

Values Exploitation in Asymmetric Conflict

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

Values Exploitation in Asymmetric Conflict, MAJ Brandt A. Murphy, US Army, 61 pages.

This paper argues that asymmetric warfare is a manifestation of asymmetric values and morals, and a deliberate strategy which seeks to gain advantage by engaging in warfare that exploits the adversary's values. Specifically, Palestinian Islamists exploit Israeli morality and values through acts of resistance and terror in addition to effectively using victimhood narratives to gain legitimacy. The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) continues to struggle to defend against values exploitation by Islamist acts of strategic and operational terror. Such encounters of exploitation require an ongoing learning cycle. This cycle forces Israel to constantly mediate the need for security and military action necessary to achieve it. It also requires the IDF to exercise power in moral ways that meet public and national need for security.

By comparing Israeli, Palestinian, and Islamist values and military interaction, this monograph identifies what is important to each group. It also examines what each does and says in response to the other in the recent confrontation in the Gaza Strip. A broad review of Western and Middle Eastern literature provides insight into how and why Islamists exploit asymmetry. Further, an examination of what it means to be an Israeli Jew and Palestinian Muslim is contrasted with Islamist thought and action against Israel. This monograph aims to highlight values-based strategy and operations, the potential dangers of both ignoring it, and how each resists their rival's strategy. Therefore, it exposes the ability of Palestinian Islamists to exploit values and conduct operations in asymmetric conflict and discusses the implications for Israel and the IDF.

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Acronyms

IDF	Israeli Defense Force
MEMRI	Middle East Media Research Institute
UN	United Nations

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Introduction: Israel and Palestine—Morality and Asymmetry

The state of nature among men is a monstrous impossibility. Anarchy breeds war among them; government establishes the conditions for peace . . . The amount of force needed to hold a society together varies with the heterogeneity of the elements composing it.

— Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis*

The Biblical land of Israel, as derived from Canaanite history, remains. It is a land of continual conflict between peoples of relative ancestry but differing religions. It is no wonder that tumult arises from a land historically plagued by conflict, upheavals, and differing ideas of humanity.¹ To make matters more confusing, important factors relating to common understanding of the terminology and descriptors associated with the region, in addition to understanding “who’s who” remain complex and fraught at best. While the term “Palestinian” refers to a regional ethnic existence for some, to others, Palestinian claims to an ethnic existence and to the land are unwarranted. On the other hand, since the Jewish people descend from the ancient Israelites from Canaan, theirs is also a legitimate historical claim to ancestral lands.² Or is it?

The complex nature of the region contributes to overarching misunderstanding and misperception, particularly with notion of what it actually means to be a “Palestinian.” Likewise, what defines the “other” also holds very different meanings.³ The chasm formed through dual claims of legitimate existence in the land of Biblical Israel and Ottoman Palestine merits study.

¹ Judith Kuriansky, *Terror in the Holy Land: Inside the Anguish of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), 4.

² Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), 19.

³ Kuriansky, *Terror in the Holy Land: Inside the Anguish of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 4-5; Kuriansky goes on to state that this “dynamic is operational in the case of the Israelis and Palestinians in which, driven by a need for positive self-identification and kinship, Palestinians and Israelis develop schemata of the self and other, with the self as the in-group and the other as the out-group.”



Figure 1. Modern Israel. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee, “Israel in Maps,” accessed February 2, 2019, <https://www.aipac.org/-/media/website/images/israel-in-maps/map-israel-today.jpg>.

The heterogeneity of society in the modern Middle East is that of delicate and uneasy equilibrium. Nation-states and peoples within the region have toiled for millennia toward dominance of resources, land, authenticity, and honor. The state of Israel is no different. Having been recognized as a sovereign entity by world powers at the conclusion of World War II, Israel’s mandated inheritance of land further diversified an already complex geopolitical situation.⁴

⁴ Harms and Ferry, *The Palestine-Israel Conflict: A Basic Introduction*, 3rd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 82-83.

