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# The Pillars of Terrorist Organizations: the Case of Hamas

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## Introduction

Is Hamas a terrorist organization or a national liberation movement? Research on Hamas is prominently featured in leading scientific journals specializing in the study of terrorism. This is due to Hamas exhibiting all the defining characteristics of terrorism, which can be described as a form of political violence aimed at instilling fear among the population to achieve significant concessions from the government, often driven by a particular ideology (Orsini, 2024). Hamas's assault on Israel on October 7 ranks as the third deadliest terrorist attack since data collection commenced in 1970, based on the number of fatalities — marking the deadliest terrorist incident against Israel since its establishment in 1948, with a death toll unprecedented in Israeli history. According to the Israeli government's latest assessment, the estimated 1,200 fatalities [1]from the October attack surpass the death toll of the next most fatal incident by over 31 times[2] (Byman et al., 2023). This incident refers to the Coastal Road Massacre of 1978, where Fatah militants hijacked a bus and killed 38 Israeli civilians. Fatah orchestrated the Coastal Road Massacre with the aim of disrupting peace negotiations between Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. Hamas's October 7 attack stands as an unprecedented demonstration of both scale and sophistication for the group. It showcased characteristics akin to a special forces' operation, utilizing small units with tailored training, equipment, and tactics to achieve significant strategic impact. Over 1,000 Hamas fighters breached southern Israel through almost 30 points in the country's border wall with Gaza. The barrier, spanning 40 miles (around 65 km) and costing over $1 billion, underwent upgrades in 2021 to prevent infiltration, incorporating various surveillance and defense technologies such as cameras, radars, sensors, barbed wire, and an underground concrete barrier to thwart tunneling. Additionally, observation towers equipped

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1 Note that the 9/11 attacks represent the most severe mass fatality terrorist attack. The Islamic State (IS) is responsible for three of the top nine deadliest attacks, with two attacks in the top five. Following the October 7 attack, Israeli officials drew comparisons between Hamas's tactics and the scale of violence seen in IS's campaign in Iraq and Syria. While Hamas's attack was brutal, IS carried out multiple mass casualty attacks over several years, a level of violence Hamas has not matched. Estimates indicate that fatalities from IS terrorist attacks and military operations exceed 33,000 people.
2 https://www.csis.org/analysis/hamass-october-7-attack-visualizing-data
Attacks spanning from 1970 to 2021 were selected from the Global Terrorism Database (maintained by START at the University of Maryland) and supplemented with data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) for events occurring between 2021 and 2023. These databases underwent further scrutiny, excluding incidents based on four specific criteria: (1) attacks targeting military installations, like the Islamic State's assault on the Tabqa Airbase in Syria in 2014, (2) attacks conducted as part of broader military campaigns aimed at territorial acquisition or retention, such as the Taliban's 2018 Ghazni offensive, (3) attacks forming part of sustained efforts of ethnic cleansing, such as the massacres during the 1994 Rwandan genocide and the 2014 Yazidi genocide, and (4) attacks executed as insurgent or guerrilla tactics within active conflicts, such as actions by Contras groups in Nicaragua and El Salvador during the 1980s. Each attack was attributed to a specific country based on its geographical location.

with remote machine gun turrets were strategically positioned every 500 feet (around 152m) along the border. Hamas employed innovative tactics to overcome these defenses. Commercial quadcopter drones were used to drop explosives on observation towers, disrupting Israel's sensors, communications, and weaponry—a utilization reminiscent of new applications seen with Russian and Ukrainian forces. Furthermore, Hamas's fighters detonated explosives to breach the border fence, subsequently widening the gaps with bulldozers to allow vehicle passage (Center for Strategic and International Studies). The Islamic Resistance Movement of Hamas emerged during the First Intifada in December 1987. Founded by Sheikh Ahmad Yassin and Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood members, Hamas developed its own charter and strategies, positioning itself as a nationalist Islamist movement with political, military, and social arms. It became a significant rival to Fatah and criticized the policies of the Palestinian Authority. Operating through its armed wing, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas conducted suicide bombings against Israeli military and civilian targets until 2005. Supported by Iran, Hamas is designated as a terrorist group by the United States and the European Union, leading to restrictive measures, including a "no contact" policy with EU officials. While once boasting a broad network of charitable and social organizations, Hamas's infrastructure suffered damage during clashes with Fatah in 2007, particularly in the West Bank. Its rule in Gaza further isolated the party from Islamist grassroots movements in the West Bank, allowing more radical factions to emerge. Hamas's leadership, comprising a consultative Shura Council and a Politico Bureau, operates both within and outside Palestine. Despite its decentralized structure, Hamas demonstrates organizational efficiency, implementing consistent policies and ensuring compliance with internal directives. After the assassination of Sheikh Ahmad Yassin in 2004, Hamas's power base shifted to its Politburo, initially in Syria and later Qatar. However, following the Politburo elections in 2017, power returned to Gaza. In May 2017, Hamas issued a revised political platform distancing itself from the Muslim Brotherhood, potentially signaling openness to a Palestinian state based on pre-June 1967[3] (European Council on Foreign Relations) . Delving deeper into the complex entity of Hamas, the present thesis embarks on a comprehensive investigation into the classification of Hamas as a terrorist organization rather than a national liberation and resistance movement. By meticulously examining Hamas's adherence to the criteria of terrorism, as defined by prominent scholars and experts in the field, and contemporaneously considering the lack of a universally agreed-upon definition of terrorism, which is often influenced by political, social, and moral concerns, this thesis asserts that Hamas can be classified as a terrorist organization rather than a national liberation movement. This classification of terrorism is based on the perpetration of acts of political violence aimed at seizing power

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3 *Mapping Politics*, https://ecfr.eu/special/mapping_palestinian_politics/hamas/

to alter the status quo and achieve concessions by the government, thereby instilling fear in the population.

As such, this thesis aims at answering the following research question, namely, which factors contribute to the classification of Hamas as a terrorist organization, considering its evolution from an Islamist resistance movement to an entity implicated in acts of violence. The first chapter undertakes a deep dive into the theoretical underpinnings of terrorism, dissecting its various components such as violence, seizure of power, fear-induction, and political motivations. Drawing upon the scholarly insights of terrorism studies' luminaries like Bruce Hoffman, Alessandro Orsini, Andrew Silke, Marta Cranshaw, and Anthony Richards, it aims to furnish a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted nature of terrorism. The second chapter, tracing Hamas's genesis as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood to its involvement in pivotal events leading up to the October 7th, 2024 attacks, chronicles the evolutionary trajectory of Hamas. Through a meticulous examination of its ideological metamorphosis and organizational structure, it endeavors to contextualize Hamas within the broader tapestry of Islamist movements. Finally, the last section, considering the theoretical analysis of terrorism elaborated in the first chapter combined with the reconstruction of Hamas's path in the second chapter, determines and conclude the terroristic nature of Hamas expounding the multiple reasons behind this classification excluding its nature of national liberation movement. Indeed, by scrutinizing Hamas's modus operandi and strategic responses vis-à-vis the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it seeks to elucidate the organization's classification as a terrorist entity. Through a comprehensive examination of Hamas's ideological underpinnings and operational dynamics, this study aspires to enrich the discourse surrounding counterterrorism endeavors and the intricate contours of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Emerging in the aftermath of the tragic October 7th 2024, attacks, this thesis serves as a clarion call for a deeper exploration of Hamas's motivations and strategic imperatives. By traversing the intricate trajectory of Hamas's evolution, this dissertation endeavors to shed light on the contentious terrain of terrorism classification amid the crucible of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

**Chapter 1 – Defining Terrorism**

1.1 What is Terrorism: a Theoretical Framework

To understand whether Hamas is a terrorist organization, it is firstly essential to understand what is terrorism: as Durkheim[4] explains, scientific research starts with providing a definition of the phenomenon under investigation. Formulating a meaningful definition entails differentiating a concept from another, and in the social sciences realm, defining a term involves elucidating its content and meaning using the same language employed in everyday speech. This differs from certain exact sciences, where mathematical formulas and equations replace common language. Terrorism, being a social science construct, is inherently incapable of a concrete definition that universally "speaks truth"[5] (Silke, 2018). According to Richard Jackson, author of *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Terrorism Studies* (2018), the potential for a universally agreed-upon definition of "terrorism" relies on the clarity of fundamental perspectives regarding the ontological nature of terrorism and there is a stark division of opinions on this issue. Objectivists, on one side, generally presume that terrorism is a tangible, unique manifestation of political violence characterized by objectively identifiable features. In these terms, Ganor (2002) sustains that having a clear and objective definition of terrorism is not just feasible but also essential for any meaningful effort to address and counteract terrorism[6]. Without such a definition, indeed, there can be no cohesive strategy in the global fight against international terrorism. On the opposite end of the spectrum, subjectivists argue that "terrorism" is entirely subjective, dependent on individual perspectives, or cynically manipulated to serve personal or political interests. Witbeck (2004) strongly conveys this viewpoint, suggesting that the absence of a consensus on the definition of terrorism is intentional as the term is so subjective that it lacks any inherent meaning[7]. According to this perspective, the only honest and universally applicable definition of terrorism would be explicitly subjective: violence that the speaker does not endorse. Hence, defining terrorism remains a persistent source of disagreement that eis unlikely to be resolved soon. Certain academic disciplines find the study of terrorism particularly problematic, as it can alter or distort the fundamental essence of the subject. For instance, political theory, sociology, and international relations have, in various ways, tended to adopt the Weberian perspective

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4 Durkheim, E. (1895) *Le Regole del Metodo Sociologico*, Einaudi, Torino, 2008.
5 Silke, A. (2018*) Routledge Handbook of Terrorism and Counterterrorism*. 1st edn. Taylor and Francis. Available at: https://www.perlego.com/book/1560649/routledge-handbook-of-terrorism-and-counter-terrorism-pdf.
6 Ganor, B. (2002) *Defining terrorism: Is One Man's Terrorist Another Man's Freedom Fighter? Policy Practice and Research*, Vol.3, pp. 287–304.
7 Witbeck, J. (2004) *Terrorism: A World Ensnared by a Word*, The New York Times, 18 February 2004.

according to which the state holds a monopoly on the use of force within its territory, and the subject of terrorism not only blurs that focus, but also introduces disconcerting new elements. (Roberts, 2015)[8]. Yet, this does not implicate that it is impossible to generate a universally agreed conceptualization of the phenomenon at a given time in a contemporary context. Despite the challenges in arriving at a definitive definition, it is reasonable to argue that scholars in "terrorism studies" generally perceive themselves as investigating a unique form of political violence deserving of distinct examination, giving rise to the expansive discipline of 'terrorism studies.' While an absolute, universally accepted definition remains elusive, there is a quest to identify analytically distinctive features of the phenomenon that could garner consensus and be encapsulated in a broad conceptualization of terrorism (Silke, 2018).

Various degrees of uncertainty and imprecision have surrounded the term "terrorism" which often seems to be indiscriminately used to indicate all kinds of aggressive acts. The latter is often used to describe almost any particularly heinous act of violence that is thought to be directed against society, including actions taken by governments, organized crime groups, common criminals, rioting mobs, individuals participating in militant protest, psychotics on the loose, or lone extortionists (Hoffman, 1998). Therefore, what is terrorism? The ordinary linguistic meaning of terrorism is reasonably simple: extreme fear. But disentangling the term from the world around it has, however, proved excruciatingly difficult[9] (Jackson, 2016). In his book *Inside Terrorism* (1998), the renowned terrorism scholar Bruce Hoffman claims that contemporary terrorism is fundamentally and inherently a political phenomenon with the primary aim of pursuing, acquiring, and using power to achieve political change. As such, terrorism can be defined as violence or, equally important, the threat of violence used and directed in pursuit of, or service of, a political aim. An essential characteristic to be added to terrorism is that it is a planned, calculated, and thus systematic act intended to have far-reaching consequences beyond the immediate target victim of the attack (Silke, 2018). This notion corresponds to the *sine qua noncondition* of terrorism, and it also permits the differentiation of terrorist acts from general warfare or state terror (Silke, 2018). The concept that the essence of terrorism lies in its aim of causing fear and coercion through fear is also confirmed by scholar Anthony Richards. In addition to the psychological element of inflicting fear, Richards also sustains that terrorism should be best understood as a specific form of political violence rather than being associated with any one ideology or perpetrator, that acts

8 Roberts, A. (2015) *Terrorism Research: Past, Present, and Future*, Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 38:1, 62-74, DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2014.976011

9 Jackson, R. (2016) *Routledge Handbook of Critical Terrorism Studies*. 1st edn. Taylor and Francis. Available at: https://www.perlego.com/book/1554045/routledge-handbook-of-critical-terrorism-studies-pdf.

of violence cannot be inherently terrorist, and that both civilians and combatants can fall victim to terrorism (2014). Having stressed the core psychological dimension of terrorism, it is necessary to then define the activity of terrorism itself that renders it a distinctive form of political violence. Terrorism, as such, should be understood as a peculiar method of political violence, rather than conceptualized according to who the perpetrator is or what the cause is (Richards, 2018). However, alluding to a shift from cause or perpetrator-based conceptualizations of terrorism does not mean that there are no ideologies underneath that explicitly support and legitimize the use of terrorism like those of Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (Richards, 2018). Still, there are numerous nationalists, religious, left-wing, right-wing, and single-issue ideologies that are not per se violent, although terrorism has often been employed in their name. Hence, no singular doctrine, whether violent or otherwise, can exclusively lay claim to terrorism. It is a form of violence that, at various points, has been employed in support of ideologies falling within each of these categories. Considering terrorism as a methodology rather than inherently tied to a specific cause allows for a more objective examination of the phenomenon. Consequently, if an act of violence meets the criteria for defining terrorism, it should be recognized as such, irrespective of the perpetrator or the underlying cause. This analytical perspective aims to move beyond the often-unproductive dichotomy of labeling individuals as either terrorists or freedom fighters. If an act of violence, or the potential for violence, aligns with one's conceptualization of terrorism, it is analytically inappropriate to relabel it based on personal sympathy for the cause (Richards, 2018). Finally, Alessandro Orsini's approach to the definition of terrorism focuses on the action and not on the perpetrator (2024). Specifically, scholars are divided among two main approaches; the first one aims at defining terrorism on the basis of the social actor, namely focusing the attention on who performs the act implicitly suggesting that terrorism pertains to non-state actors only. The second approach aims at defining terrorism according to the action ratter than on the perpetrator: it is not the actor that defines the act, but it is rather the act that defines the actor (Orsini, 2024). According to Orsini, indeed, whoever exercises terror to pursue its aims is a terrorist, be s/he a Christian, a Jewish, a Muslim,an atheist, a State, a political party, a religious sect or a cultural association. Furthermore, according to the "action" approach followed by Orsini, terrorism is not defined on the basis of the goals and objectives that terrorist organizations declare to pursue. Terrorism is not defined by the ideals, the motivations or ideologies, but it is rather a highly strategic form of violence. Orsini, indeed, aims to emphasize how a terrorist is such both killing to pursue a noble cause and killing following motivations that are heinous for the victims. As such, Orsini's definition of terrorism is based neither on the actors, neither on the targets of violence neither on the motivations. According to Orsini, terrorism is a *tecnica di combattimento* (fighting technique) to

conquest and maintain power. It is a form of political violence aimed at spreading terror among the population to obtain concessions from a government under the guidance of an ideology. There are four main elements present in this definition: political violence, terror, government and ideology. First of all, terrorism belongs to the broader category of political violence, highlighting that not all political violence is terrorism. The second element of Orsini's is terror as a psychological weapon, which is an aspect present also in Marta Crenshaw's definition of terrorism. According to the scholar, terrorists target civilians because they do not dispose of other effective means to overcome the military. The third element is the government; as stated before, terrorism aims at influencing government's decisions using terror to induce government's apparatus to change aspects of the social organization. Indeed, Orsini's sustains that social transformation and terrorism are strictly related as terrorist violence is not an end in itself but rather a mean to pursue an end, and this end is provoking or blocking the social transformation (Orsini, 2024). Palestinian terrorists constitute an example of terrorism aimed at social transformation perpetrating acts of violence trying to spread terror to impose to the Israeli government to withdraw from the occupied territories. The final element which constitutes Orsini's definition of terrorism is ideology. Orsini affirms that without an ideology, there is not any form of terrorism. Ideology is indeed the element that allows to differentiate the violence of terrorist from the one of *mafiosi*, common criminals and individuals affected by psychological and psychiatric disorders, according to Orsini (2024). The salient difference with a mobster or a mass murderer lies in the fact that the terrorist possesses a strategy sustained by an ideology. The Mafia recurs to car bombs attacks, murders, massacres or kidnapping; however, mobsters act for money interests and revenge, and not in order to change the world. Finally, to emphasize the importance of ideology to identify potential terrorists, Bruce Hoffman has claimed that "a terrorist is fundamentally an altruist; a terrorist is a violent intellectual". With the term "altruist", Hoffman refers to a person who acts to favor the political project of the community he belongs sacrificing his personal interests (Orsini, 2024). All the theoretical definitions of terrorism included in this thesis, developed by the most prominent scholars in the field, will be utilized in the last chapter to verify whether Hamas is a terrorist organization.

In 2004, there were two notable developments at the United Nations level that contributed to the discourse on defining terrorism. Notably, following the infamous Beslan school siege in the Russian Federation[10], the Security Council, for the first time, adopted a reso-

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10 On September 1, 2004, a terrorist group overa gathering of children, parents, and teachers marking the beginning of the new school year in Beslan, a town in southern Russia's republic of North Ossetia, and seized them as hostages. Authorities initially downplayed the true count of hostages, stating it to be a few hundred, while in reality, 1127 individuals were held captive. Throughout three days, the hostages endured the confined environment of School Number 1. It took considerable time to establish that 334 hostages had died in the

lution, SC Res. 1566, which does offer a form of definition:

(…) Recalling that criminal acts, including those against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or the taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population, or compel a government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act, and all other acts that constitute offenses within the scope of and as defined in the international conventions relating to terrorism, are under no circumstances justifiable by considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious, or other similar nature, and calls upon all States to prevent such acts and, if not prevented, to ensure that such acts are punished by penalties consistent with their grave nature[11].

SC Res. 1566 possesses an extensive scope, with the *actus reus*, or material element, encompassing any criminal acts, and the victim group exemplified rather than precisely defined as 'including' but not limited to civilians. While this may invite criticism for lack of clarity, it is crucial to recognize that the purpose of SC Res. 1566 is not to establish a binding definition but to offer a framework aiding states ig formulating appropriate definitions in domestic law. In principle, states are expected to provide greater clarity and specificity in domestic law; however, in practice, there is a tendency to move in the opposite direction, underscoring the need for a clearer international framework. The UN-sponsored High-Level Independent Panel, presenting its findings after 2004, put forth a "description of terrorism." This description asserted that terrorism does not encompass state violence, which is adequately addressed by other norms of international law, and emphatically stated that there is no justification for terrorism by non-state actors. The intention behind this description was to contribute to resolving the ongoing debate between states and liberation movements, fostering progress in the negotiations for the UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. Despite being non-binding, this description, much like the Security Council framework, aims to guide states in fulfilling their obligations in good faith. However, it has had limited success in quelling controversy at the negotiating table of the global Convention (Duffy, 2005)[12]. Specifically, there have been discussions and critiques on the UN Draft Definition for the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. When the United Nations was formed after World War II, it

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school,188 of them school children. Over 600 people were wounded, more than half children. Information retrieved from Tuathail, G. (2009) "Placing Blame: Making Sense of Beslan", *Political Geography*, Vol.28, pp.4-15.
11 SC Res. 1566, S/RES/1566 (2004) at para. 3, available at: www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc_re solutions04. html. For background and debate, see 'Security Council Acts Unanimously to Adopt Resolution Strongly Condemning Terrorism as One of the Most Serious Threats to Peace', available at: www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2004/sc8214.doc.htm.
12 Duffy, H. (2005) *The 'War on Terror' and the Framework of International Law* (2005), Cambridge University Press, pp.29-74.

had the opportunity to draw on the groundwork laid by the League of Nations. In 1937, the League of Nations attempted to define acts of terrorism as "all criminal acts directed against a State and intended or calculated to create a state of terror in the minds of particular persons, or a group of persons, or the general public." (Schmid, 2011). However, the League of Nations Convention against Terrorism failed to garner sufficient support for it to come into effect, having been signed by 24 states but ratified by only one (colonial India). The responsibility for the treaty was not transferred to the United Nations in 1945. The UN initiated its discussions on terrorism in 1972, prompted by terrorist attacks at the Munich Olympic Games (resulting in the deaths of 11 Israeli athletes) and Lod Airport (28 people killed). In that year, the General Assembly (GA) adopted a resolution with the lengthy title 'Measures to prevent international terrorism which endangers or takes innocent human lives or jeopardizes fundamental freedoms, and study of the underlying causes of those forms of terrorism and acts of violence which lie in misery, frustration, grievance and despair, and which cause some people to sacrifice human lives, including their own, in an attempt to effect radical changes.' The title itself reflects the division within the United Nations on the issue. In the 1970s, many non-aligned states, some recently gaining independence, viewed certain acts of terrorism (like hostage-taking) as legitimate in struggles for national liberation. It would take years for the right to self-determination and terrorism to be disentangled—a process still ongoing (Schmid, 2011).

Therefore, it is noteworthy to mention that the prevailing tendency towards ambiguity has led to a lack of a widely accepted definition of terrorism today. In these terms, Richards contends that this "failure to craft an agreed-upon definition of terrorism"[13] creates a conceptual void, allowing both state and non-state actors to define terrorism in ways that align with their perceived political and strategic interests. An illustrative example of this issue is the existence of varying definitions within different departments or agencies of the same government. In the case of the U.S. government, it employs over twenty definitions for terrorism, distinguishing between its international and domestic aspects, as well as federal or other forms of crime. Adding complexity, the U.S. State Department altered its definition of terrorism at least seven times between 1982 and 2004, currently relying on the definition in Title 22 of the United States Code, Section 2656f(d): "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents." An accompanying clarification interprets the term 'non-combatant' to encompass not only civilians, but also military personnel not deployed in a war zone or a war-like setting as per 22 USC 2656f(d)(2)[14]. The U.S.

13 Richards, A. (2015) *Conceptualizing Terrorism*, Oxford University Press, 3.
14 Quoted in U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Counterterrorism, Country Reports on Terrorism 2014, United States Department of State (June 2015), 388, http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/239631.pdf.

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) characterizes terrorism as the "unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a Government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives." According to the FBI, terrorism encompasses acts intended to intimidate or coerce civilian populations, influence policy through intimidation or coercion, and affect government conduct through mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping[15]. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) defines terrorism as any act of violence posing a danger to human life or critical infrastructure, committed by a group or individual within the United States or its territories without direction from a foreign terrorist group. The act, a violation of U.S. criminal laws, is seemingly intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population, influence government policy through intimidation or coercion, or affect government conduct through mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping[16]. Finally, the U.S. Department of Defense defines terrorism as the "unlawful use of violence or threat of violence, often motivated by religious, political, or other ideological beliefs, to instill fear and coerce governments or societies in pursuit of goals that are usually political[17]." Predictably, each of the aforementioned definitions is shaped by the priorities and specific interests of the respective agency. The State Department's focus lies in highlighting the premeditated and calculated nature of terrorism, distinguishing it from spontaneous political violence. Notably, it is the only definition among the four that underscores both the inherently political character of terrorism and the fundamental "subnational" attribute of the perpetrators. The State Department's approach is significant for broadening the scope of terrorist acts beyond the conventional focus on civilians to encompass "noncombatant targets." This category includes not only assassinations of military personnel but also attacks on various facilities frequented by off-duty service members, military installations, and armed personnel, irrespective of their armed or on-duty status, as long as they are not deployed in a war zone or war-like setting. However, a shortcoming in the State Department's definition is its failure to address the psychological dimension of terrorism. Terrorism involves not only the act of violence but also the threat of violence, strategically conceived to have profound psychological impacts on a broader audience beyond the immediate target—an aspect succinctly described by Jenkins as "terrorism is theatre.[18]" (Hoffman, 1998). Furthermore, numerous definitions assume that terrorism inherently

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15 FBI, "Definitions of Terrorism in the U.S. Code," https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/investigate/terrorism/terrorism-definition

16 U.S. Department of Homeland Security, "Homeland Security: Countering Violent Extremism," https://www.dhs.gov/topic/countering-violent-extremism

17 U.S. Department of Defense, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms (Washington, D.C: Joint Publication 1-02, as amended through February 16, 2016), http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp1_02.pdf.

18 Jenkins, B. (1975) *International Terrorism: A New Mode of Conflict*, in International Terrorism and World Security, ed. David Carlton and Carlo Schaerf, 16.

involves the use of violence or force. Narveson[19] (1991), for instance, defines terrorism as "a political action or sequence of actions… to inspire the 'target' population with terror, by means of random acts of violence." However, this requirement faces a challenge as not all actions intending harm necessarily involve violence. An example is the anthrax attacks in November 2001, where letters containing anthrax spores were mailed, causing fatalities and illnesses. Despite the absence of traditional violence, it was labeled a "terrorist act." Similarly, acts labeled as "ecoterrorism" and "cyberterrorism" aim to cause harm but may not involve direct violence (Jackson, 2016)[20]. However, insisting on harm as a requirement might be too restrictive, as threats without actual harm could still qualify as terrorism. An incident in October 2008 involved letters with harmless white powder sent to Chase Bank branches and federal banking regulators, threatening recipients. Although the powder posed no danger, the credible threat of harm led to labeling it as part of a terrorist plot, suggesting that harm or the threat of harm, rather than violence, is a crucial element in defining "terrorism." Finally, it could be worthwhile listing elements that should be excluded from the definition of terrorism embracing the approach suggested by Thomas H. Mitchell[21] according to whom a definition of terrorism must establish what terrorism is not. Embracing this view, Schmid (2011) proposes that such a list should exclude various activities from being classified as acts of terrorism, such as mere property damage, sabotage like interrupting an oil pipeline, attacks on guarded military installations, police stations during armed conflict, cases of unintended collateral damage, attacks on empty secular or religious symbols, specific types of assassinations targeting only the direct victim, acts that wouldn't qualify as war crimes or crimes against humanity in a situation of war, guerrilla warfare activities not constituting war crimes, legal use of force by legitimate authorities for public order within the rule of law, spontaneous acts of political violence like riots and demonstrations, industrial action such as strikes, and revolts.

## 1.2. The Problem in Defining Terrorism

The previous section emphasized how defining terrorism has been a considerable focus of attention for academics, lawyers, and diplomats. Yet, while some advancements have been made, with changes evident in the national laws of various states and discussions within international forums, including those facilitated by the UN, there is no indication of a definitive resolution to the ongoing challenge of defining terrorism

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19 Narveson, J. (1991). *Terrorism and morality* in Frey, R., and Morris, C., eds., Violence, terrorism, and justice, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 116–169.
20 Jackson, R. (2016) *Routledge Handbook of Critical Terrorism Studies*. 1st edn. Taylor and Francis. Available at: https://www.perlego.com/book/1554045/routledge-handbook-of-critical-terrorism-studies-pdf.
21 Kelly, M. J. and Mitchell, T. H. (1981) 'Transnational terrorism and the western elite press', *Political Communication*, 1(3), pp. 269–296.

(Roberts, 2014). Even experts and experienced scholars in the field, indeed, face the challenge of reaching a consensus on a singular definition of terrorism, mirroring the lack of agreement among individual agencies within the same governmental apparatus. In his comprehensive survey, *Political Terrorism: A Research Guide*, first published in 1984, Alex P. Schmid dedicated over a hundred pages to scrutinizing more than a hundred distinct definitions of terrorism. This exhaustive effort aimed at identifying a broadly acceptable and reasonably comprehensive elucidation of the term. Specifically, from 1983 to 2007, Schmid distributed questionnaires to researchers in terrorism studies to gather insights into their understanding of terrorism. In 1984, he identified 22 elements that were common in the definitions provided by the surveyed experts. The consensus definition established in 1984 incorporated 13 of these 22 elements, and the revised version in 1988 included 16 of the original elements. Following further consultations with experts in terrorism studies, Schmid finalized the Revised Academic Consensus Definition of Terrorism in 2011, which retained 12 of the original 22 elements (Schmid, 2023). In this latter, Schmid asserted that terrorism involves a doctrine advocating the effectiveness of a specific form of fear-inducing, coercive political violence, and a conspiratorial practice of calculated, demonstrative, and unrestrained violent actions. It primarily targets civilians and non-combatants, aiming for propagandistic and psychological impact on various audiences and conflict parties. Furthermore, the tactic of terrorism manifests in three key contexts: (i) illegal state repression, (ii) propagandistic activities by non-state actors in times of peace or outside conflict zones, and (iii) an illicit tactic of irregular warfare employed by both state and non-state actors[22]. Remarkably, Schmid finally listed over 250 possible definitions of terrorism.

As briefly aforementioned, one of the primary motivations for seeking to define terrorism has been to establish a foundation for the proscription of specific terrorist organizations. Delving deeper into the need to re-conceptualize terrorism in order to facilitate international cooperation and the best allocation of resources to combat the phenomenon, the label of "terrorism", as previously seen, is often times used without real rigor as to what terrorism is and what its strict parameters are; for instance, the term terrorism has been coined to refer to demonstrators in Libya, Tunisia, and Thailand, to the Israeli assault on a flotilla of ships seeking to breach the Israeli blockade of Gaza, to American drone strikes in Pakistan, to NATO and Western airstrikes against Libya, to Syrian rebels seeking to topple the Assad government; and to Julian Assange, the founder of Wikileaks, who was referred to as a "high-tech terrorist" by U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell (Richards, 2014). In other words, a lack of agreement on a clear, comprehensive, and cohesive

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22 Schmid, A. (2011) *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research*. 1st edn. Taylor and Francis. Available at: https://www.perlego.com/book/1514361/the-routledge-handbook-of-terrorism-research-pdf.

definition of terrorism undermines the moral and normative stance against terrorism.

Moreover, there are recognized risks associated with outright outlawing entire movements solely based on being labeled as terrorists. According to Roberts (2015), there are three main threats outlining defining terrorism. First, categorizing an entire movement as "terrorist" can be oversimplified and may amount to a significant distortion. An instance of this is the 1988 U.S. and U.K. designation of the African National Congress as "terrorist," reflecting a failure to distinguish between a specific activity of one faction at a particular time and the movement as a whole. A contemporary example of the simplistic use of the term is the Ukrainian government labeling the pro-Russian separatist forces in Ukraine as "terrorists." Furthermore, classifying an organization as a terrorist might hinder the possibility of forming a de facto or overt alliance with them in the future, especially when circumstances change, and there is a perceived urgency for an alliance against a more significant threat. An illustrative case could be the pressure in late 2014 for forces opposing the Islamic State to reach some form of agreement with the Turkish Kurdish organization PKK, despite being classified as a "terrorist organization" by numerous Western states and Turkey. Moreover, the problem of defining terrorism is further complicated in modern days by one party's tactical use of characterizing another party as a terrorist (Acharya, 2009). Plus, it is noteworthy that individuals who lack military strength and face marginalization are often labeled as terrorists. In fact, their pursuit of self-governance or self-determination is frequently thwarted by influential entities, either domestically or internationally. When their rightful appeals are ignored, they may respond, at times resorting to violence and at times not. In such scenarios, each party deems the other as terrorists, each attempting to rationalize its own use of force while condemning the violence of the opposing side. The fundamental question lies in delineating the boundary between the pursuit of nationalist identity and acts of terrorism, as well as distinguishing between legitimate political demands within a nation and the suppression of those making such demands (Acharya, 2009).

