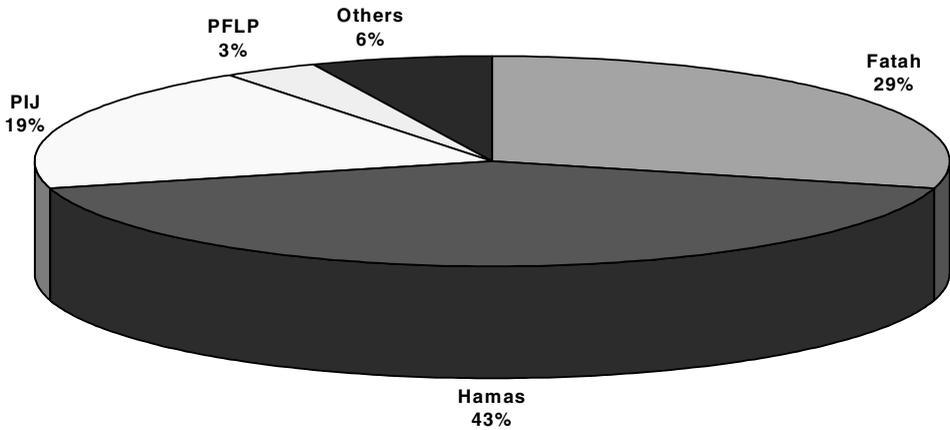
Figure 6. Percentage of suicide attacks by organization, October 2000–June 2002.

internal focus, as the military wing kidnapped and executed Palestinians suspected of collaborating with Israel. In December 1991, Doron Shorshan became the first Israeli citizen to be killed by Izz-al-Din al-Qassam.[66]

The 5 January 1996 assassination of Yihye Ayyash, the mastermind behind several suicide bombings that killed and injured scores of Israelis, sparked a renewed wave of suicide bombings that persisted until late 1997. In early 1998, after a harsh crackdown on Hamas' military infrastructure by the Palestinian Authority, new insights into Izz-al-Din al-Qassam were gained. According to Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, interrogations of group members, many of whom were from Nablus, revealed:
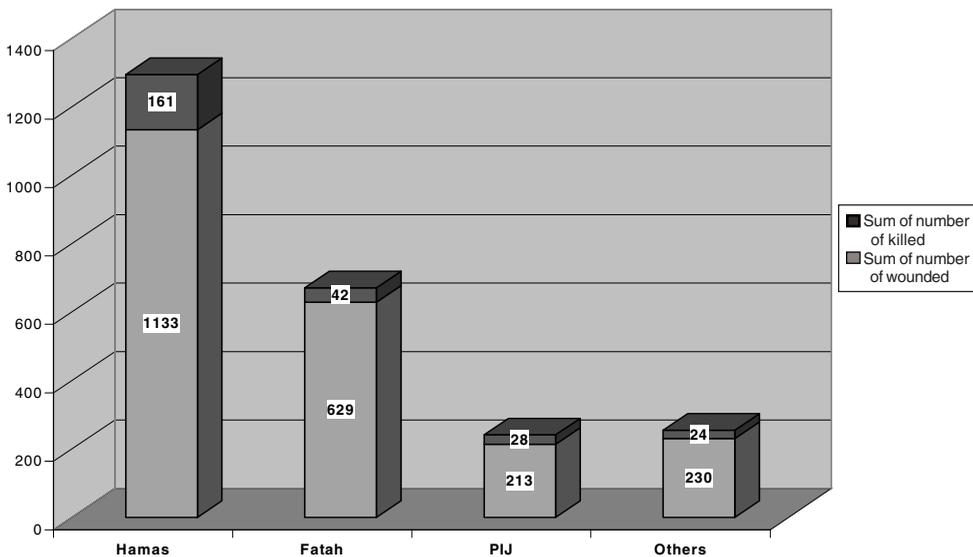

Figure 7. Killed and wounded in Israel, Jerusalem, and WBGS by organization, October 2000–June 2002.

an extensive, compartmentalized, military apparatus, which maintained close contact with the Hamas headquarters in the Gaza Strip, Jordan, and Lebanon using advanced communications methods, including the internet. The activities of the *Izz-al-Din al-Qassam* squads were divided among several senior regional commanders, whose names were on Israel's "wanted" list. They were constantly on the move from one district to another, assisted by the clergy and personnel of the mosques. These senior activists organized new military cadres and supervised their training for military operations.[67]

At the time of this writing, Hamas has claimed responsibility for some 43% of all suicide attacks perpetrated against Israelis during the Second Intifada—more than any other Palestinian organization (see Figure 6). In the 26 successful attacks organized and executed by Hamas between September 2000 and the end of June 2002, some 161 Israelis have been killed, and over 1,100 injured (see Figures 5 and 8).

Hamas has demonstrated an extremely high degree of lethality in its attacks, a fact that hints at the effective organization and information-gathering capabilities that are at the group's disposal, in addition to its wealth of material and financial resources. As a result, Hamas has increased the number of Israeli casualties in almost every period under review, except for Quarter III in 2001, and Quarter II in 2002. In the first quarter of 2002, for example, 55 Israelis were killed in three suicide attacks attributed to Hamas (Figure 8). Contrast this with Fatah's 11 attacks in the same quarter, in which 24 Israelis were killed—less than half as many as in attacks attributed to Hamas (see Figures 5 and 8). This trend repeated itself in the second quarter of 2002, when Hamas managed to inflict over twice as many Israeli casualties as did Fatah (43 and 18 Israelis killed, respectively) with only half the number of attacks (3 attacks compared to 6 by Fatah) (see Figures 5 and 8).