Legitimacy has been the key term with regard to how Israel should even exist as a modern state.⁵ Further complicating the matter is the same question concerning the people of “Palestine.” The Israeli government has historically endeavored to sustain a lasting peace with its neighbors since its reinstatement in 1948, yet neighboring state and non-state actors have sought to deny that Israel has any legitimacy as a nation.⁶

As such, the multifaceted behavior in the region exhibited by Palestinian Islamists challenges the state of nature for Israel as the region’s newest democracy. Israel is a democracy which has continued to prevail despite the off-and-on discord between it and its many Arab neighbors. Discord has driven the Israeli discourse and increasingly necessitated the use of force by the IDF to perpetually protect its citizens against Islamic *jihad*.⁷ As such, in order for Islamists to persevere, exploitation through asymmetric action is required for Islamists such as Hamas to counter the imbalance of physical power enjoyed by Israel. Since Islamists pursue a strategy of destruction of the state of Israel through values exploitation in asymmetric conflict, Israel is constantly forced to adapt its strategy.⁸ Therefore, a campaign consisting of values exploitation, coupled with effective maneuvering and acting within the victimhood narrative, allow the Islamists groups to challenge Israel’s state superiority and international legitimacy.

It is within this lens that the author endeavors to examine the relationship between Israelis and Islamists as separate entities. Further, upon review of historical region, the concept of how values, sources, and goals inform action as an Israeli Jew, Palestinian Muslim, Islamist, and Hamas is studied. Moreover, while an examination of the local and regional media perspectives

⁵ Ruth Gavison, “The National Rights of Jews,” *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs*, January 1, 2011, accessed April 12, 2019, <http://jcpa.org/article/the-national-rights-of-jews/>.

⁶ Robbie Sabel, “Manipulating International Law as Part of Anti-Israel ‘Lawfare,’” *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs*, accessed April 11, 2019, http://jcpa.org/overview_palestinian_manipulation/manipulating_international_law/.

⁷ Dilip Hiro, *Sharing the Promised Land: A Tale of Israelis and Palestinians* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2002), 291-92.

⁸ Sherifa D. Zuhur, *Hamas and Israel: Conflicting Strategies of Group-Based Politics* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2008), 40-44.

are a contemporary aperture for the examination of Israeli-Palestinian regional strife, it is most certainly incomplete toward an understanding of the ever-evolving Israeli-Palestinian state of affairs. The purpose of this paper is to gain insight into the nature of asymmetric confrontation against the state of Israel and the central role of values in strategy development. It also seeks to examine the problems that emerge from the notion that asymmetric conflict between belligerents is more “cognitive” than it is “physical” with regard to exploiting values.

Through an examination of the ways in which the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) conducts operations *vis-à-vis* Hamas, strategy in asymmetrical conflict require an overarching understanding that each seeks international legitimacy toward achieving advantage over the other. For the Islamists, credo and existence mandate the absolute destruction of the state of Israel.⁹ For the state of Israel, survival and peace requires not only international acceptance and legitimacy as a sovereign nation, but also a myriad of defense-oriented ends of which both ways and means continually evolve in response to attacks, both physical and cognitive.¹⁰ Further, as asymmetrical values exploitation intensifies and evolves, it is fruitful to explore how each actor depicts their interpretation of reality.

This exploration begs the following questions. For example, how do Islamists react to Israeli state actions perceived as further encroaching upon lands deemed to be endowed to Islamic peoples? How does what Islamists say match up to what they actually do with regard to responses to Israeli governmental or armed force actions? With regard to morality, values, and action, the research shows that Islamists are convergent in thought via Islam, yet are divergent in purpose through terrorism or conventional means. Israel, however, is convergent in purpose toward maintaining a sovereign, self-determined state, but divergent in thought found in democratic

⁹ Efraim Karsh, *Islamic Imperialism: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 210-14.