Therefore, addressing the challenge of defining terrorism has consumed considerable attention from scholars, legal experts, and diplomats. While there has been notable progress in the formulation of definitions within national legislations and various international discussions, including those under UN auspices, a definitive resolution to the definition problem remains elusive. In this respect, Roberts (2015) proposed four key assumptions regarding this issue: first, like other abstract terms in political discourse, such as "imperialism" and "democracy," the core meaning of terrorism is clear, while the boundaries remain subject to debate and are likely to stay so. Subsequently, the meaning of terrorism has evolved and varies among different countries and political traditions. The inherent diversity of views in international relations contributes to these differences.

Thirdly, any definition of terrorism should incorporate the acknowledgment of state terror. Excluding this aspect from the definition could be seen as favoring a statist perspective, providing ammunition to critics of terrorism studies who view the entire project as overly statist. Finally, given that terrorism is a concept open to interpretation, the term should be used judiciously, with scholarly caution. Academics focused on the subject may need to address potential misuse of the term more actively and what this might implicate.

1.3. Terrorism: Historical Context and Meaning's Development

An effective way of approaching the definition issue is by focusing on the historical roots of the term as examining the origins of the term "terrorism" sheds light on its evolution over time. The word "terror" has Latin roots deriving from the verb *terrere*, which means "bring someone to tremble with great fear" referring to an individual psychological state of mind and has been around for centuries (Schmid, 2011). Similar expressions are found in other Indo-Germanic languages like Sanskrit and Russian, all conveying a sense of fear, dread, and alarm. The addition of the suffix "-ism" is often associated with systematic characteristics, either in a theoretical context, reflecting a political philosophy, or on a practical level, indicating a particular mode of action (Schmid, 2023). In 1793, during the French Revolution, the National Convention, led by the Jacobins, declared "terror to be the order of the day" in response to threats from aristocrats and foreign forces. Initially employed as a tool of state repression against royalist "traitors," the *regime de la terreur*, orchestrated by the Committee of Public Safety, soon expanded its scope to include republicans. This period, known as the Reign of Terror, witnessed the arrest of over 300,000 people, with around 17,000 officially executed. An interesting turn occurred when those who had initially supported draconian measures turned against Robespierre and accused him of "terrorism." This marked a shift in the term's meaning, suggesting an illegitimate abuse of power rather than a sanctioned use of terror by the state. The term gained prominence in Europe, reaching England in 1795 through conservative writer Edmund Burke. Over time, the concept of terrorism underwent significant transformations. In the latter half of the 19th century, there was a shift from state actors to non-state actors as perpetrators. The invention of dynamite and the widespread dissemination of news through the rotary press facilitated the rise of non-state terrorists, such as anarchists and social revolutionaries, engaging in "propaganda by the deed" to draw attention to their causes and instill fear (Schmid, 2023). The evolution of terrorism has turned it into a complex phenomenon, positioned at the crossroads of individual and collective action, emotional and rational motives, and conventional and unconventional tactics. Scholars note that terrorism can serve as a potent form of protest, a feeble form of rebellion, or a specialized tactic within broader processes of tyranny or warfare (Schmid,

2011). In *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*[23] (2019), the authors attempted to recognize the features and elements of terrorist violence that have persisted across various historical contexts. The chapter highlights the consistent trends in the evolution of terrorist methods and recurrent patterns of terrorist behavior. Simultaneously, it acknowledges crucial junctures where the dynamics of terrorism underwent significant changes. First, terrorism has always been about the contest for power, namely competition for authority and control[24]. Terrorism has frequently occurred in situations where the principles of democracy are challenged, political authority is eroded, or even when the entire framework of international order faces scrutiny. Terrorist violence has been a recourse for those lacking power, both politically and socially. It has been linked to various ideologies, theories of historical development, and strategies of revolutionary change. Regardless of their specific motivations, all terrorists, in some manner, aimed to contest the state. The nature of this contestation has varied: some challenged the state's existence, territorial boundaries, or ideological stance, while others pointed to specific policies and perceived injustices. However, the underlying logic remained consistent, namely that terrorism existed in a dialogical relationship with the state. Consequently, terrorist violence should be viewed as an intrinsic consequence of modern state formation (Bew et al., 2019). Moreover, the authors argue that terrorist violence in the twentieth century possessed both an instrumental and fanatic quality. In other words, terrorism should be comprehended as a rational act, coexisting with other human impulses such as fanaticism, rage, and millenarianism. Terrorism has not typically been the last resort of reluctant revolutionaries, but it has been rather motivated by the belief that murder, or destruction could be a purifying or noble act. In this sense, terrorism is not just a condition of modernity or an outcome of modern political and strategic thought; it also taps into something more deeply ingrained in the human condition (Bew et al. 2019). As the twentieth century approached, Europe and North America were already acquainted with the concept of terrorism. In the preceding four decades, there had been a series of prominent assassinations and bombings carried out by individuals openly advocating the use of terrorist methods (Laqueur 1977; Hoffman 1998)[25]. Anarchists, radical socialists, and radical nationalists had all adopted this form of violence to achieve their objectives. The late nineteenth century witnessed the formulation of concepts like the "propaganda of the deed," legitimizing acts of militancy by vanguard groups. During this period, the first terrorist organizations, such as Narodnya Volya

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23 Bew, J et al. (2019) "The Long Twentieth Century", in Erica Chenoweth, and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019)

24 The concept of terrorism as the seizure of power also corresponds to Bruce Hoffman's fundamental assumption developed in his *Inside Terrorism* (1998). See also Burleigh, M. (2009) *Blood and Rage: A Cultural History of Terrorism*. New York: Harper Perennial.

25 Laqueur, W. (1977) *A History of Terrorism*. Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers. Hoffman, B. (1998) *Inside Terrorism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

in Russia, emerged, along with the initial sustained campaigns of violence, such as the Fenian movement's resistance against British rule in Ireland (Crenshaw 1981; Bolt et al. 2008[26]). Terrorism in the early twentieth century was frequently perceived as an extension of revolutionary politics. Practitioners of terrorist methods typically aimed to accelerate historical change rather than waiting for a moment predetermined by historical conditions for triumph or deliverance. Consequently, successful acts of terrorism carried the potential to initiate a broader chain of events as in the case of Archduke Franz Ferdinand's assassination by Gavrilo Princip, a member of the "Young Bosnians" nationalist revolutionary society, and this murder helped catalyze World War I (Bew et al. 2019). In the aftermath of World War I and the subsequent shift to total war and industrialized state violence, terrorism temporarily lost its appeal. However, the unsettled international equilibrium post-1918, coupled with growing social disorder, provided new opportunities for terrorist strategies. The United States experienced a resurgence of terrorist violence in the immediate post-war period, linked to labor unrest and the "red scare." This episode had a modern resonance, featuring anonymous attacks in the name of a global cause. The June 1919 bombings, attributed to followers of the anarchist Luigi Galleani, led to a draconian state legislative response, focusing suspicion on immigrant communities ((Murray 1955; Gage 2009; Jensen 2009)[27].While these events marked the end of late nineteenth-century anarchist-inspired terrorism, the adoption of terrorist methods continued, becoming more associated with nationalist and anti-imperialist goals. This migration involved conscious emulation and historical learning, representing an underlying continuity. Across the British Empire's dominions, especially in South Asia and the Middle East, nationalist terrorism proliferated. In Ireland, terrorist methods were re-embraced as part of a broader campaign for independence, notably by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) after 1918. The IRA's insurgency, led by figures like Michael Collins, became a template for other "freedom fighters" facing political-military inferiority against the state (Bew et al. 2019). In 1930s Palestine, Zionist groups, particularly the Irgun and later the Lehi, embraced terrorist methods in their struggle for Jewish nationhood. The Irgun, led by Menachem Begin, resumed its struggle in 1944, emphasizing the intrinsic necessity of terrorist violence. In this historical context, Yitzhak Shamir, a leader of the Lehi, assassinated the British Minister for Middle East Affairs, Lord Moyne, in Cairo in November 1944 (Byman, 1998)[28].

26 Crenshaw, M. (1981) *The Causes of Terrorism*, Comparative Politics, 13(4): 379–99. Bolt, N., D. Betz, and J. Azari (2008) *Propaganda of the Deed 2008: Understanding the Phenomenon*. London: Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies
27 Murray, R. K. (1955) *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919–1920*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. p. 129. Gage, B. (2011) "Terrorism and the American Experience: A State of the Field," Journal of American History, 98(1): 73–94. Jensen, R. B. (2009) "The International Campaign Against Anarchist Terrorism, 1880–1930s," Terrorism and Political Violence, 21(1): 89–109.
28 Byman, D. (1998) *The Logic of Ethnic Terrorism*, Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, 21(2): 149–69.

The Irgun's resumption of violence and the Lehi's activities reflected a global trend where terrorist violence became a mechanism for challenging the imperial state. More generally, the chaos and instability of World War II did appear to create opportunities for those inclined to utilize terrorist methods. After 1945, as several European empires grappled with maintaining territorial integrity and political authority, various groups endeavored to employ terrorist methods, aiming to replicate what seemed to be successful insurgencies in Ireland or Palestine. In regions like Algeria and Palestine, terrorism was just one tactic employed within broader insurgency movements. However, this form of violence proved to be effective in invigorating previously frustrated nationalist organizations, prompting European empires towards faster decolonization. This reinforced the perception that terrorist violence was integral to struggles for self-determination. Consequently, there was a renewed drive to adopt similar methods, spreading to other nationalist causes. Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement consciously aimed to emulate their Zionist adversaries. In the mid-1960s, Arafat assumed control of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), redirecting it towards "armed struggle" as the exclusive "strategy" for achieving Palestinian statehood. Simultaneously, the Provisional IRA (PIRA) emerged in Northern Ireland, seeking to complete the "unfinished revolution" for complete Irish independence. Both groups drew explicit inspiration from events in Algeria and Cyprus. However, the definition of a "colonial" conflict was subject to dispute. While the groups saw themselves in anti-imperialist struggles, these claims were challenged. In Palestine, the PLO confronted the new Israeli state, which perceived the terrorist threat as existential (Cobban, 1984)[29]. Similarly, the "colonial" nature of the British state in Northern Ireland was complicated by the presence of over a million Protestant Unionists fiercely opposing Irish unity and independence. In the post-1945 era, various groups sought to deploy terrorist methods, especially in regions like Algeria and Palestine, where terrorism became one tactic employed by broader movements of insurgency. Despite being one among many strategies, terrorism proved instrumental in energizing nationalist organizations and speeding up decolonization for European empires. The notion emerged that terrorist violence was an indispensable aspect of any struggle for self-determination. The appeal of terrorist violence persisted into the late twentieth century, spreading to leftist movements in Europe and Latin America. Even in countries without recent histories of authoritarian rule, such as France and the United States, there was a burst of left-wing-inspired terrorism. In Latin America, social inequalities and military-backed governments led to the emergence of organizations mixing guerrilla and terrorist tactics in the name of radical left-communist politics. Revolutionary alternatives inspired by Mao Zedong's "people's war" and Cuba's

29 Cobban, H. (1984) *The Palestinian Liberation Organisation: People, Power and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

success further fueled this trend (Tanham, 2006)[30]. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, a new form of religiously framed political violence emerged in the Middle East and South Asia. Islamist groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami, sought the restoration of Islamic power through the creation of avowedly Islamic states. The failure to secure power led some Islamists to embrace terrorism as a legitimate jihad against what they perceived as enemies of Islam. This shift was particularly evident in Egypt, where groups like the Islamic Liberation Organization and Islamic Jihad engaged in violent attacks against the state (Kepel, 2005)[31]. In the late twentieth century, the emergence of Hezbollah marked a distinctive development in the realm of terrorism. Established in Lebanon, Hezbollah sought to drive Israel out of the region through a combination of unconventional methods, including guerrilla warfare and the pioneering use of suicide terrorism. This campaign held a certain level of success, leading to the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the area and compelling Israeli forces to establish a 'security zone' along the Lebanese border. Hezbollah's approach to insurgency and terrorism during the 1980s demonstrated a unique blend of conventional and unconventional strategies. While their proficiency in more traditional forms of guerrilla warfare was evident, the group also pioneered the use of suicide bombings, setting a precedent that would later be adopted by various other militant organizations. The tactics employed by Hezbollah had a lasting impact, influencing the evolution of terrorism in the contemporary era. This marked a departure from the more localized nationalist struggles that characterized earlier periods of terrorism. Hezbollah's successful campaign against Israel showcased the potential efficacy of unconventional methods in confronting powerful adversaries, laying the groundwork for future militant groups to adopt similar strategies. The group's ability to achieve its goals through a combination of armed resistance and strategic innovation further underscored the evolving nature of terrorism and the diverse tactics employed by different groups in pursuit of their objectives (Bew et al. 2019). The "second wave" of insurgency and terrorism occurred in the early 1990s when returning jihadists exploited the crisis of the post-colonial state to overcome secular Arab regimes in countries like Egypt, Libya, and Algeria. Following failures in this endeavor, Al Qaeda, formed as a transnational fulcrum for jihadist fighters, shifted its focus to the "far enemy," particularly the United States. This culminated in the 1998 attacks on American embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, with Al Qaeda increasingly exploring ways to strike the U.S. "homeland," setting the stage for the devastating 9/11 attacks (Bew et al. 2019). The latter, according to Hoffman (1998) redefined the concept of terrorism. The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, had a profound impact on the conceptualization and response to terrorism. Carried out by

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30 Tanham, G. K. (2006) *Communist Revolutionary Warfare: From the Vietminh to the Viet Cong*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.
31 Kepel, G. (2005) *The Roots of Radical Islam*. London: Saqi.

nineteen individuals affiliated with al-Qaeda, these attacks resulted in the hijacking and deliberate crashing of four passenger aircraft, causing nearly three thousand casualties. The scale of this onslaught surpassed previous terrorist incidents[32] and necessitated a comprehensive and far-reaching response. President George W. Bush characterized the attacks as a "new kind of evil" and pledged to eradicate the perpetrators. In his subsequent address to Congress, he emphasized the "war on terror," extending the focus beyond al-Qaeda to include a broad range of potential adversaries[33]. The conflation of terrorism with a state of terror, as opposed to the specifically political phenomenon of terrorism, marked a significant shift in the rhetoric and approach of the United States. This semantic choice had far-reaching implications, leading to an open-ended struggle against perceived threats or sources of fear. The U.S. administration expanded the scope to include not only terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda but also "rogue" states[34] forming an "axis of evil" and Middle Eastern dictators believed to possess weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The conflation of terrorism and WMD played a crucial role in justifying the invasion of Iraq in March 2003. The link between al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein became a focal point, despite limited evidence connecting Iraq to the 9/11 attacks. The "war on terror" transformed into a broader campaign against evil, with Saddam Hussein representing a specific adversary. As such, in the early twenty-first century, terrorism was redefined to encompass not only the specific acts of violence but also the broader existential threats and fears facing civilization. The "war on terror" became a crusade against evil, reflecting the complex interplay of geopolitical considerations, security threats, and the need for a tangible adversary to galvanize national sentiment.

1.4. Psychology of Terror: Conduct, Causation, and Purpose of Terrorism

A recurring theme in various definitions of terrorism is the intricate interplay of psychological fear and the deliberate cultivation of intense terror. In 1985, Martha Cren-shaw[35] highlighted that the effectiveness of terrorism is significantly shaped by the psychological impact of violence on audiences. As already noted, a crucial distinction be-

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32 Around 477 people perished in a 1978 fire deliberately set by terrorists at a movie theater in Abadan, Iran. See Johnston, "Worst Terrorist Strikes—Worldwide" available at https://www.johnstonsarchive.net/terrorism/wrjp255us.html
33 Quoted in Ken Herman, "After the Assault: U.S. Braces for Crusade Against 'Evil,' " Atlanta Journal-Constitution, September 17, 2001.
34 See White House, "The President Delivers State of the Union Address," in which President Bush declared: "States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic."
35 Crenshaw, M. (1985) *Terrorism in Context*. Pennsylvania State University Press, p. 400.

tween terrorism and other types of political violence lies in the fact that the direct victim of the violence is often not the primary target of the terrorist threat. This concept can be visually represented through this diagram elaborated by Schmid[36] (1980):
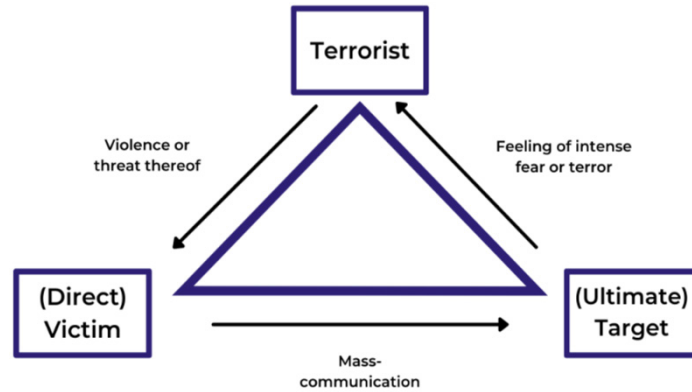


For terrorists, the individuals subjected to acts of terrorism function as catalysts for evoking emotions, with terror being the predominant sentiment. The objective is to use these emotions, particularly fear, as a tool to intimidate, coerce, impress, provoke, or otherwise influence third parties. Generating fear is not an end in itself but rather a means to achieve a broader goal. The primary focus is on eliciting specific reactions from target audiences. In contrast to a conventional assassination, where the perpetrator's primary goal is to eliminate the victim, a terrorist act initiates a process. The aim is not only to harm the immediate victim but also to instill fear in others, prompting thoughts like, "Could I be the next target?" Thus, terrorist murders serve a dual purpose, targeting both the immediate victim and others who may be affected by the fear they instill. Duffy (2008) reiterates this latter concept asserting that terrorism typically involves multiple subjective layers, with the acts serving to achieve specific gains, often driven by ideological motives rather than personal ones. In addition to the requisite criminal intent for the actual conduct (such as bombing or murder), those responsible for terrorist acts usually harbor the intention to produce broader effects[37]. These effects typically involve spreading a state of terror and/ or coercing a government or organization to take specific actions toward an ultimate goal. From a legal perspective, the presence of this dual subjective layer in many definitions suggests that, if terrorism is considered a crime, it shares characteristics with certain other international offenses, specifically being a *dolus specialis* crime. This implies that, apart from the criminal intent related to the underlying criminal act, there must be an additional

36 Schmid, A et al. (1980) *The Triangle of Insurgent Terrorism*, Insurgent Terrorism and the Western News Media.
37 Duffy, H. (2005) *The 'War on Terror' and the Framework of International Law* (2005), Cambridge University Press, pp.29-74.

intent directed toward an ultimate goal or purpose[38]. It is noteworthy that not all acts of violence carried out by terrorists are inherently "terroristic." In certain cases, terrorists may engage in violence without explicitly intending to instill terror, and they may not even claim responsibility for such actions (Schmid, 2023). In the *Handbook of Terrorism Research* (2011), Schmid sustained that at its core, 'terror' is primarily a psychological state marked by intense fear of imminent danger on an individual level and the presence of a pervasive climate of fear on a collective level. In contrast, 'terrorism' represents an active engagement, method, or tactic that, as a psychological consequence, seeks to generate this 'terror' state. To further define the term 'terror', which is of pivotal importance, M.E. Silberstein[39], a physician, has described the feeling of 'terror' in 1977 in these terms: "Terror is a state of intense fear induced by the systematic threat of imprisonment, mutilation, or death. It is intensified when the victim is helpless at the hands of another human being. We are all afraid of being hurt or killed. The terrorist manipulates persons and governments by making the threat of bodily harm manifest". Silberstein also added that since the victims of terrorism are typically unarmed, non-combatant, and selected randomly, their complete vulnerability intensifies the fear experienced by the victims. This fear extends to all those witnessing the plight of the victims, who, like the victims, are equally defenseless and share the common desire to lead undisturbed lives. These bystanders, considered secondary victims of terrorism, collectively perceive that their lives are equally at risk, instilling an equal sense of fear for their safety. Nevertheless, this immediately prompts the question: do all those witnessing the victim's plight, as suggested by Silberstein, truly experience terror? Reflecting on the global responses to the events of 9/11, the answer hinges on whether observers identified or sympathized with the nearly 3,000 direct victims, the 19 suicide terrorists affiliated with the Al-Qaeda organization who orchestrated the attacks, or some third party, such as the U.S. government. In truth, a diverse spectrum of reactions to acts of terrorism exists, spanning from highly negative to strongly positive, contingent upon whom the observers align themselves (Schmid, 2023). Individual reactions to acts of terrorism include those who are:

1. terrorized and intimidated;
2. panicking and confused;
3. frightened and showing a loss of confidence;
4. worrying and distressed;
5. indifferent or wavering;
6. angered, with hardened opposition to the terrorist cause;

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38 E.g., Persecution and genocide. For a discussion on the category of dolus specialis in the context of genocide, see Cassese, International Criminal Law, supra note 94, p. 103.
39 Silverstein, M. (1977) *Emergency Medical Preparedness*. Terrorism, 1 (1), pp. 51-52.

7. positively impressed by the short-term impact of the terrorist act;
8. sympathetic to the terrorists' cause;
9. supportive of terrorist tactics;
10. seeking to join a terrorist organization.[40]

Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, certain responses observed in parts of the Muslim world, as outlined in points 7 to 10, were not uncommon. This outcome aligned with one of Al Qaeda's primary objectives behind orchestrating these attacks (Schmid, 2023).

Moreover, it is also important to identify who is generally the ultimate target of terrorism as well as terrorists' purpose and motivation behind terrorists' attacks.
The impact of terrorist actions varies based on the objectives pursued by the perpetrators. Demonstrative acts of indiscriminate violence by terrorists can target up to ten different audiences and conflict parties, influencing them in diverse ways which Schmid[41] (2023) assessed:

1. adversary (-ies) – usually government(s);
2. society of the adversary;
3. direct victims and their families and friends;
4. others who have reason to fear that they might become the next targets; members of a terrorist organisation;
5. other rival terrorist or political party organizations; constituency terrorists claim to represent/act for;
6. potentially sympathetic sectors of domestic and foreign (diaspora) publics; neutral distant publics;
7. the mass and social media.


A single act of terrorism is unlikely to resonate uniformly across all audiences and direct conflict parties. Nonetheless, terrorism, as a tactic, involves using violence or the threat of violence to generate messages. Without the amplification provided by mass communication, an act of violence would be limited to its local impact. This leads us to a third approach in defining terrorism: distinguishing it from other forms of political crime and violence. One strategy involves narrowing the definition of 'terrorism' by excluding certain types of violence and destruction which will be explored in the next sections.

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40 Alex P. Schmid, (2020): "Revisiting the Wicked Problem of Defining Terrorism". Contemporary Voices, 1 (Terrorism: Its Past, Present & Future Study – A Special Issue to Commemorate CSTPV at (25), p. 2.
41 Adapted from Robin P.J.M. Gerrits (1992): "Terrorists' Perspectives: Memoirs"; in: David L. Paletz and Alex P. Schmid (Eds.). Terrorism and the Media. How Researchers, Terrorists, Government, Press, Public, Victims View and Use the Media. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, p.33.

## 1.5. Terrorism Definition under a Legal Perspective

From a legal standpoint, international terrorism is not a readily accessible concept either as the universal condemnation of terrorism is not matched by a universal understanding of what is meant by the term. Yet, international legal instruments provide a substantial contribution to render the definition of terrorism less blurred. Author Geoffrey Levitt[42] defined the search for a legal definition of terrorism as the quest for the Holy Grail (1986). While the international legal standing of terrorism itself may be a topic of ongoing discussion, it is evident that the lack of a global consensus on its definition has not hindered legal progress in dealing with terrorism-related issues. Specific conventions tailored to address distinct forms of terrorism, initiatives by regional organizations for their specific contexts, and advancements in various realms of international law have furnished legal mechanisms to address behaviors commonly recognized as acts of terrorism (Duffy, 2015)[43]. The initial coordinated effort within international law to address the challenge of defining terrorism occurred through a set of conferences known as the International Conferences for the Unification of Penal Law. These conferences, conducted in multiple European capitals during the 1920s and 1930s, aimed to establish a unified approach. Notably, the Sixth Conference in Copenhagen in 1935 took a significant step by adopting a model penal provision on terrorism. The crucial articles of this provision encompassed various acts, such as intentional actions targeting "life, physical integrity, health, or freedom" of Different authorities engaging in actions that result in a catastrophe by obstructing or disrupting transportation or utility services, intentionally destroying public buildings, deliberately employing explosives in a public location, or committing any purposeful act that poses a threat to human lives and the community. If any of these acts put the community in danger or induces a state of terror intended to alter or hinder the functioning of public authorities or disturb international relations[44] (Levitt, 1986). The international initiative before the war aimed at establishing a legal framework to suppress terrorism reached its peak with the 1937 League of Nations Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of Terrorism[45]. According to Article 1(2) of this Convention, "acts of terrorism" are defined as "criminal acts directed against a State and intended or calculated

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42 Levitt, G. (1986) *Is Terrorism Worth Defining?* Ohio Northern University Law Review, 97.
43 Duffy, H. (2005) *The 'War on Terror' and the Framework of International Law*, Cambridge University Press, pp.29-74.
44 Sixth International Conference for the Unification of Penal Law, Copenhagen, Aug. 31-Sept. 3, 1935, Actes de la Conference, 1938, 420, reprinted in M. BASSIOUNI,INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM AND POLITICAL CRIMES 472 (1975). Other articles of thedraft text covered such matters as conspiracy, incitement, and assistance.
45 League of Nations Doc. C.546.M383.1937.V. (1937). This convention, which was signed by 23 states, ratified by one (India), and acceded to by one (Mexico), never entered into force.

to create a state of terror in the minds of particular persons, or a group of persons, or the general public." For an act to fall under the Convention, it had to meet three criteria: (1) be an "act of terrorism" as per Article 1(2); (2) be directed against a party to the Convention; and (3) be one of the specified acts outlined in Articles 2 and 3. These acts included "any willful act causing death or grievous bodily harm or loss of liberty" to specific categories of public officials, "willful destruction of, or damage to, public property," or "any willful act calculated to endanger the lives of members of the public. " In the early 1970s, the United Nations took a proactive role, assigning an ad hoc committee of the General Assembly in 1972 to deliberate on a Draft Comprehensive Convention and formulate a definition. Despite its efforts, the Committee's resulting report did not fulfill the objective but instead highlighted the challenges associated with the definitional dilemma. Notably, influenced by recent conflicts involving wars of national liberation against former colonial powers, the report exposed ongoing divisions regarding whether to include or exclude 'national liberation movements' (NLMs) within the definition. Consequently, endeavors to establish a universal definition were once again abandoned, favoring the adoption of conventions specifying forms of terrorism where international consensus could be achieved, as discussed later (Duffy, 2015). As the 1990s unfolded, shifts in global politics – the conclusion of the Cold War and Apartheid, the attainment of independence from colonialism by several African nations, and apparent progress toward peace in the Middle East – revived optimism among proponents of a global convention that consensus on a generic definition of terrorism might finally become attainable (Duffy, 2015). In 1994, a significant development occurred with the emergence of the 'Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism.' While not legally binding, this declaration received endorsement from the UN General Assembly. It characterized terrorism as 'criminal acts intended to instigate fear among the general public, a group, or specific individuals for political purposes.' Importantly, it denounced terrorism as 'unjustifiable under any circumstances, regardless of political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious, or other considerations[46].' (Duffy, 2015).

Following 9/11, international statements demonstrated unparalleled unity in the condemnation of international terrorism. The Security Council, for its part, without defining terrorism, called on states to adopt wide-ranging measures on the domestic level, including the criminalization of terrorist acts and their financing. Additionally, it encouraged states to endorse and enact existing conventions while also adopting pending ones, seemingly alluding to the Draft Comprehensive Convention on Terrorism. The present

46 This definition was reiterated in subsequent General Assembly resolutions. See, e.g., GA Res. 51/210 (1997); GA Res. 52/165, 15 December 1997, UN Doc. A/RES/52/165 (1997); GA Res. 53/108, 8 December 1998, UN Doc. A/RES/53/108 (1998); GA Res. 54/110, 9 December 1999, UN Doc. A/RES/54/110 (1999); GA Res. 55/158, 12 December 2000, UN Doc. A/RES/55/158 (2000).

informal definition of terrorism in relation to the Draft Comprehensive Convention (Article 2), prepared by the Coordinator for Negotiation purposes, delineates terrorism as the deliberate and unlawful act of (a) causing death or serious bodily harm to any individual; (b) inflicting severe harm on public and private assets, including state, governmental, or public facilities[47]; or (c) causing similar harm likely to result in significant economic loss. The definition additionally stipulates that 'the intent of the conduct, as discerned from its nature or context, is to instill fear in a population or compel a government or an international organization to perform or refrain from any action.' (Duffy, 2015). Over the years, critiques have emerged regarding various aspects of this definition, particularly its broad and vague terminology. The central controversy can be categorized into three interconnected groups. The first two pertain to the possible perpetrators of terrorism as outlined in the Convention's definition, specifically debating whether states and national liberation movements should be encompassed by the Convention. The third group focuses on the question of whether actions during armed conflicts should be exempted, and if so, whether such exemption applies to both conflicting 'parties.' (Duffy,2015). It is crucial to underline how negotiators attempted (without success, it appears) to shift away from the longstanding debate on whether oppressive states and liberation movements should be classified as terrorists. They proposed treating this issue not as an integral part of the terrorism definition but as a limitation on the Convention's scope. Consequently, Article 18 of the Draft Comprehensive Convention excludes acts conducted during armed conflict from the purview of the Article 2 definition. This exclusion is based on the premise that another set of international legal rules, namely International Humanitarian Law (IHL), already governs armed conflict, including national liberation wars. However, the current draft only excludes 'armed forces,' thereby providing an exemption solely to state forces, and not to others, such as non-state actors in non-international armed conflicts (NIACs) or liberation movements in the context of national liberation wars, whose conduct would also be governed by IHL. Specifically, according to Aleni[48] (2008), there is uncertainty about whether acts of violence typically classified as terrorism can be justified as a defense when committed by individuals or groups involved in self-determination wars against foreign occupation, commonly referred to as "freedom fighters." Some viewpoints argue that actions carried out in the resistance against foreign occupation, even if they violate international law and constitute crimes under international humanitarian law, should not be categorized as terrorism. Yet, the uncertainty surrounding this defense extends beyond

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47 The text provides 'including a place of public use, a State or government facility, a public transportation system, an infrastructure facility or the environment'. Informal text of Article 2 Report of the Working Group on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism, UN Doc. A/C.6/56/L.9, Annex I.B.
48 Aleni, L. (2008) *Distinguishing Terrorism from Wars of National Liberation in the Light of International Law*, Oxford University Press.

its mere existence to encompass its specific parameters. The question arises as to whether this defense applies to actions carried out by freedom fighters targeting civilians or if it is limited to actions against military personnel. Drawing a clear distinction between attacks on foreign military forces and those causing collateral damage to civilians proves challenging. For instance, consider a bombing, especially a suicide bombing, directed at a military target situated in a densely populated market (Aleni, 2008). In conclusion, the complexities surrounding the definition of terrorism and the ambiguities within proposed defenses, especially those related to actions in the context of self-determination wars, underscore the ongoing challenges in achieving a universally accepted framework. The delicate balance between acknowledging resistance against foreign occupation and protecting civilian populations remains a contentious issue, emphasizing the need for comprehensive and nuanced legal discussions in navigating these intricate matters. To address these challenges effectively, it becomes imperative to scrutinize the distinctions between guerrillas, insurgents, and terrorism, as such analyses contribute to a more refined understanding of the multifaceted nature of armed conflicts and the legal implications associated with them.