Hamas, unlike PIJ, has not focused its suicide attacks solely on civilian targets. At least six attacks since September 2000 have targeted the Israeli military (Figure 9). Fig-
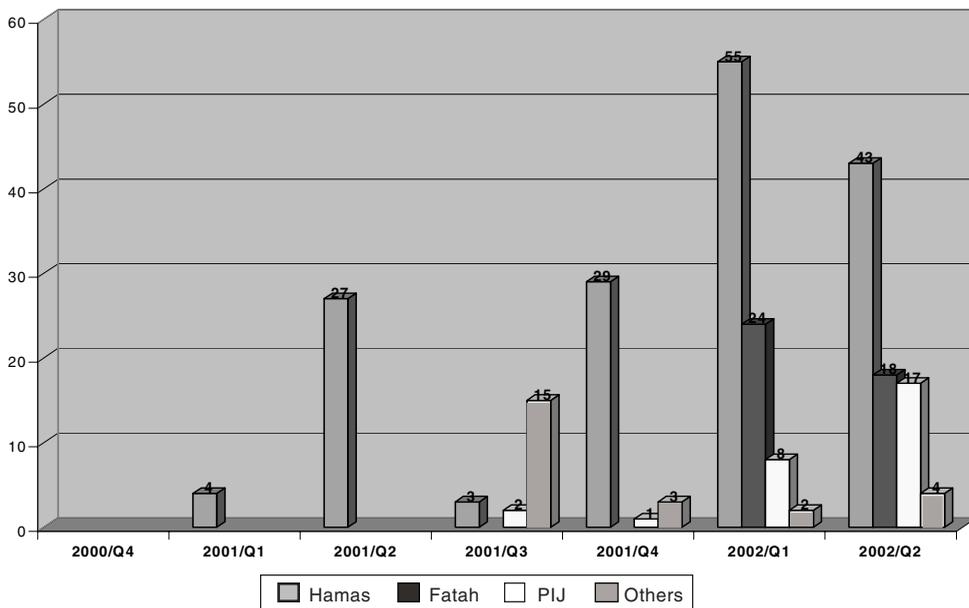

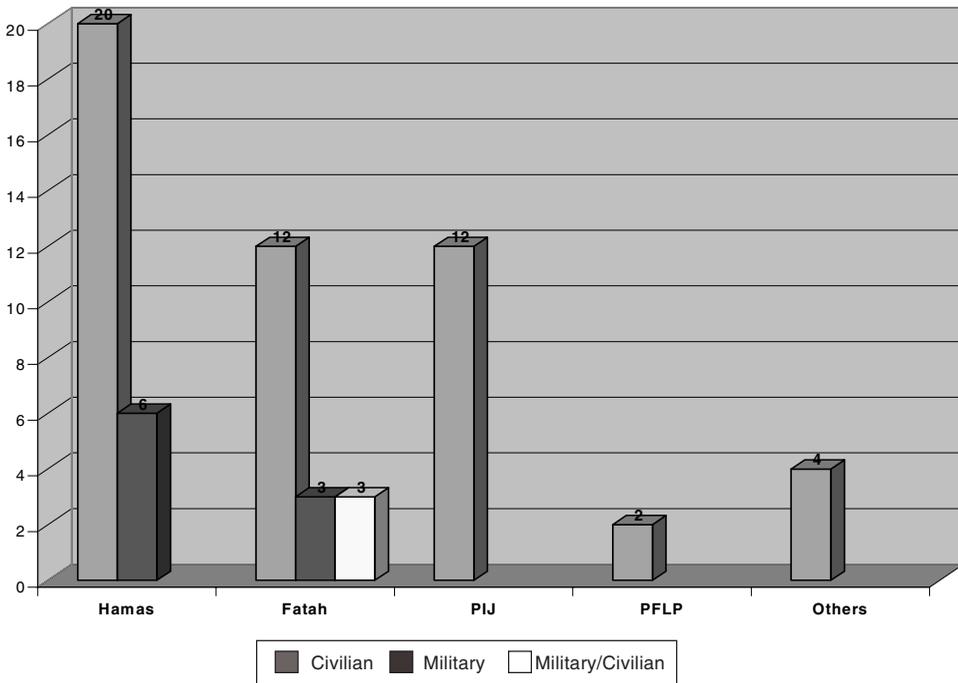**Figure 8.** Number of killed in Israel, Jerusalem, and WBGS by organization—time series.

Figure 9. Target type by organization, October 2000–June 2002.

ures 10 and 11 demonstrate Hamas's dominance in the Gaza Strip—all five suicide bomb-ers who were from the Gaza Strip were members of Hamas.

Palestinian Islamic Jihad—The Jerusalem Brigades. Unlike Hamas, the radical Islamist organization Palestinian Islamic Jihad (*Harakat al-Jihad al-Islami al-Filastini*) is dedi-cated exclusively to terrorist activities. Officially founded by Palestinian students in Egypt in 1980, PIJ, which is known for its secrecy and strict discipline, split from the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood due to the latter's "lack of revolutionary spirit and style."[68] The group maintains offices in Beirut, Tehran, Damascus, and Khartoum, and wields more influence in the West Bank than in the Gaza Strip, where Hamas clearly dominates (see Figures 10 and 11).

According to Israeli and U.S. experts, PIJ's core consists of several cells numbering some several dozen members in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.[69] Like Hamas, PIJ is also divided into military and political wings. In an interview with Beirut's Al-Manar TV station in August 2001, PIJ leader Sheikh Ramadan Shallah said that it is PIJ's military wing, the so-called Jerusalem Brigades,[70] that determines the timing, venue, and type of suicide attacks. Shallah emphasized that "there is only one military wing and one fight-ing address under the banner of the Islamic Jihad Movement at this phase. It is the Al Quds Squads [i.e., Jerusalem Brigades]. It is the party in charge of carrying out operations in the name of [the] Islamic Jihad Movement."[71]