Therefore, the absence of a universally agreed-upon definition of terrorism has far-reaching implications for legal purposes. One consequence is that the lack of a clear definition can contribute to the politicization and misuse of the term "terrorism," leading to the curbing of activities that may not be terrorist in nature or, in some cases, not even criminal. This, in turn, can lead to states violating the rights of their own citizens or those of other states, including the principles outlined in international human rights law, within the context of their counter-terrorism efforts. When domestic laws also lack clarity regarding the full scope and meaning of criminalized activities and their implications, such laws may run afoul of the principle of legality, or *nullum crimen, nulla poena sine lege*. This principle stipulates those individuals should not face criminal trial or punishment under domestic or international criminal law unless the alleged act was criminalized at the time it was committed, preventing the retroactive application of criminal law. Importantly, this legal principle emphasizes the need for certainty in the law, ensuring that the criminalized acts and their associated penalties are clearly defined without doubt or ambiguity before their alleged commission[49]. Therefore, according to Saul[50] (2019), on one level, legal frameworks for terrorism may be considered unnecessary, as acts of terrorism can typically be prosecuted as standard criminal offenses. However, having a legal concept of terrorism introduces additional elements to regular offenses, distinguishing it and expressing a societal condemnation of, for example, politically or religiously motivated

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49 United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime. (2018) *Defining Terrorism*.
50 Saul, B. (2019) *Defining Terrorism: a conceptual minefield'*, in Erica Chenoweth, and others (eds), The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019).

violence aimed at intimidating a population or coercing a government. Pragmatically, this legal concept can trigger specific powers, procedures, preventive measures, and offenses that do not apply to regular crimes. It also facilitates international cooperation, and extradition, and addresses gaps in existing counter-terrorism treaties, although these advantages diminish when national laws define terrorism differently.

## 1.6. Distinctions as a Trajectory to Definition

Distinctions among different forms of political violence may be considered as a feasible path towards defining terrorism. Exploring guerrilla warfare and insurgency proves valuable, especially as both terms are frequently used interchangeably with terrorism and are often favored for their perceived neutrality. In practical terms, guerrillas and insurgents often employ similar tactics such as assassination, kidnapping, hit-and-run attacks, bombings, and hostage-taking, aiming to intimidate or coerce and influence behavior through the instigation of fear, much like terrorists[51]. Furthermore, all three groups—terrorists, guerrillas, and insurgents—commonly eschew uniforms or identifiable insignia, making them challenging to distinguish from non-combatants. However, despite the tendency to categorize them collectively as "irregulars," there exist fundamental distinctions among terrorists, guerrillas, and insurgents (Hoffman, 1998). For instance, the term "guerrilla" is commonly understood to describe a numerically larger group of armed individuals functioning as a military unit. These groups engage in military operations against enemy forces, seize and temporarily hold territory, and exert some form of sovereignty or control over a defined geographic area and its populace. As emphasized by Laqueur[52], this distinction holds practical significance; guerrilla units can consist of thousands, while urban terrorist units rarely exceed a small number, with the entire membership of urban terrorist "movements" typically numbering only a few hundred. "Insurgents" share these traits but go beyond hit-and-run tactics, incorporating what has been referred to as "revolutionary guerrilla warfare," "modern revolutionary warfare," or "people's war," commonly termed "insurgency" today. In addition to irregular military tactics, insurgencies typically involve coordinated informational and psychological warfare efforts aimed at rallying popular support against an established national government, imperialist power, or foreign occupying force[53] (Beckett, 2001). In contrast, terrorists operate covertly, avoiding open display as armed units. They typically refrain from attempting to capture or maintain control of territory and deliberately evade direct engagement with enemy

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51 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), (2012) *Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, n.d.), 2.
52 Laqueur, W. (1976) *Guerrilla: A Historical and Critical Study*,  Boston Little, Brown.
53 Beckett, I. (2001) *Encyclopedia of Guerrilla Warfare*, New York Checkmark Book.

military forces. Due to numerical and logistical constraints, terrorists are limited in their capacity to undertake large-scale political mobilization efforts. Importantly, terrorists lack direct governance or control over a population, whether at the local or national level[54]. It is important to highlight that these categories are not distinct and often overlap. Older terrorist groups like Hezbollah, FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), and the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, or Tamil Tigers), for instance, are frequently characterized as guerrilla movements due to their size, tactics, and control over territory and populations. Almost one-third of the thirty-seven groups listed as "Designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations" by the U.S. State Department could equally be classified as guerrillas[55]. Furthermore, for this analysis, distinguishing between terrorists and common criminals is valuable. Both groups resort to violence to achieve their objectives, with similarities in the violent methods employed, such as kidnapping, shooting, or arson. However, the crucial difference lies in their motivations. While criminals typically use violence for personal gain, such as obtaining money, acquiring material goods, or committing acts of violence for personal vendettas, terrorists operate with distinct purposes and motivations beyond personal interests. Importantly, the violent actions of ordinary criminals are not orchestrated to have consequences or psychological repercussions beyond the immediate act, setting them apart from the strategic and broader objectives of terrorism (Hoffman, 1998). Plus, the distinction between a terrorist and a deranged assassin is significant. Despite potential similarities in tactics, such as shooting or bombing, and even shared objectives, like targeting a political figure, the underlying purposes of terrorists and lone assassins differ. The terrorist's objective is invariably political, aiming to instigate change or fundamentally reshape a political system through violent acts. In contrast, the lunatic assassin's goal is typically idiosyncratic, entirely self-centered, and deeply personal, lacking the broader political motivations characteristic of terrorism. Moreover, the distinction between a terrorist and a lunatic assassin is significant. Despite potential similarities in tactics, such as shooting or bombing, and even shared objectives, like targeting a political figure, the underlying purposes of terrorists and lone assassins differ. The terrorist's objective is invariably political, aiming to instigate change or fundamentally reshape a political system through violent acts. In contrast, the lunatic assassin's goal is typically idiosyncratic, entirely self-centered, and deeply personal, lacking the broader political motivations that characterize terrorism (Hoffman, 1998). In fact, at the core, the terrorist operates with a sense of altruism, believing that their actions serve a "good" cause intended for the greater benefit of a broader constituency—whether real or

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54 Central Intelligence Agency, *Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, n.d.), 2. This pamphlet was first published and distributed in the mid-1980s.
55 U.S. Department of State (2003), Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Patterns of Global Terrorism 2003, 113.

perceived—that the terrorist and their organization claim to represent. In contrast, the criminal is motivated solely by personal gain and material satisfaction, devoid of any overarching cause. As noted by Konrad Kellen[56], a prominent terrorism analyst at the RAND Corporation, an individual without a perceived cause, at least in their own perspective, cannot be considered a terrorist. However, having a cause or being associated with a particular ideology is not enough to categorize someone as a terrorist. Here lies a distinct contrast with political extremists. Many individuals hold radical and extreme beliefs, and some may even be part of political organizations deemed radical, illegal, or prohibited. Yet, unless they resort to violence to advance their convictions, they cannot be deemed terrorists. The essence of a terrorist lies in being a violent intellectual, someone who is willing and, indeed, dedicated to using force to achieve their objectives (Hoffman, 1998). Finally, a distinction has to be made between Another important question concerns the difference between the concepts of guerrilla warfare (as well as guerrillas) and wars of national liberation (as well as freedom fighters). According to Aleni (2008), Wars of national liberation involve combatants, often referred to as freedom fighters, engaged in a conflict against an occupying power that oppresses them. These combatants are generally afforded protection as they exercise their right to self-determination. In contrast, guerrilla warfare is a method of combat and does not pertain to the status of individuals. The overlap in the treatment of these concepts likely arises from the fact that freedom fighters frequently utilize guerrilla warfare as a combat method. However, theoretically, the same method could be employed by other categories of combatants. From a legal standpoint, wars of national liberation involve combatants, often referred to as freedom fighters, engaged in a conflict against an occupying power that oppresses them. These combatants are generally afforded protection as they exercise their right to self-determination. In contrast, guerrilla warfare is a method of combat and does not pertain to the status of individuals. The overlap in the treatment of these concepts likely arises from the fact that freedom fighters frequently utilize guerrilla warfare as a combat method. However, theoretically, the same method could be employed by other categories of combatants (Aleni, 2008). In such instances, it must be determined not only whether an act of guerrilla warfare aligns with the specific objectives of terrorism (such as instilling fear among the population) but also whether that act could be justified if committed by a freedom fighter. Essentially, when classifying certain acts as either acts of terrorism or legitimate actions in a national liberation war, a grey area exists. In navigating this grey area, various factors must be considered, including: a) the prevailing conditions at the time of the attack or plan of attack (such as during war, foreign military occupation, peace, or preliminary operations for subsequent occupation); b) the targets involved (whether civilians, military

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56 Kellen, K. (1982) *On Terrorists and Terrorism*. Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, N-1942-RC, 10.

personnel engaged in belligerent operations, or military personnel participating in humanitarian aid or similar activities unrelated to belligerent operations); c) the subjective status of the perpetrator (to ascertain whether they fall under the category of freedom fighters) (Aleni, 2008).

1.7. Typologies of Terrorism and Vocational Terrorism

Delving deeper into the realm of typologies, let's transit to an exploration of the multifaceted nature of terrorism and political violence. This section analyzes various classifications and categories that aid in understanding the diverse manifestations of these phenomena. From the motivations driving perpetrators to the tactics employed, a nuanced examination of typologies provides insights into the complex landscape of terrorism and political violence. classifications based on actors remain a popular method for categorizing terrorism. This trend persists, as several recent typologies also employ this level of analysis. A crucial factor in these classifications revolves around the connection between the terrorist group and the state (Schmid, 2011). Terrorism can be divided into three types: establishment, anti-establishment and criminal professional. The first identifies the rulers – those holding state power utilizing the weapon of terror to enforce social cohesion through forced compliance based on the threat of violence. Anti-establishment terrorism, on the other hand, is directed against the government controlling authority, with criminal-professional terrorism included in this typology because of the often-claimed (and less often found) links between criminal groups and both establishment and anti-establishment terrorism. The very high level of abstraction and the inclusion of actors who may not use terrorism as a sole or primary route to goal attainment mean that its analytical usefulness is somewhat limited (Schmid, 2011). Focusing on the broader global scenario, Lizardo and Bergesen present an analysis of terrorist groups concerning the world system, categorizing them as embedded in the structural core, on the periphery, or in the semi-periphery. This classification leads to three actor–target dyads: (1) core actors targeting governments; (2) peripheral or semi-peripheral actors against governments in similar positions; and (3) peripheral or semi-peripheral actors targeting core states. These categories, combined with ideological justifications and historical periods, form a typology of three terrorism types. The first, 'terror in the core,' involves violence within core states as a form of rebellion. The second, 'struggling against oppression,' encompasses most terrorist activity, often emerging in the semi-periphery or periphery, targeting local governments. Type 1 groups often stem from this violence. The third type, 'the transnational turn,' involves semi-peripheral groups attacking core targets across borders. This phenomenon, evident since the 1960s, includes instances like transnational terrorism

during the Palestinian–Israeli conflict and the contemporary wave of religious terrorism. The latter, though having diffuse targets, aims to undermine certain aspects of the implied world system (Schmid, 2011).

For what concerns "typologising" political violence, the latter encompasses a wide variety of phenomena being a heterogenous term. Indeed, in the realm of political violence, typologies are viewed as essential for drawing generalizations beyond individual cases. This becomes especially valuable for analyzing and preventing conflicts. Therefore, typologies of political violence extend beyond being mere research tools and find practical application in defense contexts. For instance, by establishing a correlation between the type of group and its chosen methods of warfare, it becomes feasible to forecast potential behaviors. Moreover, these typologies play a crucial role in policymaking by helping identify causally significant factors and downplaying those that are not deemed as significant (Schmid, 2011). Schmid developed a typology of political violence aiming to position the forms of political violence into a wider classificatory system. Within the domain of political violence, the use of typologies is deemed crucial for extrapolating insights beyond isolated cases, proving particularly beneficial for the analysis and prevention of conflicts. Consequently, typologies of political violence transcend their role as mere research tools and hold practical utility in defense applications. For example, establishing a connection between the nature of a group and its preferred methods of warfare enables the anticipation of potential behaviors. Additionally, these typologies play a vital role in shaping policies by aiding in the identification of causally significant factors and minimizing the importance of those deemed less significant. Another classificatory method is proposed by Ekaterina Stepanova, who also used the concept of asymmetry[57]. Author categorizes terrorist groups based on two criteria: (1) the extent of a group's objectives concerning global or local issues; and (2) the role of terrorist actions in relation to other forms of violent confrontations and the extent to which they are employed alongside alternative violent methods. Using these criteria, three functional types of terrorism are delineated. The first is 'classic terrorism of peacetime,' which operates independently of broader armed conflicts and includes stand-alone left- and right-wing terrorism. Second, 'conflict-related terrorism' is defined as an embedded tactic within asymmetric armed conflicts, where those employing terrorism are motivated by a specific cause, often limited to a particular region. Here, terrorism is utilized alongside other tactics, such as guerrilla-type attacks targeting security forces and critical infrastructures. The third type identified by Stepanova, "superterrorism", is characterized as having global scope and is considered a relatively recent phenomenon. Those falling under this category are said to

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57 Stepanova, E. (2008) *Terrorism in Asymmetrical Conflict: Ideological and Structural Aspects (*SIPRI Research Reports Book 23), Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

have existential and non-negotiable aims, and it applies to groups like Al-Qaeda within the broader Salafist-jihadist movement. Stepanova emphasizes that these three types of terrorism have interactive and interconnected characteristics, with the possibility of combinations depending on the circumstances. Despite ongoing debates over definitions, political crimes are generally evaluated based on the subjective and objective criteria outlined in the Norgaard Principles[58]. These principles encompass six characteristics utilized to determine whether a crime is political: (1) the motive behind the offender's actions; (2) the context in which the act occurs; (3) the legal and factual nature of the act, including its severity; (4) the political objective of the act and its intended target; (5) whether the act was carried out under the orders of a group to which the actor belonged; and (6) the relationship between the act and the political objective, emphasizing the proximity and proportionality of this connection. Finally, it is worth mentioning the work of a young Australian scholar who developed the so-called Löckinger's typological tree. The latter categorizes different forms of terrorism into four main groups: actors, means and methods, motives, and geographic range. Each of these types is then further subdivided into sub-types, offering a detailed exploration of the key dimensions of terrorism and their conceptualizations. This typology serves as a useful visual representation of the diverse perspectives through which terrorism can be analyzed. It facilitates the integration of new research into the overarching framework, creating a dynamic depiction of the various manifestations of terrorism (Schmid, 2011).

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58 These criteria are commonly known as the "Norgaard principles," named after Professor Norgaard, an independent academic from Denmark. In June 1989, he was tasked with interpreting the terms of the Namibian Settlement Proposal, which included provisions for the release of all individuals detained by South African authorities for political reasons. Notably, this proposal lacked a clear definition of "political," prompting Professor Norgaard to delineate the concept of a "political offense."
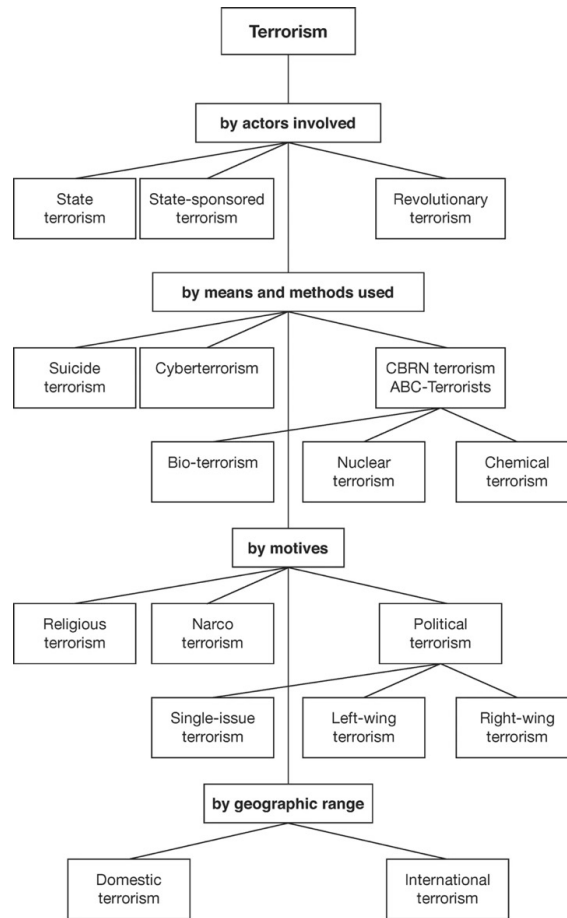
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                        ┌───────────┐
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*Table 2 Löckinger's typological tree of terrorism.*

*Source: G. Löckinger, Terrorismus, Terrorismusabwehr, Terrorismusbekampfung. Vienna: Ministry of Defence.*

Boaz Ganor has developed a similar framework for presenting terrorism and its characteristics, as illustrated in Figure 3.6. Ganor aims to amalgamate categories from various terrorism typologies, using multiple dyadic juxtapositions as an organizational principle. Unlike a typical typology for organizing terrorist groups, Ganor's approach blends different typologies. However, he acknowledges that its explanatory power is constrained by the breadth of criteria it considers. The more features of a group are included in any conceptualization, the less beneficial it becomes for analysts. This leads Ganor to introduce the 'limiting variable' typology (Schmid, 2011).
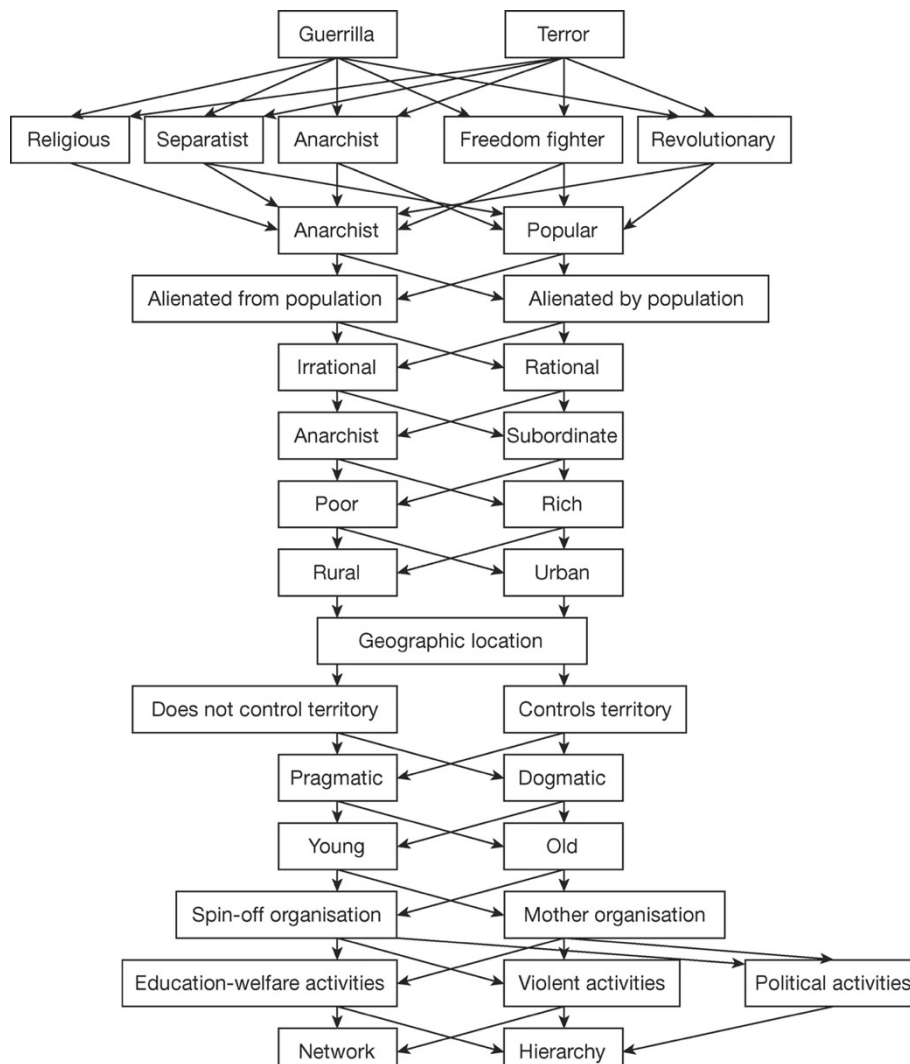
*Table 1 Ganor's classification of terrorist organizations by their characteristics.*

Therefore, distinguishing terrorists from other criminal and irregular fighters, as well as differentiating terrorism from other forms of crime and irregular warfare, helps us recognize the inherently political nature of terrorism in its aims and motives. Terrorism involves violence or the threat of violence, aiming to have profound psychological repercussions beyond the immediate target. It is carried out by organizations with identifiable structures or individuals inspired by existing terrorist movements. Perpetrated by subnational groups or nonstate entities, terrorism can be defined as the intentional creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence, all in pursuit of political change. Terrorist acts are strategically designed to instill fear and intimidation within a broader "target audience," which may include rival groups, entire countries, governments, political parties, or public opinion. The ultimate goal is to generate publicity, leverage, and power for achieving political change at local or international levels.

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In order to comprehensively define terrorism, it is imperative to acknowledge and elucidate the concept of vocational terrorism. In his book *Anatomy of the Red Brigades*[59] (2011), Alessandro Orsini first define vocational terrorist[60] as men and women who have decided to sacrifice their lives principally in order to satisfy a spiritual need. Orsini's concept of "terrorism by vocation" draws on Max Weber's distinction between living "off" politics and living "for" politics[61]. Those who live off politics derive the material means for their survival from politics; those who live "for" politics dedicate their lives to a cause in order to satisfy an inner need. Important contributions that help better understand the vocational terrorism phenomenon have also been published in "Studies in Conflict and Terrorism" and "Terrorism and Political Violence" by Simon Cottee-Keith Hayward, and Megan K. McBride. By integrating work from different fields, McBride argues that terrorism may be driven by an existential-terroristic feedback loop: a cycle in which people support or engage in terrorism to alleviate existential anxiety but ultimately end up finding this anxiety exacerbated in the wake of the violence they create or sanction. Existential anxiety is key to understanding McBride's analysis. Human beings are driven to imbue life with meaning in order to cope with the existential anxiety that comes from recognizing human mortality. The radicalized ideologies underwriting terrorism actually serve as meaning-giving constructs whose function is to relieve existential anxiety. Relying on recent research in existential psychology, McBride presents an existential-terroristic feedback loop in order to understand the function of terrorist ideologies. The feedback loop is predicated on the idea that when a terrorist ideology acts as a meaning-giving construct, it paradoxically may result in events that increase the existential anxiety it was intended to relieve and so reinforce the original ideology. The cycle is relativelysimple: existential anxiety compels individuals to seek meaning; for some individuals, support of a terrorist ideology functions as an anxiety-reducing, meaning-giving construct; these terrorist ideologies often result in acts of terrorist violence, terrorist violence ultimately exacerbates existential anxiety, compelling terrorists to defend their ideologies and returning them to the very state the ideologies were meant to relieve.

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59 Orsini A. (2011) Anatomy of the Red Brigades. The Religious Mind-set of Modern Terrorists, London: Cornell University Press. See also Orsini A. (2013) A Day Among the Diehard Terrorists: The Psychological Costs of Doing Ethnographic Research Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 36:4, pp. 337-351; Orsini A. (2020) What Everybody Should Know about Radicalization and the DRIA Model, Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 46:1, pp. 68-100.
60 Orsini A. (2012) "Poverty, Ideology and Terrorism: The STAM Bond," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 35(10), pp. 665–692.
61 Max Weber, Politics as a Vocation, in Max Weber, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, Translated, Edited, and with an Introduction by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 84.

**Chapter 2 – The History of Hamas**

2.1. Before Hamas

Founded in 1987, Hamas emerged as a branch of the pan-Islamic Muslim Brotherhood movement. It aimed to address Palestinian nationalist aspirations and grievances through an Islamic lens. Its name, which translates to "strength," "bravery," and "zeal" in Arabic, also serves as an acronym for Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya, or the Islamic Resistance Movement[62]. Yet, in its original thinking and configuration, Hamas belongs to the realm of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) representing the internal metamorphosis of its Palestinian branch. As such, to entirely comprehend Hamas' origins and subsequent development, one must begin with the history of its parent organization in the occupied territories (Abu-Amr, 1993)[63]. Originating in Egypt in 1928 amid the decline of the Ottoman Empire, the Muslim Brotherhood stands as a significant Islamist force, often regarded as the progenitor of political Islam in the Middle East, aside from Iran. With roots dating back nearly a century, its influence spans across various Arab nations, intertwining religious doctrine with political activism. The Palestinian branch emerged in Jerusalem in 1946, predating the establishment of Israel by two years. While the Muslim Brotherhood initially espoused mainstream and relatively moderate ideologies, the subsequent emergence of radical splinter groups over the past two decades has altered this perception. Influential figures within the Brotherhood, notably Sayyid Qutb, have significantly shaped diverse strands of political Islam worldwide. The primary aim of individual Muslim Brotherhood movements is to establish Islamic states within their respective countries, with the ultimate aspiration of uniting these states into a singular entity representing the Muslim *Ummah* (Hroub, 2010)[64]. At present, the most influential and dynamically engaged political movements in the Middle East are those aligned with the intellectual underpinnings and principles of the MB. The latter, indeed, stands as a remarkably successful Islamist movement, its ideology exerting such significant influence across the Muslim world that it has been labeled as the foremost organization of Sunni revivalist Islam (Wickham, 2013)[65]. With its associated movements, the MB has assumed pivotal

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62 Herzog, M. (2006) Can Hamas Be Tamed? *Foreign Affairs,* vol. 85, no. 2, pp. 83-94. *Note*: Michael Herzog is a Brigadier General in the Israel Defense Forces and a Visiting Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. He was formerly the senior military aide to Israel's Minister of Defense and the head ofstrategic planning for the IDE
63 Abu-Amr, Z. (1993) Hamas: A Historical and Political Background, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol.22, n.4, pp. 5-19.
64 Hroub, K. (2010) *Hamas*. 2nd edn. Pluto Press.

65 Wickam, C. (2013) *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*, Princeton University Press.

roles in the political and social landscapes of various Arab nations. It has held parliamentary representation in countries such as Algeria, Bahrain, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Morocco, Tunisia, and Yemen, thereby solidifying its position as one of the most potent and actively engaged political entities in both the region and the broader Muslim community (Hroub, 2010). Hassan al-Banna, a highly educated and deeply devout Egyptian elementary school teacher, founded the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928 (Helbawy, 2009)[66]. Al-Banna vehemently criticized the injustices and harmful effects of British colonial rule and aspired to reshape Egyptian society into one mirroring the community established by Prophet Muhammad. Al-Banna advocated for the establishment of an Islamic state devoid of any separation between religion and governance, where the Quran and the sunnah would serve as the foundation for all aspects of life (Abu-Amr, 1993[67]). Emphasizing personal development as a prerequisite for societal progress, the MB adopted a broad and adaptable philosophy, resulting in a diverse array of organizational manifestations spanning social, political, and militant spheres (Brown, 2012[68]). Al-Banna characterized the Muslim Brotherhood as "a Salafi message, a Sunni path, a Sufi truth, a political organization, an athletic group, a cultural-educational association, an economic enterprise, and a social concept" (Mitchell, 1969[69]). The MB prioritized its action and organization over strict ideology, positioning itself as a revolutionary force focused on inciting mass action through direct engagement (Strindberg and Wärn, 2011)[70]. Rather than seeking unilateral political power, the movement emphasized social reform as its primary political agenda. While advocating for the incorporation of *shari'ah* into the legal system, the Brotherhood believed this should only happen once social reform had been achieved, with the impetus for *shari'ah* coming from the people, not the organization. Embracing an incrementalistic approach, the Brotherhood promoted *ijtihad*, or personal reasoning, to reconcile Islamic principles with the needs of the modern Muslim community (Wickham, 2013). This approach viewed Islam as more than just legislation, but as a flexible system adaptable to individual and collective reinterpretations of modern life (Roy, 2011). The MB advocated for a gradualist approach to social reform, positioning itself as the guardian of traditional Arab/Muslim life, where religion serves as a central guiding force to navigate modern challenges (Wickham, 2013). They attribute Muslim setbacks to a departure from Islamic principles and advocate a return to these teachings as the basis for reform. The Brother-

66 Helbawy, K. (2009) "The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt: Historical Evolution and Future Prospects", *Political Islam Context versus Ideology* edited by Khaled Hroub (2010): London: London Middle East Institute at SOAS.
67 Abu-Amr, M. (1993) from Kear, M. (2018) *Hamas and Palestine*. 1st edn. Taylor & Francis.
68 Brown (2012) from Kear, M. (2018) *Hamas and Palestine*. 1st edn. Taylor & Francis.
69 Mitchell (1969) from Kear, M. (2018) *Hamas and Palestine*. 1st edn. Taylor & Francis.
70 Strindberg, A and Wärn M. (2011) *Islamism: Religion, Radicalization and Resistance*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

hood engages across various spheres—social, cultural, religious, political, and military (Hroub, 2010). Central to their ethos, particularly concerning Hamas and its goal of a Palestinian state, is the vision of a society where Muslims can live according to the Qur'an's precepts, free from the constraints imposed by Enlightenment-inspired European powers. This stance contrasts with Zionism's aim, discussed in subsequent chapters, which seeks to establish a state for Jews free from similar external influences. While primarily focused on Egyptian affairs and opposition to British occupation, the MB, under their founder's leadership, also embraced a broader regional perspective. Al-Banna conceived Egyptian nationalism as a pathway toward pan-Arab and pan-Islamic unity, and central to this gradualist approach was the belief that Islamic solidarity transcended national allegiance. Therefore, the Brotherhood closely monitored developments in Palestine, which had been under British control since World War I, when it was taken from the Ottoman Empire. In 1922, Palestine became a British Mandate overseen by the League of Nations, tasked with guiding it toward independence. However, this mandate conflicted with Britain's commitments to the Zionist movement, which sought to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine. By the 1920s, Jewish immigration to Palestine was increasing, fueled by events such as the Russian Revolution and rising anti-Semitism in Europe. The Brotherhood perceived Zionist activities and the influx of Jewish immigrants as a significant threat to the Muslim world (Baconi, 2018)[71]. Resistance to Zionism was gaining momentum among the native Arab population of Palestine, spurred by the emergence of nationalism as former Ottoman territories fell under European control. By the time of the British Mandate, Palestinian elites, particularly urban traders and professionals, had developed a strong sense of Palestinian nationalism and anti-Zionism. They demanded that Britain abandon its support for Zionism, halt Jewish immigration, and move towards independence with an Arab majority. Rural Palestinians also protested against the economic impact of being displaced from their agricultural land by Jewish settlers. The influential religious establishment, led by the Mufti of Jerusalem, played a significant role in shaping this burgeoning nationalism. It issued Islamic legal decrees supporting anti-land-sale campaigns to prevent Arab landowners from selling to Jewish immigrants and called for the protection of Islamic holy sites. The Mufti engaged with the international Muslim community, seeking to globalize the Palestinian cause by emphasizing the political and religious significance of its holy places. However, despite these efforts, Palestinian political and religious leaders struggled to halt the influx of Jewish settlers. Their reliance on British support, belief in peaceful lobbying, and internal divisions hindered their ability to effectively advance Palestinian nationalism (Baconi, 2018). Indeed, while the MB had always been actively engaged in the 'Palestinian Question', it took until 1945 for it to

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71  Baconi, T. (2018) *Hamas Contained*. 1st edn. Stanford University Press.

establish its Palestinian affiliate, the PMB (Kear, 2018). Following World War Two, the conflict over Palestine reignited and in 1944, Jewish settlers initiated an armed campaign against British forces, aiming to compel their departure and expand Jewish immigration into Palestine. Faced with financial strain, British frustration, and conflicting commitments to Palestinians and Zionists, Britain handed the Palestine issue to the United Nations. In November 1947, the UN General Assembly proposed a Partition Plan, allocating 56 percent of Palestine to the Jewish community, despite their forming only a third of the population. The Palestinian leadership rejected this, asserting the right to self-determination in their homeland. As the British Mandate ended in May 1948, Israel declared its establishment, triggering Arab intervention and transforming the civil war into a regional conflict. Israel emerged victorious, seizing 78 percent of Palestinian land. The war, termed "al-Nakba" by Palestinians, resulted in mass displacement and loss. About 700,000 Palestinians became refugees, with the UN adopting Resolution 194 in December 1948, affirming their right to return. However, Israel prevented their reinstatement, instead appropriating their land for Jewish settlements. Refugees endured dire conditions in camps across the region, with territories like East Jerusalem and the West Bank annexed by Jordan, and the Gaza Strip administered by Egypt (Baconi, 2018). By 1947, the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood (PMB) had established 25 branches across Palestine, boasting a membership estimated between 12,000 and 20,000 (Jensen, 2009)[72]. The PMB's appeal derived not only from resistance to British occupation but also from opposition to increased Jewish immigration. Al-Banna, the movement's leader, emphasized that opposition to Jewish immigration wasn't religiously motivated, arguing that retaliating against Palestinians for past European persecution of Jews was unjust. During *al-Nakba*, the PMB trained and equipped approximately 10,000 members from its affiliate branches, who joined Arab armies in combat (Helbawy, 2010). This bolstered the PMB's support and influence, attracting more members. Amidst the emergence of various Islamist and Arab nationalist movements in refugee camps, the PMB's narrative resonated strongly, blending Islam with resistance, promoting jihad, and advocating Palestinian self-sufficiency and responsibility for reclaiming their land (Sayigh, 2011)[73]. The following events of *al-Nakba* and the resulting Palestinian refugee crisis profoundly influenced and distinguished the experiences of Palestinians in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza, significantly impacting the future organizational and ideological evolution of Hamas (Kear, 2018). On June 5, 1967, President Nasser of Egypt mobilized ground forces in the demilitarized Sinai Peninsula in response to Israeli threats toward Syria and closed the

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72 Jensen, M (2009). *The Political Ideology of Hamas: A Grassroots Perspective.* Translated by Sally Laird. London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010.
73 Sayigh, Y. (2011) "We Serve the People: Hamas Policing in Gaza", Brandeis: Crown Centre for Middle East Studies.

Sinai straits to Israeli shipping. Despite Israel's understanding of Egypt's troop deployment as defensive, it launched a surprise attack against Egyptian forces, devastating much of Egypt's air force while it was grounded. Jordan and Syria entered the conflict, opening multiple fronts against Israel, but failed to reverse Israel's preemptive advantage. Over six days, Israel expanded its territory significantly, leading to another wave of refugees. While in 1948 Israel had seized 78 percent of Palestine, it now controlled the remaining 22 percent. East Jerusalem was formally annexed by Israel, although this action has not been internationally recognized. The West Bank, Gaza Strip, Syrian Golan Heights, and Egyptian Sinai Peninsula came under Israeli military rule without formal annexation. By June 11, 1967, Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip had officially commenced (Baconi, 2018). As such, after the 1967 war, there was a significant shift in both politics and geography as Israeli control expanded to include all historic Palestine, including the West Bank and Gaza Strip. During this time, the PMB factions in Gaza and the West Bank drew closer together and established unified structures. While leftist and nationalist movements had dominated Palestinian politics since the 1940s, the Muslim Brotherhood began to gain influence in the 1980s. This period also marked the emergence of Hamas as an organization specifically dedicated to resisting Israeli occupation, a decision made by the PMB just before the 1987 uprising, known as the Intifada, which will be covered subsequently. Furthermore, it is noteworthy to mention the existence of other Islamist movements in Palestine. Specifically, the Islamic Jihad Movement, which emerged in the early 1980s, predates the formation of Hamas by at least five years. It was established by disenchanted former members of various Palestinian factions, including the Muslim Brotherhood and Fatah, who were inspired by the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1978/79 (Hroub, 2010). The Islamic Jihad aimed to forge a connection between Islam and Palestine, integrating the struggle against Israeli occupation deeply into Islamic ideology and practice. During the early 1980s, while the PMB was primarily engaged in religious programs, the Islamic Jihad presented a novel interpretation of nationalist Islam. It advocated for military resistance against the Israeli occupation, challenging both the Muslim Brotherhood's non-confrontational approach and the nationalist factions' criticisms of deferring confrontation with Israel. Throughout the second Palestinian uprising in 2000, the Islamic Jihad carried out numerous suicide attacks, at times surpassing Hamas and other factions in this tactic. However, despite its active involvement in resistance efforts, the Islamic Jihad has struggled to match Hamas's strength in terms of membership and networking. Consequently, it has shown limited enthusiasm for participating in elections, arguing that such activities divert national energy away from resisting Israeli occupation. Another significant Islamist movement in Palestine is Hizb al-Tahrir (the Liberation Party), which emerged as a splinter group of the

MB in 1952. Hizb al-Tahrir advocates for the restoration of the Khilafa (Muslim rule) as the solution to the perceived sins and challenges facing Muslim societies. However, its passive approach to the Palestinian issue and its opposition to political participation and violence have led to a decline in popularity and influence among Palestinians (Hroub, 2010).

For what concerned the situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, after the *al-Nakba*, Jordan assumed control of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Initially, the PMB collaborated closely with the Jordanian regime, focusing primarily on religious and social activities rather than engaging in politics. The PMB in the West Bank consisted mainly of merchants, landowners, middle-class officials, and professionals. However, after Jordan annexed the West Bank in 1950, the PMB gradually began to participate in Jordanian politics, positioning itself as the 'loyal opposition' (Mishal & Sela, 2006)[74]. Nonetheless, many Palestinians viewed Jordan's King Hussein as pro-US and pro-Israel, leading to growing suspicions towards the PMB. Life in the West Bank under Jordanian control maintained traditional familial and tribal structures, with fewer Western influences compared to other areas. Consequently, the impact of *al-Nakba* on Palestinians in the West Bank was not as significant. As a result, the sense of Palestinian nationalism and militancy within the PMB in the West Bank was less prominent than in Gaza (Milton Edwards & Farrell, 2010)[75]. The passive approach towards occupation shifted when Israel gained control of the West Bank in 1967. The West Bank holds immense cultural and ideological significance for Zionism's state-building objectives, representing historic Jewish regions and contributing to the creation of a biblical Eretz-Israel. Israeli occupation led to the gradual dismantling of traditional Palestinian social, cultural, political, and economic structures, eroding Palestinian national identity in the West Bank. Israeli policies aimed to subordinate the West Bank economically to Israel, stifling the traditional agrarian economy and pushing Palestinians into Israel's labor force. While the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) opposed Israeli occupation from the diaspora, the PMB initially pursued a passive strategy. However, as West Bank Palestinians grew increasingly hostile towards Israeli repression and the perceived ineffectiveness of the PLO, the PMB's focus on reconnecting with Islam gained traction, preparing the population for future challenges (Abu-Amr, 1993). Concerning Gaza, the situation was significantly different (Kear, 2018). After the *al-Nakba*, the PMB emerged as the predominant political movement in the territory, focusing primarily on addressing the dire conditions of refugees flooding into the Gaza Strip (Gunning, 2009). Initially, under Egyptian control, the Gaza PMB faced repression but also benefited from some aspects of Egyptian rule,

74 Mishal, S and Sela, A. (2006) *The Palestinian Hamas*, Columbia University Press.
75 Milton Edwards, B and Farrell, S. (2010) *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, Polity.

such as modernization and Westernization (Abu-Amr, 1993). However, Egyptian repression and Western cultural influence led the Gaza PMB to become insular, incorporating Palestinian nationalist discourse into its ideology (Milton-Edwards & Farrell, 2010). This nationalist sentiment, coupled with a renewed emphasis on Islam, drove the PMB's transformation into Hamas, particularly in Gaza where it became the spiritual home of the movement (Tamimi, 2009)[76]. While the Israeli Defense Forces actively repressed Palestinian nationalist movements in newly acquired territories, the PMB in Gaza embarked on reconnecting Palestinians with Islam, leading to the establishment of numerous mosques and Islamic institutions aimed at providing social services and promoting Islamic education (Mishal & Sela, 2006). These efforts also served as a response to the PLO's secular nationalist resistance, ensuring the PMB had a viable Islamic alternative (Robinson, 1997)[77]. In 1979, the PMB experienced its first significant internal division when a group of militant members split to form the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). This split occurred due to the PMB's reluctance to adopt a more aggressive stance towards Israeli occupation. The PIJ advocated for a more assertive form of Palestinian nationalism, prioritizing the re-establishment of Palestine over the gradual Islamization of Palestinian society (Strindberg & Wärn, 2011). This division sparked internal discussions within the PMB about the effectiveness of its passive approach and the potential role of militancy in achieving Palestinian goals. As a result, the leadership decided to establish a separate military wing, known as "the Project," by 1985, with its organizational structure and leadership independent of the PMB (Rabbani, 2008)[78]. The final decision was made to launch this military wing. On December 8, 1987, a crash involving an Israeli tank transporter in Gaza led to the deaths of four Palestinians and injuries to several others. Subsequently, widespread riots erupted in Gaza and spread to the West Bank, marking the beginning of the First Intifada. Before the onset of the first intifada, the MB did not outright reject the doctrine of armed struggle for the liberation of Palestine but refrained from actively engaging in violence. The intifada served as a catalyst for internal differentiation and debate within the Brotherhood, pitting the cautious older leadership against younger members advocating for active resistance and nationalism (Abu-Amr, 1994)[79]. Hamas can trace its origins back to the Palestinian branch of the MB, which established Hamas as a separate, affiliated faction in 1987. Notably, the primary motivation for establishing this new faction was not ideological conviction, but rather the pressure exerted on the Brotherhood by competing groups, exacerbating existing leadership differences over the role of violent jihad. Even

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76 Tamimi, A. (2009) *Hamas: A History from Within*, C Hurst & Co Publisher.
77 Robinson, D. (1997) *A Simple Guide to Islam*, Bennett Books LTD.
78 Rabbani, M. (2008) "A Hamas Perspective on the Movement's Evolving Role: An Interview with Khalid Mishal: Part II", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 37(4), 59–81.
79 Abu-Amr, Z. (1994) *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza; Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad,* Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

before the outbreak of the intifada, pressure mounted on the Brotherhood to adopt a more assertive stance. High-profile acts of violence perpetrated by groups like the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and, to a lesser extent, Fatah, prompted the Brotherhood to follow suit (Budeiri, 1995)[80]. The intifada further elevated the profile of active resistance, widening the internal divide until a compromise was reached between the cautious reformist approach of the older leadership and the militant stance advocating defensive jihad put forth by the younger generation (Mishal and Sela, 2006). This compromise led to the formation of Hamas as an independent faction of the Brotherhood. As the intifada intensified, nationalism and religion became even more intertwined for Hamas, emphasizing the strong correlation between the concept of jihad and the objectives of the Palestinian national movement (Milton-Edwards, 1992)[81]. Establishing Hamas, the leadership demonstrated that political considerations, rather than ideology alone, heavily influenced decision-making. Initially, fear of an Israeli backlash, threatening both the physical safety of its members and the welfare of Brotherhood institutions, drove the leadership. These concerns were not unfounded, as evidenced by the imprisonment of Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin in 1989, shortly after the intifada began. The political and religious compromise served as a means of mitigating risks to the Brotherhood, with the creation of Hamas offering a way to participate in the intifada without jeopardizing the future of the broader movement (Milton-Edwards, 1992). The Brotherhood's existing popularity and societal position provided advantages to Hamas, ensuring an immediate and substantial following. The leadership, having heavily invested in earning respect through social service institutions, was reluctant to endanger these investments solely for the sake of joining the resistance. Additionally, the formation of a separate organization offered the benefit of plausible deniability. Ultimately, while Hamas eventually overshadowed and absorbed the Palestinian branch of the Brotherhood, the initial concern for the survival of Brotherhood institutions highlights limitations in adherence to ideology (Gruber, 2007)[82].

2.2. The Inception of Hamas

On December 14, 1987, Hamas emerged on the Palestinian political scene, issuing a communiqué urging Palestinians to resist Israeli occupation (Abu-Amr, 1997)[83]. On the

80 Budeiri, M. (1995) "The Nationalist Dimension of Islamic Movements in Palestinian Politics," *Journal of Palestine Studies,* vol.91, n.2.
81 Milton-Edwards, B. (1992) "The Concept of Jihad and the Palestinian Islamic Movement: A Comparison of Ideas and Techniques," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 19, n. 50.
82 Gruber, S. (2007) "Hamas: Pragmatic Ideology", *The Fletcher School Journal for issues related to Southwest Asia and Islamic Civilization*.
83 Abu-Amr, Z. (1997). "The Palestinian Legislative Council: A Critical Assessment", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 26(4), 90–97.

evening of December 9, Yassin convened a meeting with the senior leaders of the institutions established in Gaza during the Brotherhood's preparations for transitioning to armed resistance. After extensive deliberations, it was decided that the Brotherhood would utilize its groundwork and establish a small militarized faction to engage in armed conflict against Israel. Thus, in January 1988, the Islamic Resistance Movement, known as Hamas, was officially inaugurated. While initially conceived as a subsidiary, Hamas quickly absorbed the organizational framework of its parent organization. The Islamic Association, renowned for its extensive network of social and charitable institutions in Gaza, naturally became a cornerstone for Hamas's burgeoning social activities. Additionally, Hamas assimilated various organizations established throughout the 1980s, incorporating them into distinct political, administrative, and military wings. While Yassin's close associates from the Islamic Association endowed Hamas's political wing, its military wing, overseen by Salah Shehadeh, remained relatively small and comprised disparate units (Baconi, 2018). Initially intended to complement the PMB's activities, Hamas quickly surpassed it in popularity due to its blend of militant ideology and social activism. As a result, Hamas absorbed the PMB, becoming the dominant Islamist player in Palestinian politics. In fact, the PMB faced internal debates regarding its passive approach to the Israeli occupation, with some advocating for a shift towards confrontation while others adhered to traditional thinking focused on Islamizing society first. The eruption of the intifada provided an opportunity for the Brotherhood to lead by creating Hamas. Additionally, competition from the Islamic Jihad, which had gained prominence preceding the intifada, spurred the Brotherhood to accelerate its internal transformation (Hroub, 2010). Inheriting the PMB's extensive social welfare network, Hamas gained significant institutional support and social capital (Gunning, 2008)[84]. This allowed Hamas to challenge the Palestine Liberation Organization's (PLO) ideological and political dominance over Palestinian self-determination efforts (Mishal & Sela, 2006). The inception of Hamas also signaled the onset of structural changes within Palestinian society, as a distinct counter-elite emerged to challenge the long-standing dominance of Palestinian notables. This dominance, rooted in the Ottoman Empire era, began to wane due to ongoing Israeli occupation, which led to the displacement of Palestinian peasants, continued land seizures, and the establishment of a Palestinian university system. The emergence of this new elite, primarily native to the territories rather than the diaspora, brought forth a larger, younger, better-educated cohort from more humble backgrounds. Crucially for Hamas, this new elite fervently supported Palestinian nationalism and vehemently opposed Israeli occupation. This transformation facilitated the mobilization of Palestinian society in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) more systematically, enabling sustained collective action over significant peri-

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84 Gunning, J. (2008) *Hamas in Politics: Democracy, Religion, Violence*, C Hurst & Co.

ods (Kear, 2018). Several months after its inception, in August 1988, Hamas released its charter, titled "The Charter of Allah: The Platform of the Islamic Resistance Movement (HAMAS)." This document served as an introduction to the movement and delineated its mission, values, and objectives. It proclaimed Hamas's motto as "God is its goal; The messenger [the Prophet Mohammed] is its Leader; The Quran is its Constitution; Jihad is its methodology; and Death for the Sake of God is its most coveted desire." Within this document, Yassin and other founders laid out the lineage of jihad upon which Hamas purportedly built. The charter lauded the jihad of Izz al-Din al-Qassam and his role in the lead-up to the Arab Revolt in the late 1930s, portraying him as the pioneer of Islamic resistance in Palestine. It also praised the Brotherhood's involvement in the 1948 and 1967 conflicts with Israel, despite its limited contribution. While the liberation of Palestine was almost incidental for these historical figures, part of a broader mission of Islamic revival as a form of anti-colonialism, Hamas drew upon this narrative to shape its emerging ideological platform. The charter positioned Hamas as "a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood chapter in Palestine," while asserting its status as a "distinct Palestinian movement." Through this charter, the Brotherhood's Palestinianization culminated in Hamas's emergence as both an Islamic and nationalist entity. By defining its nationalism as "part and parcel of its religious ideology," Hamas's leadership underscored that Islam served as the cornerstone for its political agenda. Thus, Hamas entered the realm of Islamist parties, or movements that leverage Islam to define specific political objectives (Baconi, 2018). Instead of aspiring to establish a caliphate or a pan-Islamic entity, numerous Islamists are motivated by "Islamo-nationalism," which entails merging Islamic identity with nationalism. Hamas's charter not only emphasizes its nationalism but also glorifies the transnational Islamism that has shaped the movement's historical identity. This suggests that, at a philosophical level, Hamas maintains its connection to the broader framework of the Muslim Brotherhood within the region. Hamas's charter lacks explicit details regarding the theological and political framework of the Islamic Palestinian state it envisions, and it does not signal a departure from the conventional nation-state model. While the charter professes the potential for peaceful coexistence between Christians, Jews, and Muslims under Islamic governance, its contents reveal deep-seated anti-Semitic sentiments. Drawing on age-old stereotypes, Hamas portrays Jews as accumulating wealth, being deceitful, and wielding undue influence in global affairs, particularly through Zionism. The charter attributes the establishment of Israel to alleged Jewish manipulation of significant historical events, such as the world wars and the creation of the United Nations, drawing from the fabricated anti-Semitic text, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion (Baconi, 2018). Throughout the document, Hamas conflates Jews and Zionists, using the terms interchangeably. Moreover, it condemns Israeli policies toward Palestinians as reminiscent of

Nazism, citing instances of collective punishment and violence against innocent civilians as evidence. Most notably, Hamas explicitly rejects the State of Israel and insists on the indivisibility of "Historic Palestine" – the land encompassing the former British Mandate, from the Eastern Mediterranean to the River Jordan – as an Islamic territory entrusted to Muslim generations until the Day of Judgment (Baconi, 2018). This uncompromising stance on Israel's non-recognition coincides with pivotal developments in the Palestinian political landscape, notably alongside initiatives led by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Despite its vague vision for an Islamic state, Hamas's charter underscores its entrenched hostility toward Israel and its commitment to reclaiming what it considers sacred Palestinian land (Baconi, 2018).

## 2.3. Hamas' Organic Structure and Leaders

Examining Hamas's internal structures, decision-making bodies, and sources of authority provides insight into the strengths and weaknesses of its decision-making processes (Gunning, 2008). The organization is divided into five constituent elements: Gaza, the West Bank, Prisoners, the Diaspora, and the IQB. These components reflect the fragmented nature of Palestinian life and highlight Hamas's organizational vulnerabilities in its conflict with Israel. Each element has its developmental history and holds equal influence in Hamas's decision-making processes. This balance ensures that Hamas's decisions remain closely aligned with the domestic situation, with the organization mindful of their impact on Palestinians in the OPT. This sets Hamas apart from Fatah, as noted by Hroub (2000), who observes that it compels Hamas to adopt a politically realistic approach within the confines of feasibility, rather than relying on lofty and impractical slogans. Hamas operates within a tightly compartmentalized and hierarchical structure, dividing Gaza into seven districts and the West Bank into five. Each district is further subdivided into sub-districts and local units, such as villages or refugee camps, each with its committees for education, publications, finance, and prisoners (Mishal & Sela, 2006). Local cell members elect leaders and representatives to district shura councils, which then elect representatives to the national shura council. This national council subsequently elects Hamas's Political Bureau (Gunning, 2008). Due to conflicts with Israeli security and intelligence organizations, local units within Hamas are strictly isolated from each other, with communication limited to members within the same unit. Communication between different units and districts relies on specially designated IQB couriers (Mishal & Sela, 2006). The majlis shura, with around 12 members, functions akin to a state legislature, providing normative backing and moral justification for Hamas's political conduct and major decisions, as well as determining its overall strategy and political aims (Gunning,

2008). The Political Bureau, consisting of approximately ten members, acts as the state executive, responsible for implementing the strategies set by the Majlis Shura. Despite this hierarchical structure, Hamas's compartmentalization grants considerable autonomy to local activists. This autonomy sometimes leads to the political leadership being unaware of impending military actions against Israel (Mishal & Sela, 2006). However, this organizational setup also allows Hamas to adapt more readily to leadership changes at all levels, such as imprisonment, deportation, or assassination. The immediate threats faced by Hamas, including occupation and external pressures, result in internal tensions primarily driven by tactical and strategic disagreements rather than ideological differences. This dynamic enables Hamas to largely insulate itself from internal ideological divisions among its constituents (Mishal & Sela, 2006). Yet, this does not mean that tensions do not exist as Hamas leaders in Gaza, the West Bank, and in exile face notable friction among themselves (Hroub, 2010). This is especially evident in the leadership trio of Gaza, the West Bank (referred to as the "inside" leadership), and the exiled communities (known as the "outside" leadership). Following the imprisonment of Yassin in 1989, Hamas realized the necessity of diversifying its leadership beyond those solely based in the territories. The temporary leadership predominantly comprised senior members from within the territories who had been deported, mainly individuals with university education and expertise in various professions. Generally, the "inside" leadership tends to adopt more practical stances regarding their relationships with Israel and Fatah. This inclination stems from their direct experience with the challenges of occupation, blockade, and the constant threat of conflict with their adversaries (Hroub, 2000)[85]. Their ascent to power is founded on their adeptness at navigating organizational crises and their ability to secure funding from sympathetic governments and communities. These "inside" leaders are elected from the ranks of the Palestinian membership, which fosters closer personal ties with local members and with the issue of Palestinian prisoners (Mishal and Sela, 2006). For what concerns the "outside" leadership, primarily consisting of tertiary-educated technocrats, this latter tends to espouse a more rigid form of political Islamism, advocating for a top-down style of revolution, in contrast to the grassroots-inspired revolutionary narrative commonly promoted by the "inside" leadership. This divergence in approach is influenced by their detachment from the challenges of occupation, blockade, and conflicts with Fatah and Israel (Mishal & Sela, 2006). The establishment of the "outside" leadership was initially recognized by the PMB as necessary for Hamas to establish an external presence to garner financial and political support beyond the occupied Palestinian territories (OPT) and to serve as a backup for the internal leadership in case of removal through imprisonment or assassination. Tensions occasionally arise regarding which leadership

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85 Hroub, K. (2000) *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice*, Institute for Palestine Studies.

faction wields influence over Hamas's overall strategic direction, likely reflecting the distinct pressures faced by each group. While Hroub (2010) acknowledges the difficulty in determining which faction holds more power within Hamas, he suggests that the Gaza leadership group seems to have a slight advantage in shaping the organization's political strategies, especially in the post-election period. Hroub (2010) delineates the division of responsibilities, noting that while the inside leadership primarily controls the operational aspects of the movement, the outside leadership oversees financial resources and external contacts. Furthermore, Spyer (2012)[86] argues that the ascension of Hamas's Gaza leadership was influenced by the 2007 schism, the necessity to consolidate power in Gaza, and the diminishing influence of the outside leadership following political upheavals in Egypt and Syria. Hamas has managed to maintain its unity and internal coherence despite facing simultaneous challenges from Israeli occupation and Fatah's political dominance for three decades. Hroub (2010) suggests that this resilience is partly due to Hamas's religious values that prioritize organizational cohesion, as well as its roots in the Muslim Brotherhood, which similarly emphasizes unity over divergent views. While Hamas encompasses militant, moderate, and radical perspectives, these differences are typically based on issues rather than temperament or geographical divisions. Consequently, there hasn't been a unifying figure or issue around which militants, moderates, or radicals could rally to threaten Hamas's internal unity. This cohesion sets Hamas apart from other Islamist movements that have grappled with internal discord and factionalism, undermining their effectiveness. This suggests that Hamas's fervent commitment to Palestinian self-determination, coupled with the relentless domestic and international repression it faces, instills a sense of purpose and solidarity among its members that transcends factional differences (Hroub, 2010). Moreover, it underscores the successful leadership of Hamas's triumvirate, who have navigated these pressures adeptly, preventing debilitating factionalism or the emergence of personality cults. Despite occasional tensions, both the "inside" and "outside" leadership contribute to Hamas's pragmatic decision-making. In the politically charged environment of the OPT, Hamas's worldview, as outlined in its Charter, initially held a stark division between truth and falsehood, with concentric circles around Palestine delineated as Arabic, Islamic, and international. However, the presence and strategic significance of the "outside" leadership prompted Hamas to adopt a more pragmatic approach toward engaging with the international community in addressing the Palestinian issue. As Hamas gained prominence, the "outside" leadership increasingly engaged with regional and international actors, leading to a gradual shift in Hamas's worldview, accommodating diverse political and ideological perspectives (Hroub, 2010).

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86 Spyer, J. (2012) "Facts on the Ground: the Growing Power of Hamas's Gaza Leadership", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 16, No. 2.