PIJ began to carry out suicide attacks during the early wave of suicide bombings that hit Israel between 1994 and 1997. On 11 November 1994, a Palestinian recruited by PIJ detonated himself while he was riding a bicycle, killing three Israelis. PIJ is also respon-sible for one of the most deadly suicide attacks in Israeli history. On 22 January 1995 on
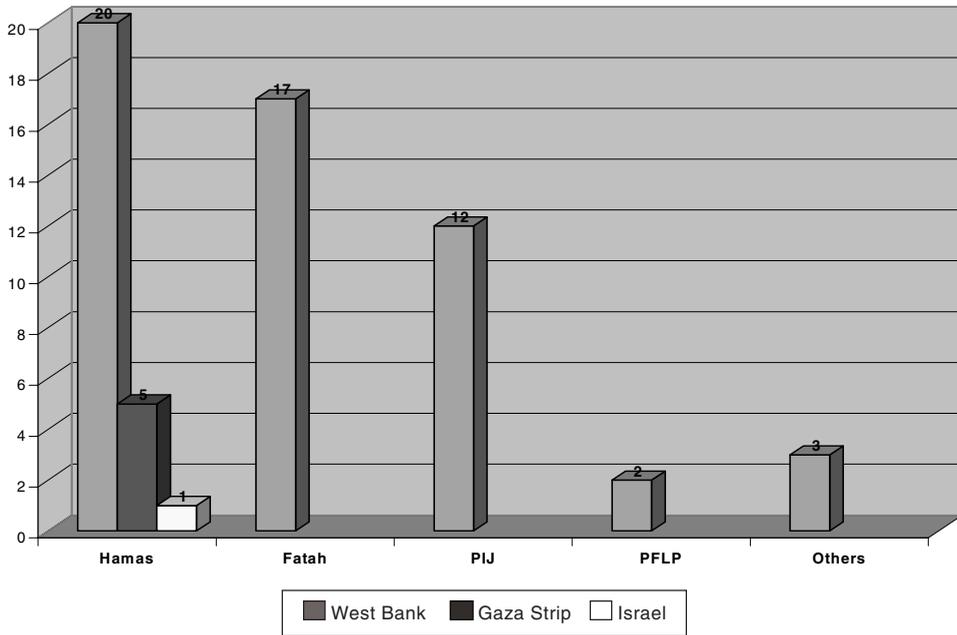
Figure 10. Origin of attacker by organization, October 2000–June 2002.
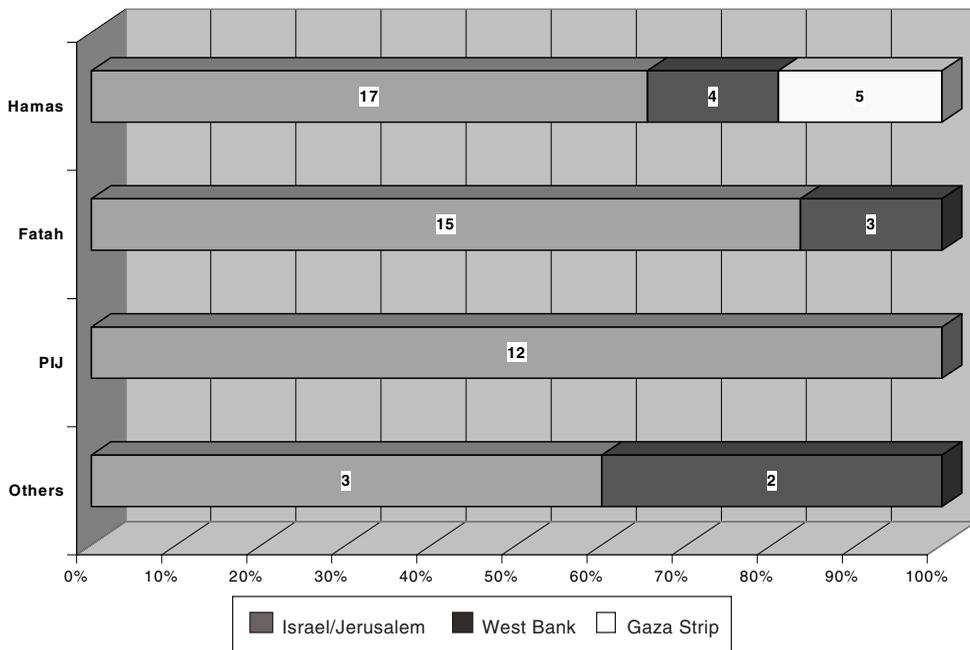

Figure 11. Target region by organization, October 2000–June 2002.

the Israeli coastal plain, two bombs exploded at the Beit Lid junction, killing 18 Israeli soldiers and 1 civilian.[72]

Between the end of September 2000 and late June 2002—the initial 21 months of the Second Intifada—the PIJ has been responsible for roughly one fifth of all successful suicide attacks (see Figure 6), killing at least 28 Israelis, and injuring 213 (see Figure 7). Figure 5 shows that the number of attacks during the Second Intifada perpetrated by PIJ has been rising slowly, reaching four attacks in the first quarter of 2002 and leading to an increase in the number of Israelis killed by PIJ attacks to eight in the first quarter of 2002 (see Figure 8). Although PIJ executed only one attack in the second quarter of 2002, the highly lethal attack on Bus Number 830 near the Megiddo Junction killed 17 Israelis— more than all of PIJ's four attacks in the preceding quarter combined. Moreover, Figures 9 and 11 show that PIJ's targets were predominantly civilians living in Israel proper, including Jerusalem.

Fatah, Tanzim, and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs. The third Palestinian organization to have employed suicide terrorism during the Second Intifada is Fatah, the dominant faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which in turn is headed by Yasser Arafat. As Figure 6 shows, Fatah has been responsible for almost a third of all suicide attacks since the beginning of the Second Intifada.. More important, Figure 5 reveal that Fatah has become the most active organization in terms of numbers of attacks on Israelis. In 2002, it has perpetrated more suicide attacks than all the other groups combined (see Figure 5). As a result of attacks by Fatah and affiliated organizations such as the Tanzim and Al-Aqsa Martyrs, 42 Israelis were killed, and 629 wounded between September 2000 and June 2002 (see Figure 7).

The armed wing of Fatah is known as the Tanzim, a group that has been responsible for much of the violence that erupted in the months following Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount. The first suicide attack in the course of the Second Intifada that has been attributed to Fatah's Tanzim took place on 17 January 2002 in Hadera, when 24-year-old Abdul Salaam Sadek Hassouneh, armed with a rifle and suicide belt, killed 6 Israelis.[73]

As the Second Intifada continues, a Fatah faction calling itself the Al-Aqsa Martyr Brigades has taken the lead in suicide attacks. In the first quarter of 2002, this group was responsible for over half of all suicide attacks against Israelis, rendering the group more active than any other, at least in the first half of 2002 (see Figure 5). It is partly due to the growing influence of Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyr Brigades that the State Department decided to put the group on its list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO) in March 2002.

The Al-Aqsa Martyr Brigades were formed after September 2000, and are said to consist of hundreds of members that are under the direct control of the Tanzim.[74] The links between Al-Aqsa and the PA leadership seem to be close. Maslama Thabet, a member of the Brigades, was quoted as saying, "we are Fatah itself, but we don't operate under the name Fatah. We are the armed wing of the organization. We receive our instructions from Fatah. Our commander is Yasser Arafat himself."[75] According to a former FBI terrorism analyst, "the infrastructure, funds, leadership, and operatives that comprise the Al-Aqsa Martyr Brigades and facilitate the group's activity all hail from Fatah. . . . Most of the Brigades' leadership are salaried members of the PA and its security forces. . . . Fatah is, by its own admission, Al-Aqsa's parent and controlling organization."[76]

Fatah's formation of the Tanzim must be seen in the context of its attempt to channel and focus the passions of many Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza away from Islamist groups. Fatah's success in doing this depends on Yasser Arafat's standing in the public, which oscillates with the political situation. Nevertheless, Fatah and the Tanzim

are the most powerful secular force in the West Bank and Gaza, and offer a secular alternative to groups such as Hamas and PIJ.

The PFLP. The fourth organization that has executed a small number of suicide attacks during the Second Intifada is the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a secular organization that originated from the PLO. Under the direction of its current leader, Ahmed Sadat, the PFLP carried out the assassination of right-wing Israeli Minister of Tourism Rehavam Ze'evi. On 16 February 2002, the PFLP took responsibility for a suicide bombing that killed 2 Israelis and injured 29 at the West Bank settlement of Karnei Shomron. Roughly 3 weeks later, the PFLP sent a suicide bomber to a hotel lobby in the settlement of Ariel, where 15 people were injured.

Recruitment, Training, and Indoctrination

Recruitment. To date, there is a relative dearth of open sources that reveal the methods employed by groups such as Hamas, PIJ, or Fatah to recruit, train, and indoctrinate Palestinians that have been selected for suicide missions. From the few open sources that are available, it appears that Hamas, PIJ, and Fatah have relatively similar processes of selection, recruitment, and training.

Typically, organizations will reject volunteers, and will select the candidates for suicide missions themselves. Because candidates are chosen on the basis of religious devotion, trust, and the ability to keep a secret, recruiters naturally prefer to pick candidates that they have known for a longer period of time. In addition, Hamas, PIJ, and other groups expect Israelis to try to plant collaborators in their organizations, and are hesitant to accept volunteers.[77]

In an article that appeared in the journal *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Harvey Kushner described the selection process as follows:

> The selection process begins with members of the Izz-al-Din al-Qassam or even the Palestinian Islamic Jihad circulating among the organizations' schools and mosques during religious instruction. The recruiters broach the subject of dying for Allah with a group of students and watch the students' reactions. Students that seem particularly interested are immediately singled out for possible special merit.[78]

In a rare interview with Salah Shehadeh posted by the website "Islam Online," the former Izz-al-Din al-Qassam commander who was assassinated by the Israel Defense Forces on 22 July said that to Hamas, it is important that the recruit be a devout Muslim; that he comply "with his parents' wishes," not be an only child, or the head of a family; have the mental capacity to carry out the act; and that "his martyrdom should encourage others."[79] Hamas and other groups seem to place particular importance on a clean criminal record of the recruit, so as not to raise the suspicions of Israel's secret service;[80] the ability to withstand severe psychological pressure; and the ability of the recruit to keep a low profile.

Both Hamas and PIJ recruiters insist they do not select candidates who have a tendency to be suicidal. In an interview with the *New Yorker*, PIJ member Abdullah Shami told a reporter that PIJ does not recruit "depressed" people. "If there were a one-in-a-thousand chance that a person was suicidal, we would not allow him to martyr himself. In order to be a martyr bomber, you have to want to live."[81]

Shami and other PIJ members recruit their activists not only in mosques, but also on university campuses, through social activities, and even in Israeli jails. Ziad Abu-Amr, for example, writes that the PIJ leadership has been highly successful in recruiting new

members in Israeli jails, and even suggests that this was one reason why the Israeli government began to deport PIJ leaders, rather than keeping them behind bars.[82]

Training and Indoctrination. The training and indoctrination of the "candidate for martyrdom" are among the core tasks of organizations that use suicide bombings as a tactic. Here as well, little reliable unclassified information is available.

Most suicide bombers undergo between several weeks to several months of training,[83] with the length of the training differing, depending on the urgency of the timing of the operation. One high-ranking IDF official pointed out that the threat of assassination, for example, disrupts the smooth planning of suicide attacks, as the organizers are obliged to spend more time ensuring their personal safety, and thus have less time available to plan and organize suicide attacks.[84]

During the training period, the candidates are subjected to both religious indoctrination and anti-Israeli propaganda. Volunteers attend classes, usually between two and four hours a day, where emphasis is placed on those parts of the Quran and Hadith that glorify martyrdom, and that describe the benefits of the afterlife.[85] Harvey Kushner adds that "students are assigned various tasks to test their commitment: delivering weapons for use in clandestine activities is a popular way to judge the student's ability to follow orders and keep a secret."[86]

Besides indoctrination, the candidate will also undergo a process of cleansing and spiritual purification while he is being trained. He will go on lengthy fasts, will spend most of the nights praying, pay off all his debts, and ask for forgiveness for the sins and offenses he committed.[87]

When the candidate for the suicide mission has been indoctrinated, has proven his understanding and belief in the relevant parts of the Quran, and has manifested his courage as well as his ability to keep a secret, he will usually go through several final stages, shortly before he embarks on his mission.

In most cases, the candidate will "disappear," leaving his home and family without a trace.[88] During this time, he will undergo intensive training for several days, and will acquaint himself with most operational aspects of his mission, including how to detonate the explosive device.[89]

In the last days before the bombing, the candidate will prepare his will in the form of a letter, audio tape, or video cassette, shot against the background of the sponsoring organization's banner. He will usually pose with the Quran in one hand, and a gun or a bomb in the other. In the video recording, the martyr will usually praise the holy war and call on his brethren to follow his example. He then will watch the tape over and over again in order to familiarize himself with his impending mission.[90] Just before the bomber sets out on his mission, Nasra Hassan writes,

> He performs a ritual ablution, puts on clean clothes, and tries to attend at least one communal prayer at a mosque. He says the traditional Islamic prayer that is customary before battle, and he asks Allah to forgive his sins and to bless his mission. He puts a Quran in his left breast pocket, above the heart, and he straps explosives around his waist or picks up a briefcase or a bag containing the bomb. The planner bids him farewell with the words "May Allah be with you, may Allah give you success so that you achieve Paradise." The would-be martyr responds, "Inshallah, we will meet in Paradise."