Concerning Hamas' political and religious authority, the existence of the *Majlis Shura* and the Political Bureau prevents unilateral decisions from being taken by any of Hamas's leadership cadre. The internal electoral process simultaneously legitimates their members and each institution, reinforcing their respective authority. Indeed, there is no guarantee of re-election to these representative bodies, enhancing the collective and individual authority of their members (Gunning, 2008). Instructively, there are term limits placed on key decision-making positions such as the chairman and prime minister. This prevents any one person, or group of people, from dominating these crucial positions for extended periods and leading to accusations of internal authoritarianism. These elections also allow Hamas as a movement the opportunity to rejuvenate itself, with new leaders having fresh ideas elected at regular intervals. Because of these institutions' representative nature, Hamas's members are not afraid to criticize and express dissent at contentious decisions. This means that both institutions are compelled to consult widely to garner members' opinions on prospective decisions. The majlis shura reflects the collective will of Hamas's membership, with normal policy decisions requiring a simple majority and those fundamentally affecting Hamas's direction requiring a two-thirds majority (Gunning, 2008). This aspect contrasts with Fatah's leadership structure under both Arafat and Abbas, which is viewed by most Palestinians as corrupt, nepotistic, and dictatorial (Rubin & Rubin, 2003)[87]. Charismatic authority, like that exhibited by Arafat, is condemned within Hamas unless it is used in the service of the movement. This even extended to Yassin, who despite his reverence throughout Hamas was overruled on several occasions by the majlis shura. The same also holds true for the leadership of Meshaal and Haniyeh who, despite the constrictions imposed upon Hamas after the 2006 election were unwilling and/or unable to assume unilateral control of Hamas (Gunning, 2008). Hamas does not rely on religious authority to screen its political candidates, indicating that religious authority can only transition into political authority through electoral processes (Gunning, 2008). However, this does not diminish the significance of Islam within Hamas and its membership. Islam serves as the framework for discourse and contention within the organization. Consequently, individuals with religious authority are those who demonstrate piety, possess religious knowledge, and are associated with mosques or religiously motivated charities (Gunning, 2008). Religious authority within Hamas is decentralized, not concentrated in any specific institution or individual. Members highly value religious knowledge, particularly in understanding Islamic jurisprudence. While Hamas leaders are knowledgeable in Islamic law and history, this expertise typically arises from self-education, aligning with the Brotherhood's emphasis on self-improvement through Islam. Although religious knowledge holds significance, its depth reflects an individual's commit-

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87 Rubin B, and Rubin, J. (2003) *Yasir Arafat: a Political Biography*. Oxford University Press.

ment to piety rather than being a prerequisite for leadership. As noted by Gunning (2008), Hamas appears to value "secular" political and administrative expertise over "religious expertise," resulting in political strategy discussions rarely involving theological dimensions but focusing on practical considerations. Hence, while religious authority complements a leader's institutional authority, it doesn't replace it; leaders accrue personal capital by possessing both religious and institutional authority concurrently. However, Hamas' members expect leaders at all levels to possess sufficient religious knowledge to frame internal debates effectively and demonstrate a requisite religious disposition (Gunning, 2008). Although Hamas exhibits a representative character and employs deliberative decision-making processes, its ability to respond swiftly to rapid political shifts is constrained. Decisions require consultation with all constituent elements and the membership to be considered authoritative and binding, hindering risk-taking. Gunning notes that the *Majlis Shura* and Political Bureau have limited avenues for debating new positions or gaining support (Gunning, 2009). Moreover, the Israeli occupation restricts movement and communication between territories and the Palestinian territories, and the Diaspora, exacerbating the decision-making process. The occupation has also hardened attitudes toward Israel among members, rendering attempts to compromise on issues related to the Government of Israel futile (Gunning, 2008). Consequently, Hamas faces significant challenges in implementing extensive policy changes, particularly concerning contentious issues like the formal recognition of Israel. Finally, Hamas's occasional recourse to violence post-2005 is largely contextual and stems from the disparity between Israelis and Palestinians. Grounded in its Islamist roots, Hamas frames resistance through an Islamic lens, as Sadiki (2010)[88] observes, stating that "Islam as faith and practice inspires a covenant, binding the community of resisters with God as well as with fellow human beings." Instances of Hamas engaging in internal conflict with Fatah are rare, and it has never initiated violent acts beyond the borders of Israel/Palestine. Thus, Hamas's use of violence is inherently linked to its ethos of resistance against Israeli occupation and its endeavor to achieve a sovereign Palestine. As mentioned earlier, Hamas views resistance as a multifaceted concept, encompassing opposition to Israeli occupation and Fatah's dominance over Palestinian self-determination efforts. A central tenet of Hamas's narrative is the contrast between its inclusive approach to resistance, which includes the use of violence, and Fatah's stance, which does not. Hamas contends that a sovereign Palestine can only be attained through confrontation with Israeli occupation, asserting that where there is military occupation, military resistance is to be expected (Hroub 2010). Broadly speaking, Sadiki (2010) argues that Hamas integrates resistance into its way of

88 Sadiki, L. (2010) "Reframing Resistance and Democracy: Narratives from Hamas and Hizbollah", *Democracy and Violence*, Taylor & Francis, vol.17, pp. 350-376.
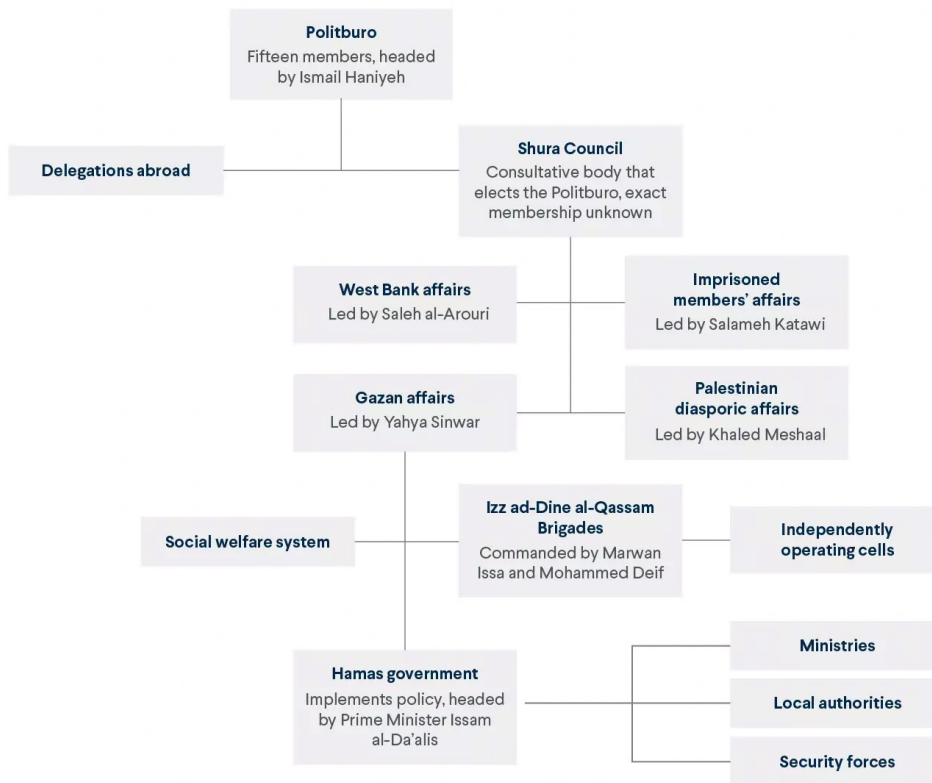
life, thought, and action to such an extent that military resistance holds as much significance as piety, charity, education, propaganda, or culture. Despite the multifaceted nature of Hamas's characterization of resistance, it lacks specificity in many respects, enabling Hamas to construct a narrative that is challenging to counter and allowing it to incorporate both military and non-military activities under the broader umbrella of resistance, such as its Dawa and Relief Services (Hroub, 2010). Hamas adeptly incorporates the concept of jihad into its narrative of resistance and the struggle for a sovereign Palestine. At the core of jihad lies the struggle to attain various forms of "freedom," which can be pursued through the heart, tongue, hands, or sword (Khadduri, 2005)[89]. In the Palestinian context, Tamimi (2009) asserts that "jihad was a struggle for the freedom for the community to worship according to their monotheistic faith and for the right to invite others to embrace it." For Hamas, the primary challenge facing Palestinians necessitates the invocation of jihad as a fundamental principle of their struggle against the Israeli state. Jihad must be waged for the Palestinian people to achieve freedom: freedom from occupation, freedom from external interference and influence, and freedom to reconnect with Islam. Hamas's focus on utilizing jihad exclusively to challenge Israeli occupation is a significant source of its legitimacy both organizationally and individually (Gunning, 2008). In these terms, Gunning observes that within Hamas, individuals earn legitimacy and esteem by frequently risking death and imprisonment, as well as by their ability to evade these risks. This recognition reflects the individual's piety, humility, self-sacrifice, and overall leadership qualities. Interestingly, very few of Hamas's senior leaders have been members of the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, indicating that Hamas's members prioritize elected leaders with primarily political rather than military experience. Hamas comprises a diverse array of leadership entities tasked with executing a spectrum of political, military, and social responsibilities. The overarching strategic direction is typically determined by a consultative body, often referred to as the politburo, which operates predominantly in exile. On the local front, committees are entrusted with managing grassroots concerns within Gaza and the West Bank (Robinson, 2023)[90].

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89 Khadduri, M. (2005) *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, Ams Pr Inc.
90 Robinson, K. (2003) "What is Hamas?" *Council on Foreign Relations*.

**Hamas's Governing Structure**



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|---|---|
| **Politburo** | Fifteen members, headed by Ismail Haniyeh |
| **Delegations abroad** | |
| **Shura Council** | Consultative body that elects the Politburo, exact membership unknown |
| **West Bank affairs** | Led by Saleh al-Arouri |
| **Imprisoned members' affairs** | Led by Salameh Katawi |
| **Gazan affairs** | Led by Yahya Sinwar |
| **Palestinian diasporic affairs** | Led by Khaled Meshaal |
| **Social welfare system** | |
| **Izz ad-Dine al-Qassam Brigades** | Commanded by Marwan Issa and Mohammed Deif |
| **Independently operating cells** | |
| **Hamas government** | Implements policy, headed by Prime Minister Issam al-Da'alis |
| **Ministries** | |
| **Local authorities** | |
| **Security forces** | |

Ismail Haniyeh presently holds the position of political chief, succeeding longtime leader Khaled Meshaal in 2017. Haniyeh has been based in Doha, Qatar, since 2020, purportedly due to restrictions imposed by Egypt on his movement in and out of Gaza. Following a fallout with their previous host, Syria, Hamas leaders established a presence in Qatar subsequent to Palestinian refugees' involvement in the 2011 uprising that preceded the Syrian Civil War. Certain senior Hamas figures are said to operate from the group's offices situated in Turkey (Robinson, 2023). Day-to-day governance in Gaza falls under the oversight of Yahya Sinwar, who previously led Hamas's military wing and spent twenty-two years in Israeli detention for orchestrating the abduction and killing of two Israeli soldiers. He was among over a thousand Palestinian prisoners released in 2011 in exchange for an Israeli soldier held by Hamas. Issam al-Da'alis assumed the role of Gaza's de facto prime minister as of June 2021. Marwan Issa and Mohammed Deif command Hamas's military wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades. The founder of the militia, Salah Shehadeh, was killed in a 2002 Israeli airstrike, which resulted in the deaths of fifteen civilians, drawing significant Israeli and international scrutiny to such tactics. Hamas's founder,

Yassin, was killed by Israeli forces in 2004. Saleh al-Arouri reportedly leads Hamas's Lebanon branch and also assumed leadership of the group's West Bank division following internal elections that concluded in 2021. Meanwhile, Meshaal was selected to head the diaspora office, and Salameh Katawi was elected to oversee the affairs of incarcerated Hamas' members (Robinson, 2023).

## 2.4. Hamas's Ideology

Hamas's ideology represents a complex interplay of religious, nationalist, and political motivations, with Islamism playing a central role in shaping its approach to the Palestinian struggle and its interactions on the regional and international stage. Understanding this ideology is fundamental to comprehending the entirety of the Hamas movement and its role in the Middle East conflict. Islamism encompasses a wide range of perspectives regarding the integration of Islam into societal structures. As Tibi (2012)[91] notes, Islamism involves the fusion of politics with religious beliefs. For Islamists, this means advocating for a political system believed to be ordained by Allah, rather than one based on popular consent. Similarly, Ashour (2009)[92] suggests that Islamist groups are social and political entities that use their interpretation of sacred texts to justify their principles, ideologies, and objectives. A common thread among Islamist movements is their interpretation of Islam's role in politics. This raises questions such as 'What do Islamists understand by Islam and Islamic?' 'How do they interpret and apply shari'ah?' and 'What is their vision of an Islamic state?' It's important to recognize that different Islamist movements offer varied answers to these questions. While Islamism isn't synonymous with Islam, it cannot exist without it (Browers, 2005). Thus, acknowledging diverse interpretations of Islam allows for distinctions between different types of Islamist movements, from Brotherhood-style groups like Hamas to entities like the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and ISIS (Browers, 2005). Acknowledging the diversity within Islamism highlights how these movements adapt to evolving social, cultural, and political contexts, shaping their ideologies and perceptions accordingly (Strindberg & Wärn, 2011). Therefore, understanding Hamas's ideology, discourse, worldview, and views on the state necessitates examining its struggle against Israeli occupation, its rivalry with Fatah, and its evolving role in these contexts. Hamas's objectives and tactics are outlined in its charter, issued on August 18, 1988. The charter articulates the Movement's ideology, reasoning, and stances not only on core issues like the Palestine conflict but also on social welfare, the role of

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91 Tibi, B. (2012) "From Sayyid Qutb to Hamas: The Middle East Conflict and Islamization of Antisemitism", *Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy*
92 Ashour, O. (2009) *The De-Radicalization of Jihadists: Transforming Armed Islamist Movements*, Contemporary Terrorism Studies, Routledge.

women, relations with other Islamic and nationalist movements, the PLO, Arab countries, and more (Abu-Amr, 1993). The charter's content aligns with the positions taken by the Muslim Brotherhood on various issues. As stated in Article 2 of the Charter, Hamas is recognized as a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood Society. However, the charter tends to give less emphasis to the Brotherhood's primary objective of societal transformation, focusing more on the Palestine problem and the concept of jihad. Regarding Palestine, the charter emphasizes that the land is a sacred trust for all Muslim generations until the Day of Resurrection, rejecting any relinquishment of it. Hamas believes that the resolution of the Palestine issue necessitates the dismantling of Israel and the establishment of an Islamic state in its place. The charter identifies three interconnected spheres—Palestinian, Arab, and Islamic—each playing a role in the struggle against Israel (Abu-Amr, 1993). In terms of peace negotiations, the charter opposes any peaceful solutions or international conferences, asserting that surrendering any part of the homeland is akin to surrendering a part of religious faith itself. It emphasizes that jihad is the only solution to the Palestine problem, making it obligatory for every Muslim when Muslim lands are occupied by an enemy. Therefore, the charter dismisses peace initiatives as futile and opposes participation in peace conferences, such as the one held in Madrid in October 1991, and urges immediate withdrawal from current Arab Israeli negotiations (Abu-Amr, 1993). Concerning Hamas' blatant opposition to the Palestinian-Israeli peace negotiations, Hamas' reluctance to engage in talks is influenced by the absence of viable alternatives and the recognition that the internal balance of power within Palestine still favors the PLO. Additionally, the considerable influence of the MB in Jordan, Hamas's patron, must be considered, as its opposition to Jordanian government policies cannot risk alienating the king. Regarding Hamas's relationship with the nationalist movement, the charter portrays the PLO as a close ally, describing it as a "father, brother, relative, or friend" of the Islamic movement. It emphasizes their shared plight, destiny, and common enemy. However, Hamas critiques the PLO's secular orientation, its leadership, and its political agenda advocating for a Palestinian state coexisting with Israel. Hamas has previously condemned the PLO's recognition of Israel and its acceptance of UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. While Hamas does not openly challenge the PLO's status as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, it opposes the widespread acceptance of the PLO as the defining authority on Palestinian identity and national aspirations. Although Hamas does not explicitly claim to be an alternative to the PLO, its repeated emphasis on Islam as an alternative to failed nationalist and secular ideologies implies a certain self-projection as an alternative. Hamas's rejection of the PLO's political agenda and its advocacy for an Islamic society in Palestine, along with the call for Islamic leadership in the struggle, reflect its rivalry with the PLO for leadership (Abu-Amr, 1993).

The role of religion is another essential aspect when examining Hamas' ideology. According to Dunning (2015)[93], indeed, Hamas' motivations and actions must be understood within the context of its profound religious foundation. However, it's inaccurate to suggest that Islam is the sole basis for Hamas's resistance. Ideas cannot be divorced from their social and political environments. While some analyses portray a clear separation between religious and sociopolitical spheres, it's debatable whether this division is as distinct as secular perspectives imply. Therefore, it's essential to explore how these aspects intersect to shape Hamas's actions. Additionally, resistance encompasses more than just political violence; it also manifests in various sociopolitical, symbolic, and cultural forms. At the heart of cultural reassertion lies the emphasis on the pillars of Islam (*arkan al-Islam*) and the concept of jihad (striving in the path of God). Islam revolves around five primary pillars: *shahada* (declaration of faith), *salah* (prayer), *sawm* (fasting), *zakat* (charity), and *hajj* (pilgrimage). Additionally, Shi'a Islam includes jihad as a sixth pillar, although mainstream Sunni Islam typically does not. While jihad holds significant importance in Sunni Islamism, it is generally not considered a pillar in mainstream Sunni Islam. Nonetheless, as noted by Dweik[94], "In Shiite Islam, they add to [the pillars], jihad, which is to fight for the cause of God, and within Sunni Islam, they say it is the highest point in Islam where you have to fight to defend your religion." However, jihad, like resistance, encompasses a range of meanings beyond armed conflict, including cultural, social, symbolic, and behavioral dimensions (Dunning, 2015). The influence of these pillars and the concept of jihad on Hamas is evident in the movement's actions and ideology. The revered figure of the *shahid* (martyr or "witness to God"), central to Palestinian culture and particularly emphasized by Hamas, originates from the first pillar, shahada. Public demonstrations of Islamic devotion have garnered symbolic significance, fostering public identification and popular support for Hamas (Dunning, 2013)[95]. These demonstrations include attending mosque prayers, fasting during Ramadan, engaging in charitable activities, collecting zakat, and undertaking the pilgrimage to Mecca. The historical evolution of Islam in Palestine reveals a significant response to the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the challenges posed by European modernity during the Age of Enlightenment. Amidst this backdrop, Muslim philosophers advocated for a return to Islam to combat civilizational stagnation. Notable figures such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida, Mustafa Kamil, and Shakib Arsalan criticized blind

93 Dunning, T. (2015). Islam and Resistance: Hamas, Ideology and Islamic Values in Palestine, *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 284–305.
94 Personal interview conducted by the author Tristan Dunning in 2010 and reported in the article by Dunning, T. (2015). "Islam and Resistance: Hamas, Ideology and Islamic Values in Palestine", *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 284–305.
95 Dunning, T. (2013) "Reinterpreting resistance: Hamas' Polysemic Conceptions of Jihad and the Search for Popular Legitimacy", The University of Queensland.

imitation of Western governance and promoted the concept of "Islam as the solution" (Kurzman, 2002)[96]. Rather than outright rejection of Western modernity, they sought to reinterpret Islam to reconcile concepts like democracy and constitutionalism with Islamic values, challenging the rigid teachings of established religious scholars. Furthermore, the development of Islamic thought in Palestine must be contextualized within regional trends. The Palestine/Israel conflict is inherently regional, with various political movements such as pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism influencing the landscape. Initially part of the broader pan-Islamic movement, Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood later shifted towards "Palestinianizing Islam" (Klein, 1996). Hamas strategically seeks support on local, Arab, and Muslim levels, influencing its ideological evolution and practical actions. Ideological trends also transcend borders, as evidenced by external influences on Hamas's political decisions. The relocation of Hamas's political bureau from Syria in 2012 exemplifies how external changes shape political and ideological choices. These dynamics highlight the interconnectedness of political and ideological ideologies, subject to borrowing and synthesis.

2.5. Historical Evolution of the Islam Thought about Hamas

Historically, Islam has played a central role in the Palestinian resistance against foreign rule. Figures like Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam exemplify this opposition, with his activism against British Mandate rule and Zionist immigration during the 1930s. As a preacher and militant, al-Qassam organized armed resistance and ultimately sacrificed his life in a firefight with British troops in 1935 (Burke, 1993)[97]. While al-Qassam's life was cut short, his spirit of resistance against foreign domination and social injustice continued to resonate. According to Schleifer (1993)[98], "Al-Qassam's defiance and the manner of his death ... electrified the Palestinian people ... Arab nationalist parties invoked his memory as the symbol of resistance. [His funeral] was the largest political gathering ever to assemble in mandatory Palestine." Al-Qassam's actions are credited with inspiring the 1936–1939 Palestinian revolt against British rule and Jewish immigration. The intensity of the revolt led to the deployment of more British troops in Mandate Palestine than in the entire Indian subcontinent (Pappe, 2006)[99]. While partially successful in prompting the British to abrogate the Balfour Declaration and significantly curb Jewish immigration, the

96 Kurzman, C. (2012) "Muslim-American Terrorism in the Decade since 9/11". Duke University, Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security.
97 Burke, E (1993) *Struggle and survival in the modern Middle East*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press
98 Schleifer, A. (1993). "Izz al-Din al-Qassam: Preacher and Mujahid". In E. Burke
(Ed.) *Struggle and survival in the modern Middle East*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press
99 Pappe, I. (2006). *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, Oxford: Oneworld.

Palestinian national movement was brutally suppressed by British forces and failed to recover in time for the disastrous confrontation with Zionist forces in 1948–49. The parallels between al-Qassam and Hamas are striking. Both emerged from outside the traditional elite. Both Hamas's precursor, the Palestinian Ikhwan, and al-Qassam initially focused on education, social renewal, and community welfare based on Islamic principles. Both eventually turned to armed resistance against foreign rule—indeed, Hamas was established as the armed wing of the Brotherhood. Al-Qassam serves as a model for Hamas, which seeks to appropriate his legacy (Filui, 2012)[100]. The name of Hamas's armed wing, Kata'ib al-Shahid al-Izz al-Din al-Qassam (the Qassam Martyrs Brigades), can be seen as an attempt to establish historical continuity with one of Palestine's earliest recognized resistance figures and martyrs. This exemplifies what Hobsbawm and Ranger (1992) termed the "invention of tradition"; in this case, a historical tradition of resistance grounded in Islamic values. One of the most prominent modern movements advocating political reform in line with Islamic principles is Hassan al-Banna's (1906–1949) al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun, founded in Egypt in 1928 and soon spreading throughout the region, including Palestine in 1935. The Ikhwan initially advocated reform through Islamization rather than armed struggle. Despite their focus on societal renewal and reform through Islam, members of the Ikhwan nonetheless fought against Zionist forces during the 1948–1949 conflict (Mayer, 1982). Islamic brigades also participated under the banner of Fatah during the late 1960s. Despite the Arab armies' crushing defeat in the 1967 Six-Day War, the political influence of Fatah and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) overshadowed the Islamists. Nevertheless, the impact of the Ikhwan on the Palestinian national movement, both for Hamas and Fatah, remains significant. According to Dweik[101], many Hamas leaders studied in Egypt, the incubator of the Muslim Brotherhood, which birthed prominent figures like Abu Iyad, Abu Jihad, and Abu Mazen—founders of Fatah. This underscores the ideological connection between the Islamists and Palestinian nationalism. Following the *nakba* ("the catastrophe") of 1948, most Palestinian Ikhwan believed that only after establishing a virtuous Islamic society could Palestinians resist Israeli occupation effectively. Consequently, they focused on da'wa (proselytizing or the "call to Islam") while avoiding military confrontation with Israel, leading to the creation of Fatah in 1954. Ironically, many founding members of Fatah were former Palestinian Ikhwan disillusioned with their passivity. It was only in 1974, when Arafat and the PLO pursued accommodation with Israel, that Islamists began advocating armed resistance, as

100 Filiu, J. (2012). "The Origins of Hamas: Militant Legacy or Israeli Tool?" Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. 41, n.3, 54–70.
101 Personal interview conducted by the author Tristan Dunning in 2010 and reported in the article by Dunning, T. (2015). "Islam and Resistance: Hamas, Ideology and Islamic Values in Palestine", *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 284–305.

seen in Palestinian Islamic Jihad. It is a common belief among Palestinians that Fatah itself is an Islamic organization, despite international discourses emphasizing its secular nature. Khatib (survey 2010), a 20-year-old Fatah supporter, describes Fatah as combining love for Islam and the country, with Islam, Allah, and the land being its top priorities. Although Fatah is part of the PLO, which has a "secular" constitution, it lacks strong ideological commitments. Fatah's approach differs from Hamas's Islamization efforts (Dunning, 2015). Barghouti (2007) argues that the Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority (PA) "islamicized" laws to counter Hamas. For example, Arafat created a Minister of Religious Affairs, previously unheard of in the Levant. In these terms, Barghouti suggests that Hamas's electoral participation from 2004 to 2006 aimed to maintain the status quo rather than further "islamicize" laws. Despite the ostensibly "secular" nature of Palestinian factions, Islam plays a central role in Palestinian society. Nasir al-Din (survey 2010), an unaffiliated 20-year-old, views Hamas as a religious organization crucial for achieving peace. This underscores Islam's profound influence on Palestinian society. It's essential not to conflate Hamas with Islam in Palestine but to recognize their intertwined relationship (Dunning, 2015). Between the 1967 Six-Day War and Hamas's establishment in 1987, Islamist political influence took a backseat to Fatah-led militant nationalism. External changes, such as the discrediting of secular Arab nationalism post-1967 and the 1979 Iranian Revolution, contributed to the regional rise of Islamism. The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 also fueled Islamic activism across the Arab world, including Palestine (Dunning, 2015). These events culminated in an ideological and financial void for the once-dominant PLO, prompting many who had previously adhered to secular or leftist ideologies to gravitate towards Islamism. Essentially, the failure of "imported" concepts such as secular nationalism, communism, and more recently, evidenced by the ongoing Arab uprisings, neoliberal market capitalism, has led significant portions of the population to re-embrace traditional indigenous reference points in efforts to modernize their societies and serve the broader community. In this context, ideological shifts in Palestine mirror regional patterns. Consequently, Hamas represents a local reflection of the broader regional trend towards various forms of Islamism, albeit within the unique backdrop of Israeli occupation. Additionally, several structural transformations specific to Palestine contributed to the emergence of Hamas. During the 1970s and 1980s, the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood established numerous social and charitable networks, along with a fledgling military infrastructure that laid the groundwork for Hamas. This period also witnessed a substantial increase in mosque construction. Between 1967 and 1987, the number of mosques in the West Bank rose from 400 to 750, while in the Gaza Strip, it tripled from 200 to 600, indicating a growing religiosity among the population. In 1973, the PMB founded the Islamic Center (*al-Mujamma al-Islami*), serving as an umbrella

organization for its activities, which is now unequivocally recognized as Hamas's principal social institution. Founded by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, along with other prominent Hamas figures like Abd al-Aziz al-Rantisi and Mahmoud al-Zahar, al-Mujamma initially had a stronger focus on Islam rather than Palestine. However, it was the onset of the first intifada that prompted al-Mujamma, and Hamas more broadly, to shift their focus (Abu-Amr, 1993). Al-Mujamma, initially established primarily as a mosque, incorporated a range of social services including a medical clinic, youth sports club, nursing school, Islamic festival hall, zakat committee, and a center for women's activities and training young girls (Abu-Amr, 1994). Within this framework, it amalgamated worship, education, and social welfare, providing subsidized services such as medical treatment, children's daycare, free meals, and sports clubs (Mishal and Sela, 2000)[102]. Interestingly, during the two years 1978-1979, al-Mujamma obtained operating licenses from the occupation authorities, who, paradoxically, viewed the Islamists as less threatening than the PLO (McGeough, 2009). This official recognition allowed al-Mujamma to establish and institutionalize its activities within the community publicly, thereby enhancing its public profile and influence on the public agenda (Roy, 2011). Consequently, al-Mujamma, the MB, and later, Hamas, succeeded in establishing a network of social institutions based on personal relationships, trust, and group solidarity, solidifying their presence and influence at the grassroots level, which other political groups found challenging to match, let alone surpass (Roy, 2011). Furthermore, al-Mujamma has established various affiliated organizations since its inception, such as al-Jami'yyat al-Islamiyya (the Islamic Society) in 1976 and Jami'yyat al-Shabbat al-Muslimat (Young Women's Muslim Association) in 1981. The Islamic University of Gaza (IUG), established in 1978, stands out as one of the most influential institutions associated with Hamas, particularly in terms of social penetration in Palestine (Roy, 2011). The university plays ideological, social, and practical roles, providing employment, training, and education services, thus deepening its influence within Palestinian society (Hoigilt, 2010). As asserted by Irving Jensen (2006), the general aim of IUG is to revitalize Islam and foster Islamic cultural and political autonomy through education. Similarly, Hoigilt (2010) argues that Islamic education, including IUG, serves as a religiously grounded response to educational challenges, strengthening civil society. Irving Jensen (2009) further observes that teaching at IUG focuses on raising students' awareness of the distinctions between the Islamic world and the West, contributing to Islamist resistance aimed at cultural, political, and individual autonomy. However, it was the rise of Palestinian Islamic Jihad during the 1980s that prompted the Muslim Brotherhood to establish Hamas as its armed offshoot to bolster its resistance

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102 Mishal, S and Sela, A (2000) *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence and Coexistence*, Columbia University Press.

credentials and compete for popular support during the first intifada. As nationalist sentiments grew during the intifada, Hamas increasingly emphasized local national issues over pan-Islamism, utilizing Islam to reinforce its nationalist identity rather than aligning Palestinians with the broader pan-Islamic sphere. Despite a professed pan-Islamic agenda, regional branches of the Muslim Brotherhood have adapted to local social, political, and cultural contexts, developing distinct operational methods while sharing a common worldview (Abu-Amr, 1993). When questioned about the apparent tension between universal Islamic principles and the specific goal of liberating Palestine, Abu Marzouq[103], in a personal interview in May 2010, asserted that there is no conflict between the national and religious aspects because patriotism is inherent to Islam. Similarly, Bashir, a Hamas member based in Damascus close to the political leadership, and trained as a biologist, clarified in a 2010 interview that Hamas is a national Islamic movement. He explained that for Palestinians, nationalism encompasses Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, thereby merging the two concepts seamlessly, akin to oxygen and hydrogen forming water, where both elements are essential components (Abu-Amr, 1993). Consequently, Hamas views Islam and Palestine as intertwined, a notion reinforced by its charter defining Palestine as an Islamic endowment. Despite this ideological fusion, Hamas operates primarily at a local level without transnational ambitions. While it engages in foreign arenas, it strictly refrains from interfering in internal affairs, focusing solely on Palestinian issues. Notably, Hamas has never conducted attacks outside the Palestine/Israel context, underscoring its localized approach (Dunning, 2015).

## 2.6. Hamas' *Modus Operandi* and Leaders

Hamas emerged in the Palestinian territories shortly after the onset of the first intifada in 1987. As the militant wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, it has been associated with violence since its inception. Over the years, Hamas has become synonymous with Islamic militancy, employing tactics such as mortar attacks and suicide bombings against Israel and its citizens. Despite this reputation, its roots in the Muslim Brotherhood have also emphasized social welfare as a crucial aspect of its political agenda. Hamas has invested significant efforts and resources in supporting the Palestinian community, addressing their needs, and helping through a network of social welfare organizations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These organizations offer various forms of aid, including cash assistance, food, medical care, education, and psychological support to hundreds of Palestinians. By leveraging these welfare networks established by the Muslim Brotherhood,

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103 Personal interview conducted by the author Tristan Dunning in 2010 and reported in the article by Dunning, T. (2015). "Islam and Resistance: Hamas, Ideology and Islamic Values in Palestine", *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 284–305.