The purpose of the recruitment, training, and indoctrination process is for the organization to reach its goal of staging a terrorist attack, while minimizing the risks involved.

These include the risk of failure, group exposure, and wasting resources. The organization attempts to achieve its objectives by recruiting the right candidates—those who remain terse and are committed to secrecy—and by training and indoctrinating these individuals. Both training and indoctrination involve the mental preparation to commit a highly violent act that will result in one's own death. To that end, the organization provides the candidate with religious and political indoctrination, in the course of which the terrorist act will be given a moral, political, and religious justification.

According to Ariel Merari, the organization and the individual form a kind of "social contract" that the candidate will find difficult, if not impossible, to break. The contract can be sealed at the end of a process consisting of three phases: first, long meetings between the trainee and trainers. During these "peptalks," several issues are discussed: the humiliation suffered as a result of the Israeli occupation; early Arab glory, juxtaposed with the current state of Arab and Islamic affairs; the glorification of martyrdom as a heroic act; and the benefits of being a martyr. Second, organizations use methods of group pressure. Third, the individual is compelled to commit himself personally and publicly by videotaping himself.[91]

Group leaders are well aware that group pressure, peptalks, and the recording of a videotape will all but seal the shaheed's fate. For organizations, preventing the candidate from changing his mind at the last moment is a top priority. By employing these forms of pressure, the organizations achieve their goal because the shaheed comes to understand that a sudden change of mind would be tantamount not only to betrayal, but also to tremendous shame. The shaheed reaches, as Merari says, a "point of no return." "From then on, he is the living martyr."[92]

Planning and Execution. Suicide bombers are usually sent to perpetrate the attacks relatively soon after the training and indoctrination period for fear that they might change their minds. Organizations are also aware that the longer they remain living martyrs, the greater the chances they will let other people in on their secret, and the greater the risk that they will be intercepted by Israeli security forces.

The execution of any suicide bombing is an extremely secretive and carefully planned act, regardless of the sponsoring organization. Once the decision to perpetrate an attack has been made, the organization needs to gather intelligence, assemble the bomb material, and organize the departure for the attack target selected.[93] The following sections describe three key components of the logistical planning that takes place prior to the execution of the suicide bombing:

Weapon procurement. Most of the materials used in suicide bombings come from Egypt and are smuggled into the Gaza Strip either by sea or through underground tunnels. The seizure of the ship *Karine-A* in early 2002 suggested that Iran is another major supplier of weapons to the Palestinians. Among the weapons confiscated by an Israeli naval commando on the night of 3 January 2002 were about 1.5 tons of explosives believed by the Israeli military intelligence to have been destined for use in suicide bombings.[94]

Division of labor and compartmentalization. To guarantee the secrecy of the attack, the planning stage is highly compartmentalized. According to a report in the Israeli daily *Yediot Aharonot*, the following hierarchy prevails in the planning process: (1) The organizational leadership is the top decision-making body and determines the need to execute a suicide attack. (2) Next comes the "operator," who is responsible for the selection of the shaheed and his aides. (3) The aides, in turn, obtain the explosives, organize the means of transportation, and provide all other necessary items such as fake identity cards,

Israeli army uniforms, wigs, or other types of camouflage. However, it is the operator who will eventually assemble the electronic apparatus for the explosive, which must be easy to operate.[95]

The so-called martyrdom cell (*Al khaliyya al istishhadiyya*) is the fundamental unit that organizes each suicide attack, and is tightly compartmentalized. The cell consists of the operator and two or three aides. The cell members, each of whom bears the title *al shaheed al hayy* (the living martyr), do not disclose their membership in the cell to their families and friends. Neither do they know the identity of the other cell members, except for that of the leader. At the end of each attack, the martyrdom cell is dissolved.[96]

The suicide bomber and the other cell members do not know the exact location of the attack, both for security reasons, as well as to prevent the suicide bomber from visiting the place in advance. The organization is concerned that the suicide bomber who visits the location in advance may change his mind about carrying out the operation due to a bad conscience.[97]

The suicide bomber will often be disguised as a religious Jew, an Israeli soldier, or a tourist. He will often have little difficulty crossing from the West Bank into Israel, given the highly porous nature of the Green Line.[98] It is generally more difficult to cross the border from the Gaza Strip to Israel, which explains why only five attacks (less than 10% of all attacks) in the first 21 months of the Second Intifada have been perpetrated in Gaza, by Gazans (see Figure 12).

Target selection. Israeli interrogations of suicide bombers have shed some light on some of the operational methods used by suicide bombers. According to a report in the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*, Israeli interrogations of suicide bombers whose attacks have been foiled established that the shaheeds were instructed to target large public shopping or leisure venues, to attack crowds or civilians, to synchronize the detonation of an explosive with the gathering of a line at the entrance to a large public venue, and to avoid security check areas by finding an area at some distance from security personnel.[99]

Conclusion

The analytical framework introduced here is founded on the assumption that the phenomenon of suicide terrorism needs to be examined both at the individual and organizational levels. An organization without individuals that are willing to die will be unable to translate its goals into practice, whereas an individual who is willing to become a shaheed
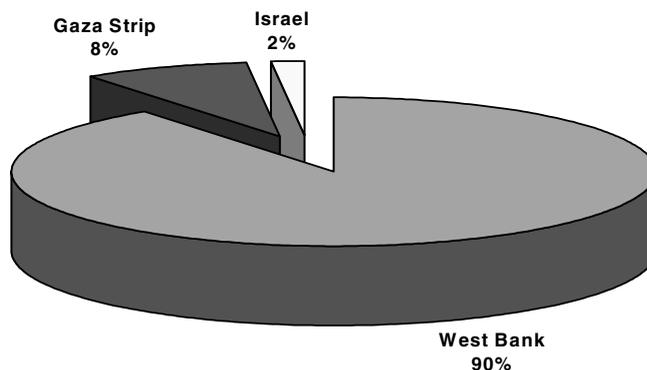

Figure 12. Origin of attacker, October 2000–June 2002.

would normally lack the resources, information, and logistical capacity to turn his intentions into deeds.