Hamas has garnered substantial grassroots support and played a pivotal role in its electoral success in 2006. In essence, Hamas has not only overshadowed its parent organization but has also ensured its political endurance in the occupied territories by expanding and consolidating these social welfare initiatives (Rashmi, 2012)[104]. In essence, Hamas transcends mere terrorism and should primarily be understood as a social movement deeply entrenched in Palestinian society and its everyday trials. Nonetheless, we cannot ignore the significant role of violence in the group's socio-political strategy. Hamas has consistently advocated for both military jihad, which can denote armed struggle or holy war, against Israel and social welfare as equally legitimate means to achieve its goal of an independent Islamic Palestinian state. However, its adoption of terrorist tactics, including suicide attacks, must be contextualized within the broader history of violence and political dynamics in the occupied territories. Hamas is not the initial Palestinian faction to employ armed resistance against Israeli occupation to bolster its popularity among the Palestinian populace, nor will it be the last. Nevertheless, Hamas has carved out a distinctive niche and identity within the Palestinian political landscape, despite facing more established rivals like Fatah. It has achieved this primarily by framing the Palestinian statehood project and its use of violence in overtly Islamic terms, contrasting sharply with Fatah's more secular narrative. Hamas's political discourse combines an anti-secular, anti-colonial ideology with an anti-Zionist, anti-Jewish stance influenced by Quranic teachings and European anti-Semitic sentiments. Essentially, it employs the language of political Islam to incorporate classical Islamic symbols and principles into modern secular ideologies, particularly the Palestinian struggle for nationhood. For Hamas, the individual duty of jihad is depicted as central to the fight for the Palestinian state, drawing upon the classical Islamic dichotomy of *dar al-Islam* (the abode of peace) and *dar al-harb* (the abode of war) to portray the Palestinian national struggle as a contest between Islam (represented by Palestine) and Western domination (personified by Israel). In summary, Hamas's ideology not only references the moral imperative of jihad but also effectively harnesses it to serve the Palestinian nationalist cause (Rashmi, 2012). Hamas also presents itself as the leading force of Islam in the Palestinian territories, framing its political ambitions within the context of actively reintroducing Islam into Palestinian society as a crucial aspect of the jihad aimed at reclaiming Palestine from non-Muslim occupiers. According to Hamas, since Palestine holds central importance in Islam, its recovery can only occur through the establishment of an Islamic state by devout Muslims. It's important to note that Hamas's Sunni Islamist and nationalist agenda reflects its origins within the Muslim Brotherhood. Like the Brotherhood, Hamas advocates for a reformist ap-

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104 Rashmi S. (2012) "The Discourse and Practice of 'Heroic Resistance' in the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict: The Case of Hamas", *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 529–545.

proach to addressing the occupation crisis, emphasizing the return of Palestinian society to Islamic principles as fundamental to achieving national independence. In essence, Hamas aims to achieve liberation by reshaping society through education and preaching while simultaneously engaging in violent resistance against Israel. Therefore, Hamas views the Islamization of Palestinian society as a prerequisite for achieving independence. By framing the concept of Palestinian statehood in Islamic terms, Hamas has fundamentally altered the strategic objectives of the national movement and the methods employed to achieve them. Consequently, Hamas's narrative portrays its acceptance of an independent Palestinian state limited to the West Bank and Gaza Strip as merely a pragmatic step within its broader historic struggle against Israel. The goal remains the establishment of an Islamic-Palestinian nation-state encompassing the entire historic territory of Palestine (Rashmi, 2012). As a matter of fact, In reality, Hamas has consistently demonstrated a pragmatic approach to political matters, particularly in its dealings with the Israeli state. Despite changes evident in different versions of the Hamas Charter, as well as its governance in Gaza, Hamas has maintained an ideological consistency enabled by the language of political Islam. This narrative allows Hamas to adapt to new political realities while seemingly remaining true to its original ideological stance, which prioritizes the goal of compelling an unconditional Israeli withdrawal from historic Palestine. The political success of Hamas, exemplified by its electoral victory in January 2006, largely stems from its ability to project both ideological coherence and a readiness to continue armed resistance. This stands in stark contrast to competitors such as Fatah and the PLO/PA, which were increasingly perceived as abandoning armed struggle and compromising on the aspiration for an independent nation-state encompassing all of historic Palestine in favor of a two-state solution (Rashmi, 2012). Hamas employed and conducted a policy of accommodation and escalation, as well. Following the implementation of the Oslo agreement in the spring of 1994, indeed, significant tension arose between Hamas and both Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA). This tension had a notable impact on the overall peace process. The challenges emerged swiftly because of the transformative political landscape in Gaza and the West Bank after 1994. This included the expansion of Palestinian self-rule under Arafat's leadership across various sections of these territories, the extensive legal and political subordination of these self-rule areas to the Israeli occupation regime, the establishment of a Palestinian Legislative Council through elections in January 1996, the predominance of Arafat's Fatah group, mounting pressure from the United States and Israel on Arafat to dismantle Hamas infrastructure, the growing divide between Palestinian political factions supporting and opposing the peace process, ongoing economic stagnation in the Palestinian territories due to Israeli closures, increasing Israeli settlement activities, depoliticization of Palestinian educational institutions, and a shift in

focus from the peace process to domestic issues such as governance challenges, quality of life concerns, human rights, and the conduct of Palestinian security forces (Muslih, 1999)[105]. These transformations occurred within a society undergoing rapid change, where the power dynamics among political elites were shifting in favor of leaders allied with Arafat from Tunisia, and where the Palestinian Authority (PA) was acting as a buffer between the Palestinian populace and Israeli authorities. The PA's influence in the self-rule areas was expanding, leading to increased stability and satisfaction due to the reduction of visible signs of Israeli occupation. However, this also bred resentment and unease among many Palestinians. The PA's corruption, authoritarian tendencies, and heavy-handed approach drew criticism from various quarters, particularly from educated individuals. Meanwhile, the peace process, fraught with uncertainty and convolutions, became a battleground for regional and international players vying for influence and pursuing their own interests. Palestinian society, small and vulnerable, situated at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict, was susceptible to influences from Israel, the United States, Western Europe, and the surrounding Arab world. These complexities presented Hamas with unprecedented dilemmas and challenges. While interconnected, these issues formed a cohesive and comprehensible subject matter. How did Hamas navigate these circumstances? To answer this question, we will explore Hamas's approach to three key areas: the peace process, its relationship with the PA, and its stance toward the U.S. government. Regarding the peace process, it can be characterized as incomplete, with deadlines from signed agreements between Israel and the PA being ignored, and Israeli security demands posing a threat to the viability of any future Palestinian entity. Concerning Hamas-PA relations, it's essential to consider the divergent views of both parties regarding the path to peace. The shifting landscape highlighted whether Hamas should adhere to a maximalist rejectionist stance or strike a more balanced approach in a dynamic environment where Arafat and his internal and external supporters held decisive sway. Let's begin by examining Hamas's stance on the peace process. While we won't delve deeply into this question here, some key points emerge clearly. Literature from the movement indicates that Hamas opposes Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. However, it also suggests that this opposition is tempered by an understanding of the social and economic challenges faced by Palestinians in the occupied territories. A Palestinian observer wrote, "Despite vocal opposition, the organization [Hamas] does not wish to project itself as an obstructive force when there might be a chance, however slim, of finding a solution. Hamas' opposition to the talks is further tempered by a lack of available alternatives and awareness that the internal Palestinian balance of power still favors the PLO. More important is the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, its patron, whose opposition to Jordanian govern-

105 Muslih, M. (1999). The Foreign Policy of Hamas. *Council on Foreign Relations.*

ment policies cannot be allowed to reach the point of alienating the king"[106]. In situations where more powerful actors dictate the course of events, weaker players like Hamas often find themselves more inclined towards deliberation than rigid adherence to doctrine. In such circumstances, the role of ideology may take a backseat, allowing for the exploration of practical, non-ideological approaches. This shift, which had its roots before the Oslo agreement, began to take clearer shape afterward. The evolving trends within Hamas after 1993 provide insight into the emergence of goals and methods diverging from earlier ideological frameworks. While not entirely novel, these trends may signal Hamas's capacity to adapt to ongoing changes both within and outside Palestine. The first trend was exemplified by those staunchly opposed to any settlement that did not entail a fully liberated Palestine. They conceived jihad as the sole means of achieving liberation and categorically rejected any negotiations with Israel. This perspective was shared by certain religious leaders, as well as Hamas's members in Syria, Sudan, and Egypt (Muslih, 1999). Hamas' moderate figures, such as Dr. Mahmud al-Zahhar (from Gaza), Muhammad Nazzal, and Musa Abu Marzuq (based in Amman), represented this trend. They were inclined to consider the concept of phased solutions, or in other words, two distinct stages—an immediate ("*ajil*") and a "deferred" ("*mu'ajjal*") one. The immediate solution proposed the establishment of a Palestinian state in Gaza and the West Bank, not as a final resolution but as a transitional phase. There was also a growing inclination towards employing diplomatic means to achieve this objective. Prominent proponents of this viewpoint included al-Zahhar, a practicing physician in Gaza, and Muhammad Nazzal, who had previously served as Hamas' representative in Jordan.

Al-Zahhar's proposals can be summarized as follows:

1. Acknowledging the Oslo agreement as a reality, albeit describing it privately as a "poisoned meal" that Palestinians would reluctantly accept.
2. Calling for Israel's withdrawal from the territories it occupied in 1967, particularly Jerusalem.
3. Advocating for the United Nations to assume custody of the occupied territories.
4. Asserting the Palestinians' right to choose their representatives from both inside and outside the occupied territories, without Israeli interference.
5. Initiating negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian representatives to address all outstanding issues. As for Nazzal, he simply indicated Hamas' willingness to accept a peaceful resolution if Israel agreed to withdraw from the territories captured in June 1967. However, he emphasized that Hamas would not recognize Israel.

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106 Muslih, M. (1999). The Foreign Policy of Hamas. *Council on Foreign Relations.*
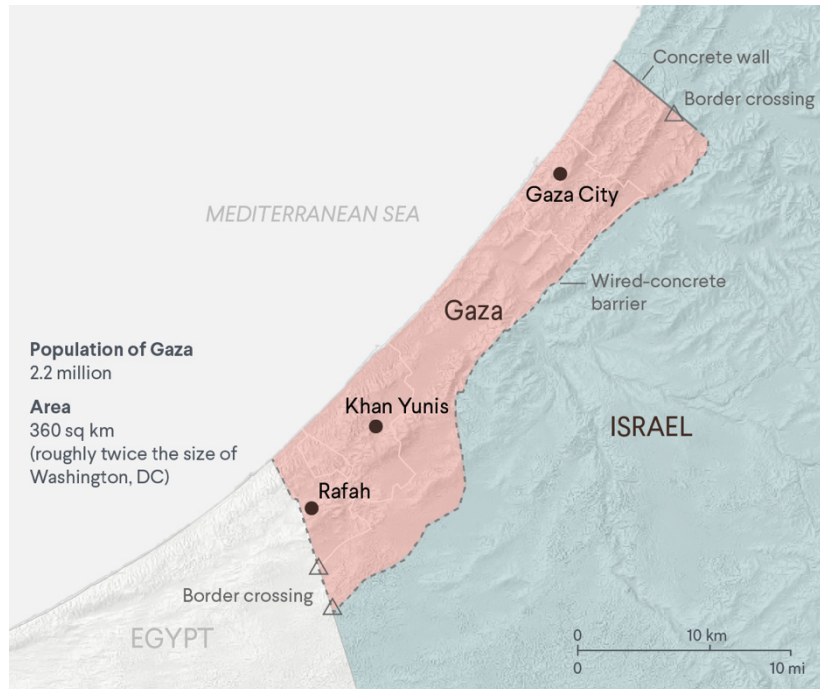
Finally, Hamas went to great lengths to steer clear of direct confrontation with the United States. While the organization continued to emphasize in its literature and statements that the U.S.-led new world order aimed to undermine Islam and Islamic movements, it also recognized the significant influence of the U.S. in shaping global affairs, particularly through actions such as the destruction of Iraq and the initiation of the Middle East peace process. Hamas perceived an underlying agreement among the U.S. and other Western powers to assert dominance over the Arab and Islamic worlds, while strengthening the American-European-Israeli alliance (Muslih, 1999). However, Hamas' practical approach seemed to prioritize pragmatic considerations over ideological adherence. Despite ideological differences, Hamas made a deliberate decision not to engage in violence against American targets. This decision was made despite U.S. efforts to contain Hamas by designating it as a terrorist organization, pressuring Arafat to take stricter measures against Hamas' infrastructure, and promoting anti-terrorist cooperation at regional and international levels. This cooperation aimed to hinder Hamas' recruitment efforts, disrupt its arms procurement, and trace its sources of financing. Hamas had compelling reasons to avoid direct confrontation with the U.S. government. This strategy aligned with its broader goal of focusing its efforts on confronting Israel while minimizing the number of adversaries it faced (Muslih, 1999).

2.7. Hamas: From a Political Movement to October 7th

Hamas has been the de facto authority in Gaza since shortly after Israel withdrew from the territory in 2005. The following year, Hamas won most the seats in the PA's legislature and formed a government. It earned votes for the social services it provided and as a rejection of the incumbent Fatah, which many voters perceived as having grown corrupt at the helm of the PLO and delivering little to Palestinians through its negotiations with Israel. The outcome was unacceptable to Fatah and its Western backers, and the party ousted Hamas from power in the West Bank. In Gaza, Hamas routed Fatah's militias in a week of fighting, resulting in a political schism between the two Palestinian territories. Palestinians have not voted for a legislature since 2006, nor a president since 2008 (Robinson, 2023)[107].

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107 Robinson, K. (2023) "What is Hamas?" *Council on Foreign Relations*.

Concrete wall
Border crossing

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

Gaza City

Gaza

Wired-concrete barrier

**Population of Gaza**
2.2 million

**Area**
360 sq km
(roughly twice the size of
Washington, DC)

Khan Yunis

ISRAEL

Rafah

Border crossing

EGYPT

0       10 km
0       10 mi

Upon assuming control of the remaining PA institutions in the territory, Hamas established its own judiciary and implemented authoritarian structures. While ostensibly governing in line with the sharia-based Palestinian Basic Law, similar to the PA, Hamas has generally adopted more stringent measures, such as regulating women's attire and enforcing gender segregation in public spaces during its early tenure. According to a 2020 report by the watchdog organization Freedom House, the Hamas-led government lacks effective and independent mechanisms to ensure transparency in its finances, procurements, and operations. Additionally, Hamas suppresses media outlets, civilian activism on social media platforms, political dissent, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), thereby circumventing accountability mechanisms (Robinson, 2023). Hamas has launched rockets and mortars into Israel since it gained control of the Gaza Strip in the mid-2000s. Iranian security officials have claimed that Tehran supplied some of these weapons, but Hamas also developed the capability to manufacture its own missiles after receiving training from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and its proxies. Israel estimated that Hamas and other Palestinian militant factions in Gaza possessed around thirty thousand rockets and mortars in their arsenal. Additionally, Hamas's militants have sent balloons carrying incendiary devices toward Israel, leading to occasional fires. The group has also conducted raids into Israeli territory, resulting in the deaths and abductions of soldiers and civilians. Before the 2023 conflict, Hamas and Israel experienced their most intense fighting in years in 2021. This occurred after Hamas launched rockets into Israel following a

period of heightened tensions between Palestinians and Israelis in Jerusalem. Some analysts suggest that Hamas aimed to enhance its reputation as the defender of the Palestinian cause, particularly after the Palestinian Authority postponed the 2021 elections. During the eleven-day conflict, Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) fired over four thousand rockets from Gaza, resulting in the deaths of ten Israeli civilians and injuries to more than three hundred others. Hamas reportedly coordinated its actions with the IRGC and Lebanon's Hezbollah during the hostilities, employing suicide drones alongside its conventional missile arsenal. The United States and Egypt brokered a ceasefire to halt the conflict (Robinson, 2023). Hamas's recent assault on southern Israel, dubbed "Operation Al-Aqsa Storm" by its leaders, has been characterized as extraordinary in terms of its strategy, scale, and level of secrecy, according to analysts. The offensive commenced in the early hours of October 7, coinciding with the Jewish Sabbath and an important holiday, as Hamas launched thousands of rockets into southern and central Israel, reaching as far north as Tel Aviv. Simultaneously, Hamas militants breached the heavily fortified Gaza border and infiltrated numerous towns and villages in southern Israel, resulting in approximately 1,400 casualties, along with numerous injuries and abductions. Mohammed Deif, Hamas's military leader, stated that the assault was motivated by Israel's prolonged blockade of Gaza, its occupation of Palestinian territories, and alleged crimes against Muslims, including the desecration of Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. The attack on October 7 stands as the deadliest in Israel's seventy-five-year history and has inflicted profound psychological trauma on its populace, drawing comparisons from some analysts to the surprise attacks on Pearl Harbor and September 11, 2001, in the United States. Israeli and U.S. intelligence agencies reportedly had no prior indications of Hamas's plans for such an assault. CFR Senior Fellow Bruce Hoffman remarked, "It is completely unprecedented that a terrorist organization would have the capacity or the wherewithal to mount coordinated, simultaneous assaults from the air, sea, and land." In response, Israel has declared war on Hamas, launching a campaign aimed at eradicating the group and rescuing approximately two hundred hostages. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has warned of a "long and difficult war" against Hamas. Since October 7, Israel and Hamas have exchanged fire daily, and Israel has enforced a total blockade of Gaza, exacerbating the suffering of an already deprived population. Within the first three weeks of Israel's offensive, its forces had reportedly killed over eight thousand Palestinians in the enclave, with around 40 percent of them being children, according to Gaza's Hamas-controlled health ministry. Additionally, the Israeli health ministry reported the deaths of more than three hundred Israeli troops in the conflict. There are concerns among experts that a full-scale Israeli invasion of Gaza could prompt a significant retaliatory attack against Israel by Hezbollah, an Iran-backed militant group and political party in Lebanon, potentially

igniting a broader conflict in the region. CFR Senior Fellow Steven A. Cook warned, "Iran is, of course, a patron of Hezbollah [as well as Hamas and other Palestinian militant groups], and there is an ever-present danger of a two-front conflict, which would devastate parts of Israel and much of Lebanon, where Hezbollah is based. There is a risk of escalation." However, some observers are questioning whether Israel will pursue a full-scale invasion and reoccupation of Gaza and whether it has a viable plan for governing the territory post-Hamas. CFR Senior Fellow Max Boot suggested, "If Israel simply attacks Hamas and then withdraws—as it has done previously—the terrorist organization will have the opportunity to regenerate itself. However, Israel has shown little inclination to reoccupy the Gaza Strip since its withdrawal in 2005, and the Palestinian Authority appears to lack the capacity and determination to govern in Hamas's absence. Attempting to establish a Palestinian Authority government in Gaza, with assistance from Arab states, may be the most feasible option. Nevertheless, according to CFR Senior Fellow Max Boot[108], if this approach fails, Israel may have no alternative but to occupy Gaza itself."

108 Boot, M. (2023) "Israel's Ground War Against Hamas: What to Know", *Council on Foreign Relations*.

## Chapter 3 – What Renders Hamas a Terrorist Organization?

3.1. Critical Studies on Terrorism

Considering the intricate analysis presented throughout this thesis, it becomes unequivocally clear that the ultimate elucidation lies within the confines of this concluding chapter. Herein lies the pivotal task of unraveling the enigma that encapsulates the core inquiry: is Hamas to be characterized as a terrorist organization? This culminating section assumes paramount importance as it endeavors to provide a comprehensive response, drawing upon the intricate web of evidence, discourse, and critical examination meticulously woven throughout the preceding chapters. For this purpose, the categorization of Hamas as a terrorist organization lies upon the pivotal role of critical terrorism studies (CTS). In its initial decade, CTS has achieved several significant milestones, a few of which are worth noting. Firstly, through synthesizing various assessments, including those by Stohl (1979)[109], Schmid and Jongman (1988)[110], Zulaika and Douglass (1996)[111], Reid (1997)[112], Silke (2004), and Ranstorp (2006)[113], the CTS initiative has fostered an extensive and thorough discourse on terrorism studies as a domain of inquiry, education, and public involvement. This discourse has delved into topics such as the foundational conditions of terrorism studies, its underlying ontology and epistemology, its methods of knowledge generation, disciplinary norms, its interactions with political authority, the expertise within the field, and more. Consequently, it can be argued that CTS has enriched the broader field's critical self-reflection and awareness regarding the terminologies, definitions, classifications, assumptions, values, theories, methodologies, institutional dynamics, and media influences that shape its intellectual pursuits and organizational structures (Jackson, 2018)[114]. Secondly, and even most importantly, CTS has effectively initiated and, in some instances, broadened and intensified crucial debates within the discipline concerning the essence and delineation of terrorism, the utilization of the "terrorist" designation and the language surrounding terrorism, the societal reluctance to address terrorism and the necessity for more primary research, the oversight of

109 Stohl, M., (1979) "Myths and Realities of Political Terrorism", in Stohl, M., ed., *The Politics of Terrorism*, New York: Marcel Dekker, pp. 1–19.
110 Schmid A., and A. Jongman (1988) *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Databases, Theories and Literature,* Oxford: North Holland.
111 Zulaika J., and Douglass, W., (1996) *Terror and Taboo: The Follies, Fables, and Faces of Terrorism*. London: Routledge.
112 Reid, E., (1997) "Evolution of a Body of Knowledge: An Analysis of Terrorism Research", *Information Processing and Management*, vol. 33, n.1, pp. 91–106.
113 Ranstorp, M., (2006) *Mapping Terrorism Research: State of the Art, Gaps and Future Direction*, London: Routledge.
114 Jackson, R. (2018) *Routledge Handbook of Critical Terrorism Studies*, Taylor & Francis LTD, 328 pp.

state-sponsored terrorism, the magnification of the terrorism menace, the assessment of counter-terrorism strategies and the war on terror, the ethical dimension of terrorism studies, the gendered dynamics within terrorism research, and other pivotal themes (refer to Jackson and Sinclair 2012)[115]. It is reasonable to posit that many of these topics would have remained relatively overlooked or inadequately discussed in the discipline's literature, publications, and conferences had they not been spotlighted by CTS scholars and initiatives (Jackson, 2018). Thirdly, CTS scholarship has been instrumental in integrating the kinds of social theory and foundational discussions that have long been prevalent in fields like international relations into the realm of terrorism studies. Prior to the emergence of CTS, apart from a few exceptions (as seen in Zulaika and Douglass, 1996), meaningful conversations surrounding ontology, epistemology, methodology, and practical applications were scarce within terrorism studies literature, publications, or conferences. The majority of terrorism scholars did not actively engage with or systematically employ alternative theoretical frameworks such as constructivism, critical theory, post-structuralism, feminist theory, post-colonialism, and others. It is partly attributable to CTS that an increasing number of publications within the field now grapple with social theory in a substantive manner and demonstrate a diversification of methodological and epistemological approaches in their research endeavors (Jackson, 2012)[116]. Finally, CTS has succeeded in establishing itself as a unique and recognizable approach within the broader security and terrorism studies fields. That is, CTS is now recognized for its critical theory-influenced ontology, its epistemological concerns, its methodological pluralism, its skepticism towards official counterterrorism culture and practice, and its sustained normative critique of the war on terror and Western counterterrorism practices. This distinctive approach has provided a vocabulary and a set of theoretical tools and assumptions for scholars wanting to study terrorism and counterterrorism from a post-positivist, normatively inspired perspective. It has proved to be particularly inspirational for many young scholars who have come to terrorism studies in the years after 9/11 when the war on terror had already been embedded and normalized in politics, academia, and society (Jackson, 2018). As such, why study the history of terrorism expertise? According to Stampnitzky (2012)[117], terrorism is not an intrinsic category but rather a construct that has evolved alongside the contemporary conceptualization of terrorism. This perspective suggests that both the events constituting terrorism and our understanding of the phenomenon have been shaped by social and political forces. Exploring this historical trajectory serves to challenge prevalent assumptions about terrorism and the construction of exper-

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115 Jackson, R., and Sinclair, S., eds., (2012) *Contemporary Debates on Terrorism*, Abingdon: Routledge.
116 Jackson, R., 2012. "The Study of Terrorism 10 Years After 9/11: Successes, Issues, Challenges", *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, (*Journal of International Relations – Turkey*), Vol.8, n. 32, pp. 1–16.
117 Stampnitziky, L. present in *Routledge Handbook of Critical Terrorism Studies*, Ch.1, sec.2

tise within the field. It underscores the dynamic nature of our understanding of the problem and the evolution of expert knowledge over time. In essence, the expert field and the discourse on terrorism have co-evolved, necessitating a deeper understanding of the structuring of the expert field to grasp the terrorism discourse, as argued by Stampnitzky (2013[118]). A central inquiry in studies of terrorism expertise revolves around the degree of autonomy experts possess, or whether they predominantly reflect the interests of states and other powerful actors. This debate, as highlighted by Stampnitzky's arguments, underscores the significance of understanding the processes shaping expertise within the field. Therefore, delving into the history of terrorism expertise becomes crucial for unraveling its constructed nature, interrogating established assumptions, and comprehending the intricate interplay between expertise and power dynamics (Stampnitzky, 2013). In these terms, Stampnitzky's asserts that the evolution of perceptions and terminology surrounding political violence, particularly the shift from viewing acts of violence as the actions of rational strategic actors labeled and classified them as "terrorism"; this concept is pivotal in this thesis' attempt to classify Hamas as a terrorist organization[119]. The pivotal turning point dates back to the late 1960s and early 1970s, marked by the emergence of a novel form of political-theatrical violence exemplified by media-centric hijackings and hostage takings orchestrated by Palestinian nationalists post-1967 war. While political violence by sub-state actors against civilians was not unprecedented, the innovation here lay in how nationalist and anti-colonial violence transcended geopolitical boundaries, targeting Americans and other "Westerners" as direct victims and intended media spectators. This shift involved striking transnational sites like international air travel and, notably, the Olympic Games, exemplified by the infamous Munich Olympics attack on September 5, 1972. This event, while significant, did not singularly or immediately alter discourse. Instead, transformations occurred through a confluence of events and subsequent struggles over their interpretation and who held the authority to define them. While some immediately labeled the attacks as "terrorism," there was ambiguity regarding the framework and interpretation of these events. The response, including the establishment of a Cabinet Committee to Combat Terrorism by President Nixon, signaled a governmental commitment to address terrorism in unprecedented ways (Stampnitzky, 2012). This led to the formation of a new field of expertise, with the State Department and the Cabinet Committee commissioning studies and consultations to understand this perceived "new"

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118 Stampnitzky, L. (2013) *Disciplining Terror: How Experts Invented "Terrorism"*, Cambridge University Press.

119 The author assumes that prior to the 1970s, incidents such as hijackings and assassinations were often understood within the context of strategic political maneuvering. However, post-9/11, there has been a narrative portraying terrorist as incomprehensible pathological villains. "Disciplining Terror" explores this transformation, tracing how political violence came to be categorized as terrorism and examining the implications of this shift, including the emergence of the contemporary "war on terror."

problem. As a result of these efforts, terrorism rapidly evolved from a scarcely studied topic to a focal point around which entire institutes, journals, and conferences were organized within a few years. Bibliographic catalogues were compiled to track the increasing number of publications, reflecting a growing academic and policy interest. The surge in attention to terrorism surpassed that of insurgency and related terms by the early 1970s, indicating a significant shift in discourse and scholarly focus on the subject (Schmid and Jongman 1988[120]). Consequently, it is possible to notice lasting effects of the emergence of terrorism as an object of knowledge. In fact, the historical development of terrorism as a subject of knowledge has had profound implications for the cultivation of experts and expertise in this domain. Firstly, it has instigated a fundamental shift in the primary question posed about violent incidents: "Is this terrorism?" This question serves as the lens through which responses to such incidents are determined. Consequently, there arises a necessity to scrutinize why certain events, like the Boston Marathon bombing, are labeled as terrorism while others, such as the Sandy Hook school shootings, are not. Despite extensive discourse surrounding the classification of events, less attention is directed towards understanding why this question has come to dominate the debate. Secondly, the framing of political violence as terrorism influences the language used to discuss violence and the authorized voices in these discussions. As Stampnitzky previously argues in 2013, both expert and popular discourse on terrorism is characterized by a politics of "anti-knowledge." This entails a deliberate rejection of rational explanations, positioning terrorism as the result of inexplicable evil. Consequently, understanding the terrorist becomes taboo, as if the notion of evil creates a barrier around them, rendering further inquiry unnecessary. This phenomenon, akin to James Ferguson's concept of "anti-politics," removes the problem from political debate, albeit in a different manner. Here, the exclusion of certain perspectives is not driven by technological solutions proposed by experts but rather by a reluctance to engage with nuanced understandings of terrorism. As terrorism emerged as a paradigm for comprehending political violence, experts encountered challenges in establishing themselves and their work as credible. To maintain legitimacy, experts had to avoid delving too deeply into the worldviews of terrorists, lest they be perceived as sympathetic. Consequently, there emerged a need for experts to maintain a certain distance from their subject matter. Those who sought to understand the motivations of terrorists faced skepticism and resistance, as highlighted by political scientist Martha Crenshaw's recollection of governmental reactions to such inquiries. A frequent criticism leveled at the field, indeed, is the scarcity of studies based on firsthand interactions with individuals labeled as terrorists (Schmid 2011 and Silke 2004). Brian Jenkins,

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120 Schmid, A., and A. Jongman (1988) *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Databases, Theories and Literature*, Oxford: North Holland.

a pioneer in the field, drew a striking analogy, likening terrorism analysts to Victorian cartographers of Africa: "Just as the cartographers a century ago mapped from a distance a vast and impenetrable continent few of them had ever seen, most contemporary terrorism research is conducted far removed from, and therefore with little direct knowledge of, the actual terrorists themselves" (quoted in Hoffman 2004). Therefore, as terrorism evolved into a subject of expertise, it did not shed its inherent political or moral dimensions; instead, the expert discourse became entwined with moral, political, and analytical considerations. This intertwining posed persistent challenges for those seeking to approach political violence through a lens of rational understanding. Experts encountered difficulty in maintaining a position that produced expertise perceived as rational, apolitical, and value neutral. Those perceived as getting too close to terrorists risked being labeled as sympathetic and thereby losing credibility. Moreover, this historical trajectory carries direct implications for the policies and practices enabled by it. Viewing adversaries as rational actors with clear objectives might lead to strategies aimed solely at their elimination. Alternatively, approaches could involve addressing underlying grievances, persuading them to reconsider their goals, or altering incentives to dissuade violence. However, the prevailing approach in the war on terror has largely focused on identifying and eliminating the perceived "bad guys" (Stampnitzky, 2012). Important contributions to CTS stemmed from post-structuralism and constructivism as they refuse to accept "terrorism" as well as "terrorist" as objective categories existing in the world. Specifically, as argued by Charlotte Heat-Kelly[121] (2012), approaches rooted in post-structuralism and constructivism challenge the notion of "terrorism" and "terrorist" as objective categories inherent in the world. Instead, they delve into the politics surrounding terrorism, recognizing how these terms are constructed and deployed to delegitimize certain actors, achieve policy objectives, and obscure the complexities within the international system. In essence, these approaches shed light on the politics underlying violence. To understand why terrorism is not a universally accepted, objective concept, it's crucial to delve into the roots of critical thought in linguistic theory rather than solely focusing on debates about the labeling of violence as legitimate or illegitimate. While these debates are significant, exploring linguistic theory provides deeper insights into the construction of meaning. Both post-structuralism and constructivism trace their intellectual lineage to twentieth-century linguistic philosophy, particularly the structuralist movement spearheaded by Ferdinand De Saussure in the study of linguistics. Saussure challenged the notion of a direct correspondence between words and the objects they represent in the world. For instance, he highlighted that the same object may be referred to by different words in

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121 Heat-Kelly C. (2012) "Post-Structuralism and Constructivism" in *Routledge Handbook of Critical Studies on Terrorism* by Richard Jackson.

different languages, illustrating the arbitrariness of linguistic signifiers (Sanders, 2004)[122]. He also argued that there is no direct relationship between words and the objects they represent in the world. For example, the same object is known by different words across different languages. A cat is a *chat*, is a *katze*, is a *macska*, is a *felis* and so on. Given this realization (and one might also think of the changing meaning of words over time, such as gay shifting from "happy" to "homosexual"), it becomes clear that words don't have timeless connections to the objects they represent. Words change, and there are multiple words for each object. So, what is the relationship between language and the world? The premise of structuralism rests upon the division of linguistics into categories of "signified" and "signifier" to explore this, emphasizing the lack of a direct, natural, objective relationship between the two. We have signs to represent the world, but these signs are not directly connected to the objects they signify as they change, they are plural, they mutate. A cat could be called anything (Heat-Kelly, 2012). But how do you know, if there is no connection between the word and the object it signifies? This is an epistemological question to which the structuralist school responded that a hidden structure of language renders it functional. You know what any given word represents because it is situated within a structure of other words, and it obtains its meaning through contrast and juxtaposition. Simply put, you know what cat is because it isn't dog. While the word cat has no intrinsic relationship to the referent animal, it is situated in relationships with a potentially infinite number of other words within the structure of language. As such, a word has no "objective" meaning (no timeless connection to the object it represents); instead, words give meaning to each other through their relationships in a structure. Cat is not dog, is not terrorist, is not president. If these elements are clear, then it is possible to understand the intellectual heritage of the post-structuralist and constructivist schools of international relations (IR) (Heat-Kelly, 2012). Constructivist IR theory is based upon the argument that the identities of states are not pre-given, but instead developed through comparison and contrast with other members of the international community. Identities and the "international" are constituted through discursive performance. Essentially, this is the cornerstone of Alexander Wendt's argument in "Anarchy is What States Make of It" (1992)[123], a key work within constructivism. Writing against the dominant neorealist conception of anarchy as determining the behavior of states within the international community, Wendt argued that anarchy does not have a timeless objective status. It isn't an objective thing.