Two major conclusions can be reached with regard to the motivations of those Palestinians that volunteer for suicide missions. First, most of the Palestinian individuals who volunteer for suicide missions seem to be influenced by several motivations at once, although the exact combination of these motivations varies from case to case. Therefore, although one volunteer for martyrdom may be most affected by, for example, religious and national motives, another may be more influenced by the promise of personal benefits, and may have been more susceptible to group pressure. It is impossible to delineate the exact combination of motives because many of them are difficult to distinguish from each other, and in fact often feed one another. It is difficult, for instance, to separate economic from personal motives when it is clear that economic distress has a bearing on the individual's dignity, or may create an urge to exact revenge against those held responsible for his misery.

It is unlikely—though it cannot entirely be ruled out—that a single motive among those identified would be sufficient cause for a Palestinian individual to be willing to sacrifice his life. Nationalist and economic motives alone, for example, are not sufficient explanations as to why groups employ suicide bombings as a tactic. Many other nations struggle for national self-determination without resorting to suicide terrorism, and the existence of economic hardship is a global phenomenon that does not necessarily lead to a "culture" of suicide bombings. The same can be said of religious motives, especially when it is considered that few Arab or Islamic countries—including those that host a relatively large number of radical Islamists—are plagued by this phenomenon.

More important may be the fact that the conflict bears a strong religious dimension, manifested by the fact that the terms Israeli, Jew, and Zionist are used virtually interchangeably. A deep-seated animosity toward Jews seems likely to serve as an additional incentive to commit acts of suicide terrorism.

It seems painfully obvious that many Palestinian suicide bombers believe that the benefits of becoming a martyr outweigh the costs. Becoming a martyr, many believe, is the fulfillment of a religious command. It provides an escape from the humiliation felt by most Palestinians. It provides the suicide bomber and his family with a multitude of tangible and intangible benefits, and offers an afterlife in paradise that is preferred to the reality of everyday life under Israeli occupation. Martyrdom bestows on the Palestinian youth a sense of achievement, and offers him an opportunity to stand out from the crowd. It enables him to exact revenge on the despised Israeli/Jewish enemy while humiliating him and exposing his weaknesses. Last, but not least, the shaheed is fighting for the homeland he believes was illegally taken away from him and his family. A cost-benefit analysis undertaken by the volunteer for martyrdom, therefore, may result in his conviction that istishhad is a tempting, even attractive option, and that the rewards offered come at a relatively low price. That price may or may not include a mourning family. But, then again, the shaheed is likely convinced that he will rejoin his loved ones in heaven anyway.

Aware of what motivates the potential martyrs, organizations seek out candidates that demonstrate the highest promise to achieve the organization's goals while minimizing the risks of failure, exposure, and wasting of resources. The purpose of the training and indoctrination process, meanwhile, is to prepare the candidate mentally by inculcating religious and political propaganda that will justify his deed, while committing him psychologically to the eventual execution of the suicide attack.

Israel faces a particularly daunting task in addressing the phenomenon of suicide terrorism. The very multitude of motivations that provoke a person's decision to volun-

teer for a suicide mission makes it difficult to identify the root causes of the problem. Even if identified, it seems unlikely that any quick and easy solutions would be available to address those highly complex causes.

In the short run, therefore, the state confronted with this phenomenon would be hard pressed to find ways of removing the motivations that present themselves to young Palestinians. Given the pressure to act quickly, Israel will be more likely to target the more easily identifiable organizations that sponsor suicide missions. This may help explain Israel's attempt to "destroy the terrorist infrastructure"[100] by staging incursions into Palestinian cities during operations such as "Defensive Shield" of April 2002.

In the longer run, however, it is unlikely that targeting the organizations alone will prove to be the best strategy to fight this form of terrorism. A better long-term strategy would consist of a two-tiered approach targeting the organizations on one hand, and attempting to remove the incentives for individual Palestinians to volunteer for suicide missions on the other. Finding a way to address the individual motivations that play an integral role in suicide terrorism will certainly prove to be a major challenge for Israel in the years to come.

Notes

1. See Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, 3 August 2002 (http://www.mfa.gov.il/). See also Ze'ev Schiff, "Strategic Dilemma," *Ha'aretz* (On-Line Edition), 9 August 2002.

2. See Ze'ev Schiff, "Strategic Dilemma," *Ha'aretz* (On-Line Edition), 9 August 2002.

3. See Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, 3 August 2002. See also Tracy Wilkinson, "Lives Forever Scarred after Suicide Bombings," *Los Angeles Times*, 21 July 2002, p. 1, which lists at least 270 Israelis killed and an estimated 2,500 wounded. Additional statistics on Israeli victims are available at the websites of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) (http://www.idf.il/), and the website of B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories at (http://www.btselem.org/).

4. "Victims of Palestinian Violence and Terrorism," Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 3 August 2002, available at (http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0ia50/).

5. At the time of this writing, the only book that has dealt exclusively with the phenomenon of suicide terrorism is a collection of proceedings of an International Conference on Suicide Terrorism that was sponsored by the International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) in Herzliya, Israel, on 20–21 February 2000. The book is titled *Countering Suicide Terrorism: An International Conference* (Herzliya, Israel: The International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) at the Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya, Israel, 2001).

6. Not all terrorism analysts agree on the importance of individual aspects of suicide terrorism. For example, Prof. Ariel Merari, a leading scholar on suicide bombings from Tel Aviv University, refers to suicide terrorism as an "organizational phenomenon." See lecture by Prof. Ariel Merari at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy on 16 January 2002, summarized in Assaf Moghadam, "Fletcher Hosts Ariel Merari, Israeli Expert on Suicide Terrorism," *Fletcher Ledger*, 4 February 2002, available at (http://www.fletcherledger.com/archive/2002-02-04/020402-NfinalSuicideTerrorism.htm).

7. There are a few exceptions to this rule. In February 2001, for example, a 35-year-old Palestinian bus driver apparently acting on his own overran and killed eight Israelis.

8. It is assumed that some of these motives apply to both individuals and organizations.

9. Lecture by Ariel Merari at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, in Assaf Moghadam, "Fletcher Hosts Ariel Merari, Israeli Expert on Suicide Terrorism," *Fletcher Ledger*, 4 February 2002, available at (http://www.fletcherledger.com/archive/2002-02-04/020402-NfinalSuicideTerrorism.htm).

10. Ibid.

11. For in-depth discussions on religious aspects of suicide terrorism, see in particular the studies by Reuven Paz, including "Suicide and Jihad in Radical Palestinian Islam: The Ideological

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12. Nasra Hassan, "An Arsenal of Believers: Talking to the "Human Bombs,'" *The New Yorker*, 19 November 2001, p. 38.

13. Walter Laqueur (ed.), *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 130

14. Quoted in Laura Marlowe, "A Fiery Cleric's Defense of Jihad," *Time*, 15 January 1996. See Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 97.

15. Reuven Paz, "The Islamic Legitimacy of Suicide Terrorism," p. 91.

16. "Friday Sermon on PA TV: Blessings to Whoever Saved a Bullet to Stick it in a Jew's Head," *Special Dispatch No. 252*, Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), 7 August 2001, available at (http://www.memri.org/).

17. Quoted in Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 153.

18. See, for example, "Hundreds of Men, Women, Volunteer for 'Martyrdom Operations,'" *Palestinian Information Center*, 19 May 2001, FBIS-NES, Document ID GMP20010519000045, "An Estimated 1,000 Martyrdom Bombers said Willing to Join Hamas' Military Wing," *Al-Majd*, 20 August 2001, FBIS-NES, GMP20010822000212.

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20. Quoted in Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Martyr Strategy: What Does the New Phase of Terrorism Signify?" *New Yorker*, 9 July 2001, p. 36.

21. "Egyptian Government Daily on the Muslims' Love of Death and Their Enemies' Love of Life," *Special Dispatch No. 289*, *MEMRI*, 19 October 2001, available at (http://www.memri.org/).

22. Reuven Paz, "The Islamic Legitimacy of Suicide Terrorism," p. 93.

23. Author's interview with Reuven Paz, 6 January 2002.

24. See, for example, David C. Rapoport, "Sacred Terror: A Contemporary Example from Islam," in Walter Reich (ed.), *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1998), pp. 117–118.

25. See interview with Abdul Aziz al-Rantisi, in Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 187–188.

26. See, for example, Roni Shaked, "$10,000 per 'Shahid,'" *Yediot Ahronot*, 13 December 2000, available at (http://www.mfa.gov.il/). In March 2002, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that some 46 families of Tulkarm received checks of $25,000 for each martyr, and of $10,000 for each Palestinian shot by Israeli troops, from Saddam Hussein. See "Witwenrente von Saddam?" SPIEGEL Online, 26 March 2002, available at (http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/0,1518,189096,00.html).

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28. See, for example, "Hamas Military Wing Promises Suicide Operations to Avenge 11-Year-Old Boy," *London Quds Press*, FBIS-NES, GMP20010708000123.

29. "Profile of a Suicide Bomber: Single Male, Average Age 21," *Ha'aretz* (Online Edition), 24 August 2001.

30. Nasra Hassan, "An Arsenal of Believers," p. 41.

31. "Palestinian Suicide Bomber Dies in Gaza Blast," *Reuters*, 9 July 2001.

32. "Palestinian 'Suicide Bomber' Interviewed on Motives, Family Background," *Al Majallah*, 19 August 2001, in FBIS-NES, GMP20010822000152.

33. Cameron W. Barr, "A Suicide Bomber's World," *Christian Science Monitor*, 14 August 2001.

34. See Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, p. 187.

35. For an extensive discussion on the subject, see Yotam Feldner, "72 Black-Eyed Virgins: A Muslim Debate on the Rewards of Martyrs," *Inquiry and Analysis No. 74, MEMRI*, 30 October 2001, available at (http://www.memri.org/).

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38. Moshe Sunder, "The Lost Garden of Eden," *Ma'ariv* (Weekend Section), 17 August 2001, p. 28 (Hebrew).

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42. Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising—Israel's Third Front* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), pp. 82–83.

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46. CIA World Factbook, 2001, 28 December 2001, available at (http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/).

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48. Harvey Morris, "Closures in West Bank and Gaza 'Hurting Israel,' UNSCO Report," *Financial Times*, 21 December 2001, p. 8. See also "Fifteen Months: Intifada, Closures, and Palestinian Economic Crisis—An Assessment," World Bank Report, 18 March 2002. The World Bank report data reflects that of the UNSCO report. The report is available at (http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/mna/mena.nsf/Attachments/complete/$File/complete.pdf/).

49. Ibid.

50. Philip Jacobson, "Home-grown Martyrs of the West Bank Reap Deadly Harvest," *Sunday Telegraph*, 19 August 2001, p. 20.

51. See Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, p. 191.

52. Public Opinion Poll, June 2001, available at the website of the Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre (JMCC) (http://www.jmcc.org/publicpoll/pop/01/jun/pop4.htm/).

53. Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre Poll # 45, May– June 2002, available at (http://www.jmcc.org/publicpoll/results/2002/no45.htm/).

54. The author thanks Jessica Stern for her insightful comments on the role of organizations in terrorism.

55. The brevity of this section shall in no way indicate that organizational motives are less important than individual motives.

56. Martha Crenshaw, "The Logic of Terrorism: Terrorist Behavior as a Product of Strategic Choice," in Walter Reich (ed.), *Origins of Terrorism*, p. 8.

57. On organizational theorists, see Chester I. Barnard, *The Functions of the Executive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), p. 216; and James Q. Wilson, *Political Organizations* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 30–36. On terrorism analysts, see for example Jerrold M. Post, who argues that "for any group or organization, the highest priority is survival. This is especially true for the terrorist group," in Jerrold M. Post, "Terrorist Psycho-Logic," in Walter Reich (ed.), *Origins of Terrorism*, p. 38.

58. See, for example, Mary Jo Hatch, *Organization Theory: Modern Symbolic and Postmodern Perspectives* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) pp. 120–121.

59. See the Second Chapter of the Hamas Charter. The translation of the Hamas Charter used in this discussion can be found in the *Journal of Palestine Studies* XXII(4) (Summer 1993), pp. 122–134.

60. Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, p. 142.