122 Sanders, C. (2004) *The Cambridge Companion to Saussure*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
123 The publication of Wendt's essay "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics" (1992) established him as the leading thinker of constructivism in international relations. Broadly defined, constructivism is a theoretical framework in which the fundamental elements of international politics are conceived of as social constructs. For constructivists, elements such as power, norms, interests, and even identity are not immutable facts that determine unidirectionally the behaviour of international actors. Instead, they are partly shaped by that behaviour.

It is a social construction. Essentially, states constitute the meaning of the international arena through their actions. If the international is anarchic, then this is what states have made of it, according to Wendt. Meaning is a social product, not an objective truth. Constructivist scholars of terrorism embraced this perspective and began exploring fundamentally different questions compared to their counterparts in strategic studies. Traditional terrorism studies typically accept the existence of a category of "terrorist" as a neutral reflection of reality. Consequently, it focuses on quantifying terrorist phenomena and applying scientific methods to understand the variables that influence terrorist violence (Bjorgo 2005[124]; Horgan 2005[125]; Pape 2006[126]; Piazza 2007[127]). In contrast, constructivist scholars are intrigued by how political elites and others attribute terrorism and how these labeling processes function. Here, terrorism is not seen as an objective reality but rather as the application of a label and the performance of meaning. The act of labeling serves to juxtapose the identities of wrongdoers and legitimate powers, reinforcing the labeler's position within legitimate politics and their identity as respectable. Prominent constructivist research on terrorism revolves around the interconnectedness of war and words. Works such as Stuart Croft's "Culture, Crisis and America's War on Terror" (2006)[128] and Richard Jackson's "Writing the War on Terrorism" (2005) delve into the multidirectional relationship between words and the practice of the war on terror. They argue that words play a crucial role in making war possible. Threats and crises are socially constructed, not objective realities. The war on terror, for instance, would not have been feasible without the discursive construction of terrorism as the most significant and dreadful global threat. Conversely, war shapes meanings. The violence enacted by the coalition during the war on terror has functioned to solidify "Western" state identities as righteous and legitimate against the perceived threat of the barbarous other. To summarize, constructivist research posits that "terrorism is what states make of it," echoing Wendt's sentiments. It emphasizes that while America experienced the 9/11 attacks, there was nothing inherently objective, obvious, or natural about their response (Croft, 2006). The US could have pursued the matter as a criminal act, opting for the prosecution of those responsible in courts of law. Yet, the aftermath rhetoric initiated the discursive framing of 9/11 as an act of war and as evidence of an international security crisis, thereby legitimizing the era of the war on terror. Jackson[129] (2005) elucidates this process, stating that the words used to describe

124 Bjorgo, T., (2005) *The Root Causes of Terrorism*, Abingdon: Routledge.
125 Horgan, J., (2005) *The Psychology of Terrorism*, Abingdon: Routledge.
126 Pape, R., (2006) *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, New York: Random House.
127 Piazza, J., 2007. "Draining the Swamp: Democracy Promotion, State Failure, and Terrorism in 19 Middle Eastern Countries", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism,* Vol.30, n.6, 521–539.
128 Croft, S. (2006) *Culture, Crisis and America's War on Terror*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
129 Jackson, R., (2005) *Writing the War on Terrorism: Language, Politics and Counter-Terrorism*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

these events were not merely a neutral reflection of what had occurred but actively worked to promote a specific interpretation and meaning, particularly that they constituted an "act of war" (Jackson, 2005). This politically constructed interpretation normalized the administration's response; by characterizing it as an "act of war," a "war on terrorism" seemed rational and justified. This war-centric approach was further reinforced by integrating the narrative of September 11, 2001, into broader meta-narratives surrounding Pearl Harbor and World War II, the Cold War, the clash between civilization and barbarism, and the advancement of globalization. Significantly, much of the purpose behind the language was to discourage any interpretation that implicated American foreign policy.

## 3.2. Is Hamas a Terrorist Organization?

Having underlined the paucity of a definition of terrorism and its harmful consequences, Bruce Hoffman (2017)[130] also adds the fact that the lack of precision in defining terrorism has been exacerbated, in part, by modern media's inclination to convey complex messages in the shortest possible space. This has resulted in various violent acts being indiscriminately labeled as "terrorism." Whether one reads a newspaper, accesses a website, or watches the news, they may encounter diverse incidents described as terrorism. These can range from bombings and assassinations to civilian massacres, food tampering, or cyberattacks. Essentially, any egregious act perceived as a threat to society, whether perpetrated by antigovernment groups, governments themselves, criminal organizations, rioters, protestors, individuals with mental illness, or extortionists, tends to be branded as terrorism. As already explored in Chapter 1, Hoffman defines terrorism as an act of violence—or, equally important, the threat of violence—used and directed in pursuit of, or in service of, a political aim (2017). Moreover, citing the Oxford English Dictionary's version[131] (OED), Hoffman adds the planned, calculated and indeed systematic nature of an act of terrorism. Finally, implicit in the OED's definition is the enduring normative perception of terrorism as a form of political violence carried out by individuals associated with an organization or ideological movement committed to revolutionary transformation. This transformation, believed by the perpetrators to be achievable solely through violence or the intimidation it entails, is depicted as a fervent belief in the necessity of such tactics.

Now, it essential to analyze whether this prominent definition of terrorism coincides or can be associated to Hamas' course of actions against the state of Israel. When Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip through armed force in 2007, it encountered an

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130 Hoffman, B. (2017) *Inside Terrorism*. 3rd edn. Columbia University Press.
131 Oxford English Dictionary definition of terrorism:

ideological dilemma. It had to decide whether to prioritize governing Gaza and addressing the needs of the Palestinian people or to use Gaza as a base for attacking Israel. Hamas recognized that these two objectives were incompatible. Despite expectations that Hamas might moderate or adapt to the responsibilities of governance, it did not. Instead, Hamas focused on radicalizing society and developing the military infrastructure necessary to eventually launch attacks aimed at Israel's destruction (Margolin and Levitt, 2023)[132]. Hamas perpetrated the deadliest terror attack since 9/11 on October 7, resulting in the deaths of 1,200 Israelis. The brutality of these acts rivaled, and even exceeded, the worst atrocities committed by the Islamic State. The subsequent conflict in Gaza, heightened tensions across the Middle East, and the widespread outrage among Arab and Muslim communities over the significant civilian casualties have dramatically shifted the landscape of the international terror threat. This has sparked urgent concerns about potential reprisals and raised fears of a new global wave of Islamist terrorism, especially considering recent attacks in France and Belgium (Margolin and Levitt, 2023)[133]. The ruthless assault orchestrated by Hamas on Israeli communities near Gaza on October 7 marked a significant tactical evolution for the group. Previously recognized for launching rockets at Israel, orchestrating suicide bombings in city buses or cafes, and executing roadside attacks and shootings at restaurants and bars, Hamas demonstrated a new approach with this attack. The group's explicit targeted killing and kidnapping of civilians baldly contradicts Hamas' articulated revised political strategy since it took control of the Gaza Strip in 2007. In fact, over a span of 35 years, Hamas had never executed an operation of such magnitude, nor had it explicitly aimed at vulnerable groups such as children or the elderly. While the group has previously targeted civilians, those attacks predominantly focused on adults, viewed as legitimate targets due to Israeli military draft laws, which Hamas perceives as applicable to all Israeli adults. Additionally, Hamas has engaged in indiscriminate targeting of civilians through rocket attacks or suicide bombings. The act of taking children and elderly individuals as hostages into Gaza represents a departure from their previous tactics: before October 7, Hamas had only taken male hostages aged 18 and above (Margolin and Levitt, 2023). As such, according to the authors belonging the *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*[134], Hamas' strategic adjustment and change of route highlights its enduring dedication to establishing an Islamist state across historical Palestine and its goal of Israel's destruction. Despite having always described itself as a resistance organization, firmly repelling the 'terrorist' designation Israel, the

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132 Margolin, D and Levitt, M. (2023) "The Road to October 7: Hamas' Long Game Clarified", *Combating Terrorism Center Sentinel*, Vo.16, iss.10.
133 *idem*
134 The *CTC at West Point* is an institution committed to producing objective, rigorous, and policy-relevant research that applies theory to practice, informs strategic counterterrorism thinking, and moves the boundaries of academic knowledge.

United States, the European Union apply to the group, the attacks of October 7 require a re-examination of Hamas' nature and course of actions: thousands of Hamas operatives, aided by small numbers of terrorists from other groups such as Palestinian Islamic Jihad, murdered some 1,200 people in Israel, wounded thousands, and took at least 240 hostages with nationals from more than 40 countries[135]. Since its inception, Hamas has perpetrated numerous acts of violence targeting both military and civilian entities, ranging from bombings, rocket and mortar assaults, shootings, stabbings, kidnappings, and attempted abductions to car-ramming incidents. The outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000 saw a significant surge in Hamas attacks. From 2000 to 2005, Hamas carried out 39.9 percent of the 135 suicide bombings during the Second Intifada[136] (Benmelech and Berrebi, 2007). According to the Global Terrorism Database, between 1987 and 2020, Hamas was responsible for the deaths of 857 individuals and the injury of 2,819 others. These attacks, designed to instill terror not only in their immediate targets but also in the broader Israeli populace, have been characterized by their indiscriminate nature[137] (2020). Furthermore, since its foundation, violence has been a central part of Hamas and its goals; as Article 12 of the 1988 Hamas charter notes:

*Nationalism, from the point of view of the Islamic Resistance Movement, is part of the religious creed. Nothing in nationalism is more significant or deeper than in the case when an enemy should tread Muslim land. Resisting and quelling the enemy become the individual duty of every Muslim, male or female. A woman can go out to fight the enemy without her husband's permission, and so does the slave: without his master's permission.*

Furthermore, from its inception, Hamas attacks have been aimed to intimidate civilians inhabiting the local area, with the goal of either compelling them to vacate the land claimed by Palestinians or, at the very least, pressuring their leaders to make concessions to Hamas. This may include securing the release of Palestinian prisoners detained in Israeli jails. For instance, both before and after the "Shalit deal," where Israel exchanged over 1,000 Palestinian security detainees for one Israeli soldier captured in Gaza in 2006 - Gilad Shalit[138]-

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135 Regardless of Hamas' framing, the number killed on October 7 is similar to the number who died when al-Qa`ida crashed United Airlines Flight 175 into the World Trade Center's south tower two decades ago: 1,385 of the nearly 3,000 deaths caused on 9/11, according to the Global Terrorism Database. See "Incident Summary," GTD ID 200109110005, Global Terrorism Database; "Israel revises Hamas attack death toll to 'around 1200,'" Reuters, November 10, 2023.
136 Benmelech, E., and Berrebi,C. (2007) "Human Capital and the Productivity of Suicide Bombers," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol.21, p. 227.
137 Global Terrorism Database, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, University of Maryland, 2020.
138 Booth, W. (2014) "Israel's Prisoner Swaps Have Been Far More Lopsided than Obama's Bergdahl Deal," Washington Post.

Hamas has consistently pursued kidnappings and attempted abductions, hoping to gain valuable leverage for future negotiations with Israel[139]. As such, having presented and assessed Hamas's *modus operandi*, it is possible to claim that Hamas' actions fulfill all the elements of Hoffman's definition of terrorism: they involved explicit violence which included killings, suicide attacks, and kidnappings, all directed toward achieving a political goal through a strategy of coercive intimidation. Plus, Hamas' instillment of fear or coercive fear coincides with Martha Crenshaw[140] thesis according to which effectiveness of terrorism is significantly shaped by the psychological impact of violence on audiences. Hamas's classification as a terrorist organization also satisfies Andrew Silke's definition of terrorism conceived as a planned, calculated, and thus systematic act intended to have far-reaching consequences beyond the immediate target victim of the attack (Silke, 2018). Yet, it is also important to recall Anthony Richard's observation according to terrorism is primarily about instilling fear and coercion, but independently of ideology or perpetrator. He argues that terrorism should be viewed as a distinct form of political violence, not inherently tied to any specific cause or group. While some ideologies like those of Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State explicitly endorse terrorism, many others, including nationalist, religious, and single-issue beliefs, may not advocate violence but have been associated with terrorism. Richards suggests that terrorism should be understood as a method rather than solely linked to particular ideologies. Thus, analyzing an act of violence through the lens of terrorism should be objective, regardless of the perpetrator or motive. This perspective aims to move beyond the dichotomy of labeling individuals as either terrorists or freedom fighters, recognizing that acts meeting the criteria for terrorism should be acknowledged as such, regardless of personal sympathies toward the cause. Finally, Alessandro Orsini's analysis suggests that Hamas is a State-party, a religious organization, a guerrilla movement but also a terrorist organization. Orsini sustains that under the sociological profile, Hamas uses terror against civilians to push the Israeli and American government to take certain decisions, namely decisions that are pivotal in the advancement of its cause (Orsini, 2024). Secondly, Hamas follows an ideology to choose its targets and justify its violence. Finally, Hamas resorts to violence distinguishing between the primary and the instrumental target: the Israeli people killed in the October 7th mass attack constituted the instrumental target, whereas the United States and Israel were the primary target.

Some may object that Hamas is a national liberation movement rather than a terrorist organization retracing the position hold by Turkey President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. This latter sustains that, at the moment of the attack on October 7th, Hamas was governing the city of Gaza after having legally won the 2006 elections against the moderat party

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139 Israel Defense Forces, (2014) "Hamas Kidnappings: A Constant Threat in Israel".
140 Crenshaw, M. (1985) *Terrorism in Context*. Pennsylvania State University Press, p. 400.

of Fatah, suggesting that terrorist organizations do not govern cities. The President also sustains that terrorist organizations do not run for elections, do not furnish essential goods and services to the population and cannot count on an army composed of 40.000 units. In these terms, to object Erdogan's position, Orsini explains that, over the years, Hamas has become multiple things. The fact that Hamas pursues national liberation does not alter its terroristic nature since terrorism does not depend on the target nor the ideology of the organization, but on the fact of using violence to spread terror through which obtaining concessions by the government distinguishing the primary from the instrumental target. Even if Hamas aims at liberating Palestinian territories, its fighting technique is terrorism. Orsini's conclusion, to which I strongly adhere, is the following: Hamas can be defined in two different way, namely as a terrorist organization which pursues national liberation or as a national liberation movement which utilizes terrorism. Terrorism is present in both cases.

## 3.3. Hamas as a Hybrid Terrorist Organization

Portraying Hamas not merely as a resistance movement but aligning it with the attributes of a terrorist organization is feasible, particularly by highlighting the features of what is termed as the new manifestations of terrorism outlined, once again, by the CTS. The initial aspect deserving scrutiny revolves around the motivations underpinning both traditional and contemporary manifestations of terrorism. However, as I will elaborate, this primary distinction appears to have obscured boundaries between the two variants of terrorism. Advocates of both traditional and modern forms of terrorism contend that a fundamental divergence between the two lies in their underlying motivations. Initially, conventional terrorist groups were typically associated with secular motives and rational political objectives for their actions. For instance, leftist terrorist factions employed violence to mobilize the working-class populace and persuade them to revolt against the capitalist establishment. Similarly, ethno-nationalist militants sought autonomy for their ethnic communities through territorial separation from existing states, the establishment of sovereign nation-states, or integration with other territories. Even in scenarios where their demands seemed daunting, such as the reunification of divided nations or the creation of ethno-nationalist homelands, opportunities for dialogue or negotiation were often perceived to exist (Ramakrishna and Tan, 2002[141]; Neumann, 2009[142]). In contrast, proponents argue that modern terrorism is predominantly motivated by religious ideol-

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141 Ramakrishna, K., and Tan, A., (2002) "The New Terrorism: Diagnosis and Prescriptions", in Ramakrishna, K., and Tan, A., eds., *The New Terrorism – Anatomy, Trends and Counterstrategies*, Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, pp. 3–29.
142 Neumann, P., (2009) *Old and New Terrorism*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

ogy. Hoffman (1998) asserts that the religious imperative drives much of contemporary terrorist activity, marking a significant departure from the primarily secular orientation of traditional terrorism. According to Gurr and Cole (2000), the prevalence of religiously motivated international terrorist organizations has surged over time, indicating a shift towards a religiously charged form of terrorism. New terrorism is thus characterized as rejecting conventional political methods and advocating an uncompromising worldview in alignment with religious beliefs. Unlike traditional terrorism, it is argued that modern terrorism lacks specific political agendas or negotiable demands. Hoffman (1993)[143] maintains that religious motivation is the defining feature of modern terrorism, leading to distinct value systems, legitimization mechanisms, moral concepts, and a Manichean worldview (Juergensmeyer, 2000)[144]. Critics of the notion of new terrorism's religious motivation are quick to highlight that religiously motivated terrorism is not a novel phenomenon but has historical precedents. Rapoport (1984) notes that terrorism driven by religious zeal to eliminate nonbelievers has existed for millennia, dating back to ancient groups like the Zealots and Assassins. Some scholars suggest that religious motivation represents a cyclical return to earlier forms of terrorism. Cronin (2009)[145] suggests that international terrorism is reverting to historical patterns, echoing the tactics of ancient groups like the Zealots-Sicarii in the activities of modern organizations such as al-Qaeda and its affiliates. Moreover, it is argued by several scholars that many traditional terrorist organizations also had religious affiliations and were partly motivated by religious ideology (Gunning and Jackson, 2011[146]). Prominent instances illustrating this phenomenon include the Irish Republican Army (IRA), characterized by its predominantly Catholic membership, the Protestant Ulster Freedom Fighters or Ulster Volunteer Force, the primarily Muslim National Liberation Front (FLN) in Algeria, the Jewish extremist group Irgun, and the National Organization of Cypriote Fighters (EOKA) in Cyprus, influenced by the Greek Orthodox Church. As Richard Jackson et al. (2011) observe, numerous "secular" groups displayed "religious" traits. For example, both the German Red Army Faction (RAF) and the Italian Red Brigades pursued an alternative world order, framing their conflict in terms akin to a "cosmic war" and describing their adversaries in similar eschatological terms to Al-Qaeda. Much of their violence was "symbolic" or "redemptive" rather than "strategic," demanding a level of loyalty from members akin to that of the

143 Hoffman, B., 1993. "Terrorist Targeting: Tactics, Trends, and Potentialities", Terrorism and Political Violence, Vol.5, pp. 12–29.
144 Juergensmeyer, M., (2000) *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
145 Cronin, A., (2009) *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
146 Gunning, J., and Jackson, R., (2011) "What Is So 'Religious' about 'Religious Terrorism'", *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, Vol.4, n.3, pp. 369–388.

most rigorous religious cults. Advocates of the notion of new terrorism have countered this by rightly pointing out that the rhetoric and language employed by terrorist organizations differ between old and new groups (Kurtulus, 2011)[147]. It is widely acknowledged that the RAF primarily adopted a more secular stance, while Al-Qaeda often emphasizes religious themes in their public statements. Similarly, it is recognized that most traditional terrorists, such as the RAF, originated from the Western world, whereas many modern terrorists hail from the Middle East. However, debate persists regarding whether this justifies the term "new terrorism," particularly considering that the motivations of modern terrorists are fundamentally political as well.

Critics argue that despite the religious language used by new terrorist groups, they still harbor specific political agendas. A scrutiny of the demands and objectives of Al-Qaeda or affiliated modern terrorists reveals many are rooted in clear political aims and targets, such as the spread of political Islam, the expulsion of foreign influence from sacred lands, the overthrow of existing governments in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, the establishment of a global pan-Islamic Caliphate, and the eradication of Israel (Lawrence, 2005)[148]. In reality, discerning between religious and political motivations is often exceedingly challenging, if not impossible. Quillen (2002)[149] provides examples, such as the Jewish terrorists in British Palestine and the Tamil Tigers, whose motivations blend religious and political aspects. Ascribing religious motivations to individual terrorist acts remains subjective and open to interpretation. Quillen cites the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing as an instance where one might perceive it as an act inspired by Timothy McVeigh's allegiance to the Christian Identity movement or as a political terrorist reaction to gun control measures and federal interventions at Ruby Ridge and Waco (Quillen, 2002).

The second aspect under examination concerns the behavioral disparities between traditional and contemporary forms of terrorism, a distinction that aligns closely with the observed characteristics of Hamas. Advocates assert that the behavior of conventional terrorists contrasts markedly, as their actions are considered deliberate and commensurate with the political goals they pursue (Simon and Benjamin, 2000)[150]. They are described as selective in their targets, focusing on highly symbolic figures and institutions of authority, aiming to maximize publicity and convey their ideological message. This approach, termed "propaganda by deed," seeks to garner popular support and is often followed by

147 Kurtulus, E., (2011) "The 'New Terrorism' and Its Critics", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism,* Vol.34, n.6, pp. 476–500.
148 Lawrence, B., ed., (2005) *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden*, New York: Verso.
149 Quillen, C., 2002. "A Historical Analysis of Mass Casualty Bombers", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 25(5): 279–292.
150 Simon, S., and Benjamin, D., 2000. "America and the New Terrorism", *Survival*, Vol.42, n.1, pp. 59–75.

a statement claiming responsibility or outlining demands. Conventional terrorists generally avoid excessive and indiscriminate violence, as it undermines their legitimacy and support base, opting instead for targeted attacks using conventional tactics like firearms and bombs. They typically refrain from using unconventional weapons or tactics, as they aim to avoid civilian casualties, which could alienate the population and hinder their pursuit of a popular uprising (Jenkins, 1975)[151]. This calculated approach aims to maintain their eligibility for participation in negotiations and future governance roles (Laqueur, 2003)[152]. Contrary to this, the conduct of emerging terrorists, often attributed partially to religious motivations, reportedly exhibits a heightened readiness to employ excessive and indiscriminate violence. Laqueur (1999)[153], for instance, contends that "the new terrorism diverges in nature, no longer targeting clearly outlined political objectives but instead aiming at societal obliteration and the annihilation of significant portions of the populace." These religiously motivated new terrorists are perceived to view their cause as a battle of good versus evil, consequently dehumanizing their targets and regarding all those outside their group as infidels or apostates. As a result, they may justify indiscriminate violence as morally acceptable and necessary for advancing their religious cause. Unlike traditional terrorists, modern extremists are less interested in negotiation and more focused on inflicting mass casualties to destabilize society as sustained by Matthew Morgan (2004)[154] who reiterated that, "today's terrorists don't want a seat at the table, they want to destroy the table and everyone sitting at it". Additionally, they are portrayed as being more willing to engage in high-risk and seemingly irrational actions, often embracing martyrdom as a means of attaining spiritual rewards (Enders and Sanders, 2000)[155]. Regarding the suicide tactics often associated with new terrorism, and also employed by Hamas, critics highlight that suicide bombing has been extensively employed by the separatist Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka since 1983. Robert Pape (2003)[156], for instance, contends that the Tamil Tigers executed 75 out of 186 suicide terrorist attacks between 1980 and 2000. Furthermore, historical precedents such as the Assassins' use of close-range daggers during the Middle Ages and the willingness of Anarchists in nineteenth-century Europe to sacrifice their lives while attacking their targets demonstrate early instances of such tactics (Gearson, 2002)[157]. In these terms, a counterargument could be represented

151 Jenkins, B., (1975) *International Terrorism: A New Mode of Conflict?* London: Croom Helm.
152 Laqueur, W*., (2003) *No End to War: Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century*, New York: Continuum.
153 Laqueur, W. (1999) *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction*, London: Oxford University Press.
154 Morgan, M., (2004) "The Origin of the New Terrorism", Parameters, Vol.34(1), pp. 29–43
155 Enders, W., and Sandler, T., (2000) "Is Transnational Terrorism Becoming More Threatening? A Time-Series Investigation", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol.44(3), pp. 307–332.
156 Pape, R. (2003) "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism", American Political Science Review, Vol. 97(3) 343- 361.
157 Gearson, J., 2002. "The Nature of Modern Terrorism", in Freedman, L., ed., Superterrorism – Policy

by the fact that even if the indiscriminate targeting of innocent individuals, exemplified by the tragic attack on a school in Beslan, Russia, in 2004, is often attributed to characteristics of new terrorism, historical examples reveal similar atrocities by older terrorist groups. For instance, members of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine machine-gunned children at an Israeli school in 1974, resulting in the deaths of twenty-seven and injuries to seventy others. Additionally, while some argue that the gruesome violence of new terrorism, such as the beheading of reporters in Iraq in 2014, surpasses previous acts, historical records indicate comparable ruthlessness by older terrorist organizations. Martin Miller (1995)[158] recounts an incident in 1884 where a Viennese banker and his eleven-year-old son were brutally murdered with an axe in front of his other son by anarchists. While none of these examples equate to the scale of casualties witnessed in the 9/11 attacks, it's essential to note that the term "new terrorism" emerged well before 2001. Marie Breen Smyth (2007) observes that "the scale of atrocity at the World Trade Center was unprecedented in the practice of modern terror; however, the emphasis on the scale of the attack has tended to negate the value of previous scholarship and experience of 'terrorism'". Indeed, examination of data on international terrorism incidents indicates that although the number of events has generally decreased since the mid-1980s, the number of fatalities per incident has steadily risen during the same period. Considering that the concept of new terrorism is believed to have originated in the 1990s, this increase in fatalities might not be directly attributable to the phenomenon of new terrorism. An equally plausible argument is that the rise in casualties is partly due to advancements in technology. Explosives, timing mechanisms, and remote-control devices have markedly improved in recent decades, contributing to higher casualty rates (Jackson, 2016).

The ultimate consideration pertains to the organizational framework of terrorists, a facet that could distinguish Hamas as a *sui generis* terrorist entity. The conventional depiction of old terrorism underscores its organization within a hierarchical framework, characterized by well-defined command structures, as argued by Kurtulus (2011). This structure resembles a pyramid, with leadership at the apex dictating overarching policies, followed by tiers of active operatives specialized in activities such as bomb-making or surveillance, and further supported by individuals providing resources, intelligence, and ideological backing, as delineated by Henderson (2001)[159]. In contrast, the new terrorism is often portrayed as embodying a more decentralized and loosely connected network structure, facilitated by advancements in communication technology. This view, support-

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Responses, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 7–24.

158 Miller, M., 1995. "The Intellectual Origin of Modern Terrorism in Europe", in Crenshaw, M., ed., *Terrorism in Context,* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, pp. 27–62.

159 Henderson, H., (2001) *Global Terrorism – The Complete Reference Guide*, New York: Checkmark Books.

ed by Gunaratna (2003)[160], suggests that each group within this network operates autonomously yet remains linked through sophisticated communication methods and shared objectives. This decentralized approach enhances adaptability and responsiveness to diverse situations, as highlighted by Simon and Benjamin (2000)[161], who describe it as a blend of "hub and spoke" and "wheel" structures. Critics of the new terrorism concept, however, challenge the notion that old terrorism adhered strictly to hierarchical lines of command, arguing instead for a more nuanced understanding of organizational dynamics. Hoffman (2001)[162], while acknowledging the emergence of a looser network structure in modern terrorism, acknowledges its presence in historical terrorist organizations such as the anarchist movement. Moreover, examples from groups like the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Hezbollah, as mentioned by Tucker (2001)[163], demonstrate the existence of network structures within old terrorist organizations, which were not solely reliant on hierarchical command systems. Similarly, contemporary terrorist groups like al Qaeda exhibit clear signs of hierarchical command structures, as noted by Mayntz (2004)[164]. These organizations maintain a distinct leadership hierarchy with specialized subunits responsible for various tasks, including recruitment and finance. However, they also encompass diverse membership types, ranging from core professional terrorists to part-time operatives and less closely associated supporters, reflecting a dynamic spectrum present in both old and new terrorism paradigms.

As such, it can be possible to assert that within the complex tapestry of contemporary terrorism, Hamas emerges as a nuanced and multifaceted organization, embodying a hybrid amalgamation of historical and modern terrorist paradigms. At its core, Hamas is propelled by a potent blend of religious zeal and nationalist fervor, echoing the deeply rooted motivations often associated with traditional forms of terrorism. The organization's aspirations for Palestinian liberation and the establishment of an Islamic state harken back to age-old grievances and nationalist aspirations, underscoring its alignment with the ideological underpinnings of older terrorist groups like the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. In its operational conduct, Hamas displays a willingness to resort to indiscriminate violence, a characteristic shared by both old and new terrorist entities. From attacks targeting civilian populations, including vulnerable children, to acts of brutal aggression, Hamas exhibits a propensity for violence that reverberates with

160 Gunaratna, R., (2003) *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*, 3rd ed., New York: Berkley Books.
161 Simon, S., and Benjamin, d., 2000. "America and the New Terrorism", *Survival*, Vol. 42(1), pp. 59–75.
162 Hoffman, B., 2001. "Change and Continuity in Terrorism", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 24: 417–28.
163 Tucker, D., (2001) "What's New about the New Terrorism and How Dangerous Is It?", Terrorism and Political Violence, 15(3), pp. 1–14.
164 Mayntz, R., (2004) "Organizational Forms of Terrorism – Hierarchy, Network, or a Type sui generis?", MPIfG Discussion Paper 04/04, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Cologne.

the tactics employed by historical groups such as the Tamil Tigers and contemporary organizations like al Qaeda. However, what distinguishes Hamas is its organizational structure, which defies easy categorization within the dichotomy of old versus new terrorism. While the group maintains a centralized leadership hierarchy reminiscent of the traditional, hierarchical model of older terrorist organizations, it also operates within a broader network characterized by decentralized, loosely connected cells. This hybrid approach grants Hamas both the strategic coherence associated with hierarchical structures and the operational flexibility inherent in networked systems, allowing it to navigate the complexities of modern conflict with adaptability and resilience. In essence, Hamas epitomizes a synthesis of historical legacies and contemporary dynamics within the realm of terrorism. Its complex organizational makeup reflects an evolution shaped by historical precedents and modern exigencies, positioning it as a distinctive and formidable actor in the global landscape of terrorism.