61. See, for example, "Hamas Military Wing Promises 'Wave' of Suicide Operations," *Palestinian Information Center*, 17 July 2001, in FBIS-NES, Document ID GMP20010717000181.

62. See for example "Hamas Leader Al-Rantisi on Netanya Attacks, Suicide Operations," Doha Al Jazeera Satellite Channel Television, 8 January 2001, FBIS-NES, Document ID GMP20010108000280.

63. See for example, Khaled Abu Toameh, "From Cradle to Grave," *Jerusalem Report*, 4 September 1997, p. 34. At the time of this writing (April 2002), Israel conducts a self-declared "war on terrorism," during which it has occupied several cities under Palestinian control, including Ramallah, Bethlehem, and Nablus. In the course of Operation "Defensive Shield," as the operation has been labeled, Israel may find evidence that will lead to a reassessment of the nature of the relationship between Hamas's political and military wings.

64. The group's name is based on Izz-al-Din al-Qassam, considered a heroic figure by most Palestinian Islamic movements—a pioneer of the Palestinian armed resistance and the father of the armed Palestinian revolution. For information on Izz-al-Din al-Qassam the individual, see Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad* (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 98–101.

65. See "Suicide and Car Bombings in Israel since the Declaration of Principles," Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs website (http://www.mfa.gov.il/ mfa/go.asp?MFAH0i5d0).

66. ICT, "Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement)," available at (http://www.ict.org.il/).

67. Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 78.

68. See Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza*, p. xvii, p. 93.

69. See Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Martyr Strategy," p. 35.

70. Also known as Al-Quds [Jerusalem] Brigades, Al-Quds Squads, or Jerusalem Squads.

71. "Islamic Jihad Leader Interviewed on Jerusalem Operation, *Beirut Al-Manar Television*, 9 August 2001, in FBIS-NES, Document ID GMP20010809000114.

72. See, for example, the website of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (http://www.mfa.gov.il/).

73. On the responsibility of Tanzim in the attack, see for example Ze'ev Schiff, "Israel Warns Hamas: Don't Use Rockets," *Ha'aretz* (On-Line Edition), 20 January 2002.

74. See Serge Schmemann, "In the Arabs' Struggle Against Israel, There are Many Players," *New York Times* (Internet Edition), 30 March 2002.

75. Matthew Levitt, "Designating the Al-Aqsa Martyr's Brigades," *PeaceWatch* # 371, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 25 March 2002, available at (http://www.washingtoninstitute.org).

76. Ibid.

77. See article by Ron Ben-Yishai, "Anatomy of a Suicide," *Yediot Aharonot*, 27 January 1995 (Hebrew).

78. Harvey Kushner, "Suicide Bombers: Business as Usual," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 19 (1996), pp. 329–337, on p. 332.

79. "A May 2002 Interview with the Hamas Commander of the Al-Qassam Brigades," translated by the Middle East Media Research Institute (*MEMRI*), Special Dispatch No. 403, 24 July 2002, available at (http://www.memri.org/).

80. See Jack Kelley, quoting "Hamas," in "The Secret World of Suicide Bombers," *USA Today*, 26 June 2001, p. 1A.

81. Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Martyr Strategy," p. 36; see also "A May 2002 Interview with the Hamas Commander of the Al-Qassam Brigades," *MEMRI*, Special Dispatch No. 403, 24 July 2002.

82. See Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza*, p. 95.

83. See Ariel Merari, quoted in Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, p. 78.

84. Author's interview with a high-ranking IDF official.

85. The martyr is particularly encouraged to read six specific chapters of the Quran that feature such themes as jihad, the birth of the nation of Islam, war, Allah's favors, and the importance of faith. See Nasra Hassan, "An Arsenal of Believers," p. 41.

86. Harvey Kushner, "Suicide Bombers: Business as Usual," p. 333.

87. Nasra Hassan, "An Arsenal of Believers," p. 41.

88. In a recent article on the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, one candidate was said to have spoken to his mother while undergoing training. There is not enough information available at this point to establish whether this was an outlier case, or whether Fatah's training is less stringent than that of

Hamas and PIJ, enabling the candidate to stay in touch with his family throughout the process. See Hala Jaber, "Inside the World of the Palestinian Suicide Bomber," *Sunday Times* (London), 24 March 2002.

89. Compare Boaz Ganor, "Suicide Attacks in Israel," in ICT, *Countering Suicide Terrorism*, p. 140. According to Ganor's excellent study, the bomber will understand *all* operational aspects during this stage. However, there are indications, which will be mentioned later, that the suicide bomber will be unaware of the location and type of attack until the very last moments before his mission.

90. Nasra Hassan, "An Arsenal of Believers," p. 41.

91. Lecture by Ariel Merari at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, in Assaf Moghadam, "Fletcher Hosts Ariel Merari, Israeli Expert on Suicide Terrorism," *Fletcher Ledger*, 4 February 2002, available at (http://www.fletcherledger.com/archive/2002-02-04/020402-NfinalSuicideTerrorism.htm).

92. Ibid.

93. See Boaz Ganor, "Suicide Attacks in Israel," p. 141.

94. See, for example, Yossi Klein Halevi, "Stop Terror at its Source: Iran," *Los Angeles Times*, 8 January 2002, p. 11.

95. See Ron Ben-Yishai, "Anatomy of a Suicide," *Yediot Aharonot*, 27 January 1995. (Hebrew)

96. Nasra Hassan, "An Arsenal of Believers," p. 41.

97. See Ron Ben-Yishai, "Anatomy of a Suicide," *Yediot Aharonot*, 27 January 1995. (Hebrew)

98. A Palestinian man, Ibrahim Sarachne, who served as the driver for four aspiring suicide bombers between March and May 2002, and was subsequently arrested, described in a June 2002 interview the ease with which Palestinian attackers can cross Israeli roadblocks and closures. See "Guide for Bombers Maps His Methods," *Los Angeles Times*, 12 June 2002, p. 1.

99. Amos Harel, "Suicide Bombers Instructed to Aim for the Front of the Line," *Ha'aretz* (On-Line Edition), 16 July 2001.

100. According to former Israeli cheif of staff, Lt.-Gen. Shaul Mofaz. Arieh O'Sullivan, "A War in Defense of Our Homes," *Jerusalem Post,* 16 April 2002, p. 7.