## 3.4. How Structural Factors Explain Terrorism

Progressing into the analysis of the factors that contribute to the transformation of a political movement into a terrorist organization, it's crucial to approach this subject with a scientific lens, devoid of any intent to justify or excuse the abhorrent actions perpetrated by groups like Hamas. This thesis endeavors to delve into the intricate dynamics that underlie this transformation, recognizing that it is a complex interplay of various socio-political, economic, and ideological factors. By conducting a rigorous cause-and-effect analysis, we aim to elucidate the processes through which certain political movements deviate from peaceful means and resort to terrorism as a strategy for achieving their objectives. Through meticulous examination and critical inquiry, we seek to unravel the underlying catalysts that propel organizations down this perilous path, acknowledging the nuanced interplay of historical grievances, ideological fervor, external influences, and internal dynamics. By elucidating these factors, we aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of terrorism and its roots within broader socio-political contexts. The fundamental premise of scientific inquiry asserts that every event, whether occurring or not, is the result of a combination of factors. In essence, there are no truly random occurrences in the universe; however, quantum theory introduces a level of uncertainty as outcomes are probabilistic. This principle applies not only to physical phenomena but also to social and political events, including acts of terrorism. While to the casual observer, suicide bombings may appear random, senseless, or irrational, closer examination reveals their deliberate nature, as elucidated by scholars such as Gupta and

Mundra (2005)[165] and Horowitz (2015)[166]. In the realm of the social sciences, it is widely acknowledged that aggression often stems from frustration. Scholar Nina Musgrave, cited in *Terrorism and Political Violence*[167] (2015), addresses the root causes of terrorism with the intent of explaining why terrorism occurs. Musgrave argues that structural issues such as poverty and ineffective governance contribute to societal grievances, which some argue can lead to terrorism. For instance, the blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip has led to severe poverty among its Palestinian residents. While this economic hardship is recognized as a factor driving radicalization, the broader political grievance of Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory also serves as a catalyst for extremism. William O'Neill contends that terrorism cannot be solely attributed to poverty; rather, it often stems from a sense of injustice and powerlessness, evolving into a form of "vengeance." This sentiment of being marginalized makes individuals susceptible to recruitment by terrorist leaders. On the other hand, Francisco Gutiérrez suggests a strong association between terrorism and inequality but argues against considering it a root cause in itself. Instead, Gutiérrez proposes that while inequality plays a role, its impact is politically mediated, with political structures determining how individuals positioned on the disadvantaged side of the inequality spectrum will react. Also, when individuals perceive obstacles hindering their attainment of desired goals, feelings of anger and frustration may arise, culminating in violent actions aimed at overcoming these barriers. This understanding of human behavior dates back millennia, with Aristotle's assertion that "poverty is the parent of revolution and crime" echoing sentiments later substantiated by psychologists like John Dollard and his research team in 1939. Indeed, throughout recorded history, there has been a tacit acknowledgment of the correlation between socio-economic disparities and political violence. Examining the tragic loss of innocent lives in attacks perpetrated by sub-national groups, one is confronted with two possible conclusions: either the perpetrators are driven by insanity, or they are individuals with little to lose. This association becomes particularly perplexing when considering attacks where the perpetrators willingly sacrifice their own lives to harm others. Through this lens, it becomes evident that acts of terrorism are often rooted in complex interplays of socio-economic grievances, psychological factors, and ideological motivations, underscoring the multifaceted nature of this phenomenon (Jackson and Pisoiu, 2018)[168]. The core principle of scientific inquiry posits that every event, whether occurring or not, is influenced by a combination of fac-

165 Gupta, D., and Mundra, K., (2005) "Suicide Bombing as a Strategic Instrument of Protest: An Empirical Investigation", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol.17(4), pp. 573–98.
166 Horowitz, M. (2015) "The Rise and Spread of Suicide Bombing', *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol.18, pp. 69–84.
167 Kennedy-Pipe, C., Clubb, G. and Mabon, S. (2015) *Terrorism and Political Violence*. 1st edn. SAGE Publications.
168 Jackson, R. and Pisoiu, D. (2018) *Contemporary Debates on Terrorism*. 2nd edn. Taylor and Francis.

tors. This implies that true randomness does not exist in the universe. However, quantum theory introduces a level of uncertainty, as outcomes are probabilistic. This principle extends to social and political events, including terrorism. While suicide bombings may appear random, senseless, or irrational to casual observers, closer examination reveals their deliberate nature, as discussed by scholars like Gupta and Mundra (2005) and Horowitz (2015). In the realm of social sciences, there is a widely accepted premise that aggression often emerges from feelings of frustration. When individuals encounter obstacles preventing them from achieving their goals, they may experience anger and frustration, potentially leading to violent actions aimed at overcoming these barriers. This concept has been acknowledged for centuries, as evidenced by Aristotle's assertion that "poverty is the parent of revolution and crime." This understanding predates the work of psychologist John Dollard and his research team, who explored the link between frustration, anger, and social structural strains as contributors to aggressive behavior in 1939[169]. Following catastrophic events like the 9/11 attacks, there is often perplexity surrounding the motives of the perpetrators. This confusion can be compounded by the pervasive assumption of human rationality in Western scholarship, particularly in disciplines like economics and social science. The notion that individuals are primarily motivated by self-interest may lead to the belief that sacrificing one's life for a political cause is inherently irrational. However, attributing terrorism solely to insanity oversimplifies the issue and precludes the need for deeper causal explanations. Trained psychiatrists and psychologists from various backgrounds have refuted the idea that terrorists suffer from psychological disorders. Instead, research indicates that the roots of terrorism often lie in social structural imbalances, such as poverty, limited education, economic disparities, or political oppression. These structural factors impede individuals from realizing their full potential and may drive them to resort to violence as a means of addressing grievances[170]. Once insanity is discounted as an explanation, attention often turns to other frequently cited factors underlying terrorism and political violence: social structural imbalances. The rationale behind this argument is straightforward. Structural disparities such as poverty, limited access to education, restricted economic opportunities, income inequality, and lack of political freedoms hinder individuals from realizing their full potential. The frustration and anger stemming from the inability to achieve perceived entitlements can man-

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169 The *Frustration – Aggression Theory* was formulated in 1939 by by John Dollard, Leonard W. Doob, Neal E. Miller, O. H. Mowrer, Robert R. Sears, C. S. Ford, C. I. Hovland, R. T. Sollenberger, published in the American Journal of Psychology and reviewed by Edwin G. Boring; *see* Boring, E. G. (1939). [Review of Frustration and Aggression, by J. Dollard, L. W. Doob, N. E. Miller, O. H. Mowrer, R. R. Sears, C. S. Ford, C. I. Hovland, & R. T. Sollenberger]. *The American Journal of Psychology*, Vol.52(3), pp. 480–483.

170 This perspective is supported by scholars such as McCauley (2007), Horgan (2005a, 2005b), Merari (2005), Merari and Friedland (1985), Post (1984, 1990), Post et al. (2003), Silke (2003b), Taylor (1988), Taylor and Quayle (1994), and various others in the field of psychology and terrorism studies.

ifest in violent acts of political protest (Gupta, 2018). Reflecting this perspective, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, numerous prominent politicians and decision-makers instinctively pointed to various social structural imbalances as drivers of violence. Laura Tyson, former Chief of the Presidential Council of Economic Advisors during the Clinton administration, advocated for a Marshall Plan as part of a comprehensive approach to combating terrorism. Likewise, former South Korean President and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Kim Dae-Jung explicitly stated in his acceptance speech that "at the bottom of terrorism is poverty," as cited in Malečková (2005)[171].

For the purpose of this thesis, it is pivotal to recall the extensive trajectory of scholarly inquiry, spanning from Aristotle through Karl Marx to the sociologists of the 1960s, consistently identified social structural inequalities as the key catalysts for political malevolence. Karl Marx depicted a dichotomous society characterized by the exploitative bourgeoisie and the marginalized proletariat, alienated by their lack of control over the products of their labor. The proliferation of Communist- and Socialist-led uprisings globally further solidified the notion of a direct causal link between collective grievances arising from structural disparities and acts of rebellion (Gupta, 2018). In the 1950s and early 1960s, the social structural theory gained traction thanks to contributions from prominent sociologists like Coser[172] (1956), Dahrendorf[173] (1958), and Smelser[174] (1963). Among them, Smelser provided a comprehensive theory of mass movements, suggesting that societal structural strains contribute to a widespread belief in protest, which in turn leads to social upheaval. Smelser cited examples from prerevolutionary Russia, China, Cuba, Vietnam, and numerous other third world countries to support his argument. However, within this theoretical framework, political violence was primarily viewed because of institutional and social structural flaws found predominantly in so-called third world nations. In contrast, in the democratic West, citizens were believed to have the power to form voluntary lobbying groups and effect change in the offending social order, thus obviating the need for violent revolutions. Yet, the realities of the 1960s and 1970s contradicted this optimistic view of social conflict resolution in the West. Noting the absence of a systematic analysis of social conflict, the prominent political scientist Harry Eckstein lamented in 1964 that social science had produced numerous studies on various subjects but had largely neglected violent political disorder. For social scientists grappling with the prevalence of protests in North American and Western European cities during this period, despite the gradual rise in economic prosperity, the challenge was perplexing. In re-

171 Malecˇková, J., (2005) "Impoverished Terrorists: Stereotype or Reality?" in Bjorgo, T., ed., *Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, Reality, and Ways Forward*, London: Routledge, pp. 33–43.
172 Coser, L., 1956. The Functions of Social Conflict, Glencoe, IL: Free Press.
173 Dahrendorf, R., (1958) "Toward a Theory of Conflict", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol.2, pp. 69–105.
174 Smelser, N., (1963) *Theory of Collective Behavior*, New York: Free Press.

sponse, a group of political scientists proposed the 'relative deprivation' theory. According to this theory, violence occurred in affluent nations not because of absolute poverty but due to the perception of relative deprivation (Gurr 1968, 1970)[175]. It is noteworthy that during this era, social science focused primarily on mass movements, with little attention paid to terrorism. The accumulation of macro and micro data on terrorism posed a new challenge to social science theorists. The potential link between terrorism and structural imbalances can be examined at both the individual (micro) and aggregate (macro) levels. Macro-level analyses hypothesize that individuals drawn to terrorism are often personally deprived, with low levels of educational and economic attainment. Conversely, macro-level aggregate analyses seek to correlate macro-economic and political data with observed acts of terrorism. However, it was quickly realized that the relationship between frustration and the expression of anger, whether at an individual or societal level, is complex. For instance, despite assumptions, none of the 9/11 attackers hailed from impoverished backgrounds; some even came from affluent segments of their societies. Similarly, individuals like Mohammed Atta, purported leader of the group, were highly educated. Studies examining the socio-economic backgrounds of terrorist participants have generally found them to be better educated and from higher economic classes than the average population. These findings prompt two arguments. First, scholars point to Marx's belief that recruiting the poor for revolution would be challenging, as they are preoccupied with survival and face high opportunity costs for revolutionary activities. Lenin shared similar skepticism about proletariats participating in revolutions, especially in leadership roles. More recently, some scholars argue that the absence of participants in terrorism from the poorest segments of society may reflect selection bias. Terrorist groups may prefer educated and skilled individuals who can blend in with target populations. Conversely, in areas of domestic insurgency like Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Pakistan, terrorists may be drawn from the poor and uneducated (Gupta, 2018). Both micro-level and macro-level evidence present a perplexing picture. Studies by Krueger and Malečková (2003)[176], Piazza (2003), and Gupta (2008) found no direct correlation between terrorism and structural factors like GDP per capita, education, or poverty. Even democracy and political freedom showed weak correlations with violent rebellion. Only the index of state failure exhibited a strong correlation with terrorism incidents. Consequently, Krueger and Laitin (2008)[177]

175 Gurr, T., (1968) "A Causal Model of Civil Strife: A Comparative Analysis Using a New Indices", *American Political Science Review*, Vol.62, pp. 1104–1124 and Gurr, T., (1970) *Why Men Rebel*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

176 Krueger, A., and Malečková, J., (2003) "Education, Poverty and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?" *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 17(4): 119–44.

177 Krueger, A., and Laitin, D., (2008) "Kto Kogo?: A Cross-Country Study of the Origins and Targets of Terrorism", in Keefer, P. and Loayza, N., eds., *Terrorism, Economic Development, and Political Openness*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 148–73.

concluded that the economic foundations of terrorism are at best indirect. Furthermore, when examining cross-national terrorism data, it becomes evident that while terrorism affects various countries, poorer nations often experience prolonged and widespread violence. Studies by Sambanis (2004)[178], Collier and Hoeffler (2004)[179], Fearon and Laitin (2003)[180], Nafziger and Auvinen (2002)[181], and Sambanis (2008)[182] have found statistically significant correlations between terrorism and per capita income and unequal income distribution. As such, the purpose of this chapter was to address the narrower inquiry regarding whether poverty and exclusion serve as root causes of this type of behavior. When we refer to "root causes," we are questioning:

1. Are poverty and exclusion necessary factors for terrorism? We argue no, and this is likely a consensus view, so we will not delve deeply into this aspect.

2. Can poverty or exclusion alone lead to terrorism? We argue no, although some may argue otherwise. Therefore, we explicitly address this question and elucidate why we disagree.

3. Can poverty and exclusion partially contribute to terrorism? We assert yes, but we contend that this alone does not qualify them as "root causes" due to the intricate psychological processes through which they operate.

This latter aspect is vital in elucidating the applicability of social structural theory in comprehending the transformation of a political movement like Hamas into a terrorist organization. In fact, two potential explanations for terrorism have been proposed: insanity or social structural imbalances that foster widespread frustration and anger. However, there is no evidence indicating that followers in violent dissident movements suffer from mental illness or exhibit specific personality traits. Rather, observations suggest that psychologically, they are similar to the broader community. Therefore, economic and political grievances are considered more plausible motivators. Yet, empirical analyses present

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178 Sambanis, N., (2008) "Terrorism and Civil War", in Keefer, P. and Loyaza, N., eds., *Terrorism, Economic Development, and Political Openness*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 174–206.
179 Collier, P., and Hoeffler, A., (2004) "Greed and Grievances in Civil War", *Oxford Economic Papers*, Vol.56, pp. 563–95.
180 Fearon, J., and Laitin, D., (2003) "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War", *American Political Science Review*, Vol.97, pp. 75–90
181 Nafziger, W., and Auvinen, J., (2002) "Economic Development, Inequality, War, and State Violence", *World Development*, Vol.30, pp. 153–63
182 Sambanis, N., (2008) "Terrorism and Civil War", in Keefer, P. and Loyaza, N., eds., *Terrorism, Economic Development, and Political Openness*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 174–206.

a complex picture. Structural factors like poverty, unemployment, income inequality, and lack of political freedom show weak correlations with cross-national variations in terrorism. This raises questions regarding the effectiveness of social structural theory in explaining terrorism. Methodologically, researchers primarily rely on cross-national studies to discern the effects of structural factors. However, comparability issues often arise with such datasets, potentially affecting the accuracy of estimations. Additionally, individual accounts from terrorists often emphasize grievances related to economic and political injustices. However, these grievances alone do not fully explain the emergence of violent movements. The collective action problem, as elucidated by Mancur Olson, suggests that individuals are reluctant to initiate dissent movements due to the risks involved until momentum or public support is achieved. This collective action problem highlights the crucial role of leadership in mobilizing dissent movements. Political entrepreneurs, such as Gandhi or Lenin, play a pivotal role in channeling collective grievances into full-fledged political movements. Consequently, while grievances serve as necessary conditions for political violence, leadership acts as a sufficient cause. Hence, empirical analyses often show only weak correlations between structural factors and political violence due to the intervening factor of leadership. Expanding on this notion, the concept of entrepreneurs, as proposed by Schumpeter and Baumol, sheds light on the emergence of leaders from certain societies at specific times. In non-democratic Arab/Islamic nations, religious discourse often serves as the only outlet for expressing frustration, leading to the rise of radical leaders. Similarly, in democratic societies, events like 9/11 and prolonged warfare have contributed to the radicalization of Muslim youths.

Therefore, terrorism and political violence stem from structural imbalances, but their manifestation requires effective leadership. Suicide attacks, often seen as emotionally driven, are strategically timed to achieve political goals. Therefore, while factors of structural imbalances contribute to terrorism, the rise of influential leaders and their strategic actions are indispensable in shaping and perpetuating violent movements (Gupta, 2018). Specifically, the Hamas assault on Israel on October 7, 2023, - which the group's leaders have called "Operation Al-Aqsa Storm"- marked one of the deadliest terrorist attacks in the nation's history, plunging Palestinians into one of their most devastating conflicts, with casualties exceeding 15,000 and likely to rise as Israel intensifies efforts to eradicate Hamas entirely. Why did Hamas choose to strike despite knowing the deadly repercussions for both itself and the Palestinian people? Insights into this decision can be gleaned from Hamas leaders' statements, captured documents from Hamas's fighters, and the organization's historical trajectory (Byman, 2023)[183]. A primary objective of Hamas was to inflict mass casualties on Israelis. Instructions recovered from deceased Hamas's fighters

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183 Byman, D. (2023) *Why Hamas Attacked When It Did*, Center for Strategic and International Studies.

included directives to "kill as many people and take as many hostages as possible." Additionally, Hamas's fighters were equipped with thermobaric grenades capable of causing widespread fires, indicating a potential for even greater loss of life. The presence of ample ammunition, food supplies, and maps further suggested a readiness for an escalated death toll. Revenge also factored into Hamas's motivations, fueled by perceived past Israeli aggressions, ongoing occupation of the West Bank, arrests of Hamas leaders, isolation, and bombardment of Gaza. Prior to October 7, many Israelis could afford to overlook Hamas's plight and that of other Palestinians in their daily lives. However, this attack shattered that illusion. Yet, Hamas's animosity toward Israel alone does not explain its decision to strike on October 7 specifically. Part of the rationale may lie in Hamas's previous attempts at moderation yielding few rewards. In 2017, Hamas publicly rebranded and signaled acceptance of a two-state solution, albeit within a framework still marked by hostility towards Israel. This apparent shift was not met with significant concessions from Israel or the international community, nor did it deter escalating violence against Palestinians. Furthermore, Hamas's governance of Gaza for nearly two decades led some to believe that the group's stance on conflict with Israel had softened. Before October 7, Hamas restrained its own rocket attacks and disciplined those within Gaza instigating violence, signaling a potential for de-escalation. However, this perceived moderation did not elicit substantial policy shifts from Israel or international actors. Instead, incendiary rhetoric and violence against Palestinians escalated under the Netanyahu government. This lack of incentive for moderation likely increased Hamas's inclination towards a large-scale attack. Basem Naim, a Hamas official, acknowledged the anticipation of a violent reaction but emphasized the absence of viable alternatives. Hamas may have perceived a waning of popular support in Gaza due to Israel's long-standing control over essential resources, contributing to chronic shortages of electricity, water, and economic opportunities. Moreover, Hamas's legitimacy faced challenges from rival groups like the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, raising doubts about its credibility as an Islamist resistance movement. With dwindling public support and no avenues for governance-driven image improvement, Hamas may have sought to bolster its revolutionary credentials through a significant attack (Byman, 2023). Exploiting Israel's response to enhance its popularity was another strategic objective for Hamas. The group anticipated the consequences of its actions and framed them as sacrifices for the Palestinian cause, aiming to rally support among Gazans. This tactic, despite its toll on civilians, served to undermine Israel's credibility and the legitimacy of the Palestinian Authority's leadership. Additionally, Hamas aimed to shift regional dynamics, aligning with Iran's objectives. While Iran's direct involvement in the October 7 attacks remains unclear, Tehran's support for Hamas aimed to disrupt Israeli-Saudi normalization efforts and redirect regional attention towards Pales-

tinian resistance. This strategy aimed to bolster Hamas's and Iran's standing in the Arab world, framing them as champions against Israeli aggression. While Hamas's objectives may have shifted the regional discourse and restored its credibility among Palestinians, the group's gamble carries significant risks. Israeli retaliation threatens Hamas's leadership and control over Gaza, and the Palestinian populace bears the brunt of the conflict's consequences, underscoring the high stakes involved.

## 3.5. Terrorist Attacks: Are They Effective to Achieve Political Change?

While the economic impacts of terrorism generally vary from minimal to moderate, its social ramifications can be profound and far-reaching, affecting numerous aspects of society. Central to the societal impact of terrorism is its influence on people's beliefs and attitudes, with significant events playing a crucial role in shaping these perceptions. As highlighted by Sharvit et al. (2005)[184], terrorist attacks, being inherently negative and threatening, tend to capture heightened attention and leave lasting impressions on individuals, thereby influencing their evaluations and judgments. One significant consequence of terrorism is the cultivation of a sense of victimhood within affected societies. When civilians, rather than military personnel, become the targets of political violence, a pervasive feeling of victimization ensues (Bar-Tal and Sharvit, 2004). This sentiment is further compounded by the frequency of attacks on civilian populations, leading to a delegitimization of both the perpetrators and their purported cause (Bar-Tal and Sharvit, 2004). Consequently, the targeted society becomes increasingly unwilling or unable to empathize with the grievances and objectives of the opposing group, reinforcing negative stereotypes and perceptions. Additionally, terrorism often breeds a rise in ethnocentrism and xenophobia, as groups coalesce in response to violence. This phenomenon is evident across various contexts, such as the surge in patriotic sentiment in the USA post-9/11 and the bolstering of national unity among Israeli Jews during the second Intifada (Hermann, 2002)[185]. Conversely, minority groups may become subject to heightened suspicion and hostility, exacerbating existing societal tensions and leading to discriminatory practices and legislation. The social repercussions of persistent terrorism extend beyond these immediate effects, potentially manifesting in a rise in violent crimes and a general "brutalization" of society (Landau, 2003). While establishing a direct causal link between terrorist attacks and societal violence may be challenging, the observed correlation between

184 Sharvit, K., Bar-Tal, D., Gurevich, R., Raviv, A. (2005) *"Jewish-Israeli Attitudes Regarding Peace in the Aftermath of Terror Attacks: The Moderating Role of Political Worldview and Context,"* paper presented at the annual meeting of the Israeli Sociological Society, Tel-Hai, Israel.
185 Hermann, T. (2002) "Tactical Hawks, Strategic Doves: The Positions of the Jewish Public in Israel on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict", Strategic Assessment, 5, no. 2.

stress and aggression suggests a plausible connection (American Psychological Association, 2004)[186]. Thus, aggressive social behavior may be attributed, at least in part, to the pervasive threat of terrorism faced by affected communities.

The extensive social repercussions of terrorism often carry significant political implications. The rallying effect witnessed in Israeli-Jewish society during the second Intifada typifies what is commonly referred to as the "rally-'round-the-flag" syndrome, prevalent in societies grappling with terrorism (Pedahzur, 2005)[187]. This syndrome typically results in a suppression of public criticism toward the government and its policies, aligning with the tenets of system-justification theory, which posits those threats tend to bolster social conservatism, thus reinforcing the status quo (Echebarria-Echabe and Fernandez-Guede, 2006)[188]. While the political ramifications of terrorism are often discernible and pronounced, accurately assessing them can be challenging due to the multitude of potential causal factors. Government policies or specific political decisions may stem from various sources, making it difficult to definitively attribute them solely to terrorist attacks. For instance, the Sharon government's implementation of the disengagement policy, resulting in the complete withdrawal of Israeli settlers and soldiers from the Gaza Strip in September 2005, was influenced by a myriad of factors, of which Palestinian terrorism was only one (Rynhold and Waxman, 2008)[189]. Nevertheless, terrorism undeniably exerts political influence and shapes the political process, particularly in democratic or semi-democratic states. One of the most apparent ways in which terrorism affects the political landscape is by eliciting changes in public opinion, which governments often consider when formulating policies (Shamir, 2007)[190]. The pressure from public opinion for a robust response to terrorism is often difficult for governments to resist. For elected officials, the political costs of underreacting to terrorism outweigh those of overreacting. Failure to prevent future attacks due to inaction can prove detrimental to a politician's career, whereas taking strong measures, even if unsuccessful, is often perceived as having exhausted all options (Ignatieff, 2005)[191]. However, the impact of terrorism on public opinion is not straightforward and can vary significantly depending on factors such as the nature and scale of the attack, its media coverage, and existing political orientations

186 American Psychological Association (2004) "Stress and Aggression Reinforce Each Other at the Biological Level".
187 Pedahzur, A. (2005) *Suicide Terrorism*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
188 Echebarria – Echabe, A. and Fernandez – Guede, E. (2006) "Effects of Terrorism on Attitudes and Ideological Orientation", European Journal of Social Psychology, Vol.36, pp.259 – 65.
189 Rynhold, J. and Waxman, D. (2008) "Ideological Change and Israel's Disengagement from Gaza,' *Political Science Quarterly 123*, no. 1, pp. 1–27.
190 Shamir, J. (2007) Public Opinion in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: From Geneva to Disengagement to Kadima and Hamas (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace).
191 Ignatieff, M. (2005) The Lesser Evil: Political Ethics in an Age of Terror, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

(Sharvit et al., 2005). While terrorist attacks may influence public opinion, they do not invariably alter political beliefs, especially among individuals with strong convictions (Petty and Krosnick, 1995, cited in Sharvit et al., 2005). Moreover, different segments of society may respond divergently to terrorism based on their political affiliations and perspectives. In Israel, Palestinian terrorism during the second Intifada notably influenced public opinion regarding the conflict with the Palestinians and the prospects for peace. Prior to the Intifada, optimism about achieving peace was widespread among Israeli Jews, buoyed by the Oslo peace process. However, the eruption of the second Intifada shattered these hopes, fueling skepticism about Palestinian intentions and the feasibility of peace (Bar-Tal and Sharvit, 2004). Palestinian terrorism contributed to a significant shift in Israeli-Jewish perceptions, fostering a belief that there was "no partner for peace" (Peace Index Survey, 2001)[192]. This disillusionment with the peace process led to greater support for aggressive military measures against Palestinians and a decline in backing for peace negotiations (Arian, 2003)[193]. Prime Minister Barak's perceived failure to effectively respond to the Intifada led to his electoral defeat, signaling a broader rightward shift in Israeli politics (Berrebi and Klor, 2008)[194]. While the impact of Palestinian terrorism on Israeli public opinion was profound, it was not necessarily enduring, as support for peace initiatives gradually rebounded as violence subsided (Ben Meir and Bagno-Moldavsky, 2010)[195]. Moreover, Palestinian terrorism during the second Intifada precipitated a surge in militant attitudes among Israelis, who overwhelmingly supported the Sharon government's aggressive military policies (Arian, 2003). The heightened militancy was particularly evident during periods of intense violence, such as the spring of 2002, when devastating suicide bombings triggered widespread public outrage and a demand for decisive action (Canetti-Nisim, 2005)[196]. The construction of a security barrier between the West Bank and Israel also garnered significant public support in response to escalating terrorism (Arian, 2003). While the idea of such a barrier predated the Intifada, the surge in terrorist attacks propelled it to the forefront of political discourse, reflecting the Israeli public's desperation for enhanced security measures (Rudge, 2001)[197]. In conclusion, while Palestinian terrorism during the second Intifada exerted a profound and immediate

192 Peace Index Survey (2001) The Peace Index: December 2014 http://www.peaceindex.org/defaultEng.aspx
193 Arian, A. (2003) Israeli Public Opinion on National Security 2004 (Tel Aviv: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies).
194 Berrebi, C. and Klor, E. F. (2008) "Are Voters Sensitive to Terrorism? Direct Evidence from the Israeli Electorate", *American Political Science Review* 102, no. 3, pp. 279–301.
195 Ben Meir, Y. and Bagno-Moldavsky, O. (2010) "*The Second Intifada and Israeli Public Opinion*", Strategic Assessment 13, no. 3, pp. 75–6.
196 Canetti-Nisim, D. (2005) "Militant Attitudes among Israelis throughout the al-Aqsa Intifada", *Palestine-Israel Journal 11*, pp. 104–11.
197 Rudge, D. (2001) "New Movement Calls for Unilateral Separation from Palestinians", *The Jerusalem Post*, 15 October.

impact on Israeli public opinion and government policies, its long-term effects were more nuanced. While it precipitated significant shifts in political preferences and attitudes, particularly toward peace initiatives and security measures, its influence waned over time as the intensity of violence subsided. Nonetheless, the enduring legacy of Palestinian terrorism during this period continues to shape political discourse and policy considerations in Israel.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, this dissertation has embarked on a multifaceted exploration into the intricate question of whether Hamas can be unequivocally classified as a terrorist organization. Through an exhaustive analysis spanning theoretical frameworks, historical contexts, and contemporary manifestations of terrorism, this study has aimed to illuminate the complexities inherent in such a classification, particularly within the contentious landscape of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The journey through the theoretical landscape of terrorism has underscored the inherent challenges in defining and categorizing acts of political violence. While scholars and policymakers have endeavored to establish comprehensive frameworks to delineate terrorism from other forms of violence, the absence of a universally accepted definition has perpetuated ambiguity and debate. This dissertation has navigated through the diverse interpretations and dimensions of terrorism, recognizing its evolving nature and its entanglement with political, social, and moral considerations. Against this backdrop, the historical trajectory of Hamas has been meticulously traced, from its origins as an offshoot of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood to its emergence as a pivotal player in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The evolution of Hamas's strategies, tactics, and ideologies has been scrutinized, shedding light on its hybrid nature as a nationalist Islamist movement with political, military, and social dimensions. The examination of pivotal events, such as the October 7 attack, has provided valuable insights into Hamas's operational capabilities and its impact on the dynamics of the conflict. Furthermore, this dissertation has interrogated the criteria and methodologies employed in classifying organizations as terrorist entities. The application of theoretical frameworks, such as those proposed by renowned scholars like Bruce Hoffman, Alessandro Orsini, Andrew Silke, Marta Cranshaw, and Anthony Richards, has facilitated a nuanced assessment of Hamas's adherence to the characteristics commonly associated with terrorist organizations. By juxtaposing theoretical constructs with empirical realities, this study has sought to unravel the complexities underlying the classification of Hamas, finally asserting the terrorist nature of the organization. The conclusion drawn from this extensive inquiry is one of nuanced understanding and cautious interpretation. While Hamas's actions may exhibit hallmarks of terrorism, including the use of violence against civilians, the motivations, contexts, and repercussions of such actions are far from straightforward. The intricate interplay of political, social, and historical factors complicates any simplistic categorization of Hamas as solely a terrorist organization. The hybrid nature of Hamas, encompassing elements of resistance, governance, and social welfare, defies neat classification within existing paradigms of terrorism. This dissertation's findings underscore the imperative for nuanced analysis and contextual understanding in navigating the complexities of terrorism and political violence. As the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

continues to evolve, it is imperative to approach the classification of groups like Hamas with a discerning eye, recognizing the fluidity of identities and the multifaceted nature of armed resistance in such contexts. By embracing complexity, engaging in critical dialogue, and remaining attuned to the nuances of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we may inch closer towards a more informed and effective approach to addressing the challenges posed by groups like Hamas and the broader phenomenon of terrorism in the region.

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