¹⁰ Efraim Karsh, *Between War and Peace: Dilemmas of Israeli Security* (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 168-69 and 178-81.

discourse regarding security. For historical context of the conflict between the state of Israel, its neighboring states and Islamists since the 1917 Balfour Declaration, refer to Figure 2 below.¹¹

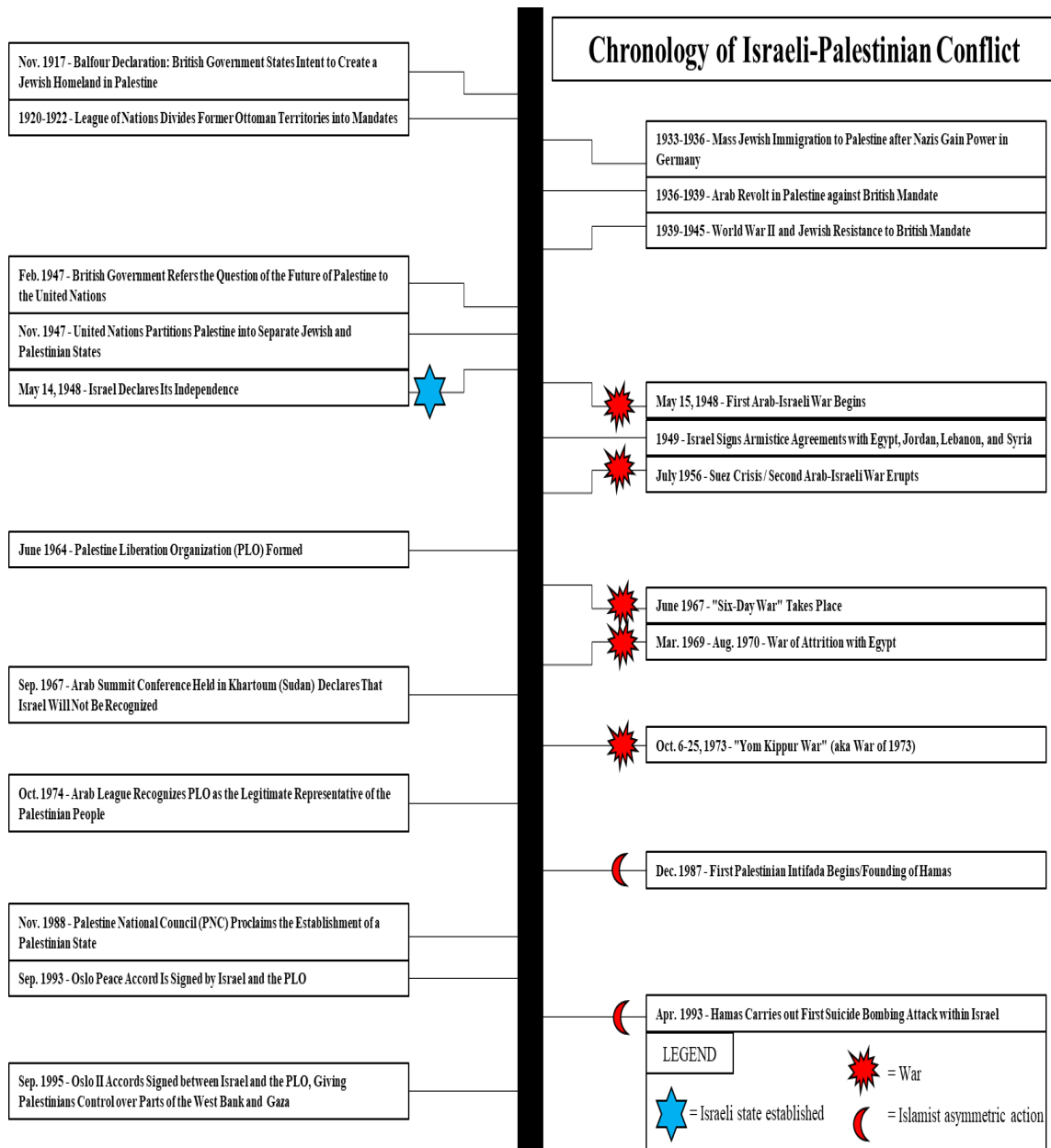


Figure 2. Chronology of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. Created by author.

¹¹ The Balfour Declaration was a statement by the British government in 1917 proclaiming support for the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine, which was an Ottoman region that contained a small minority Jewish population.

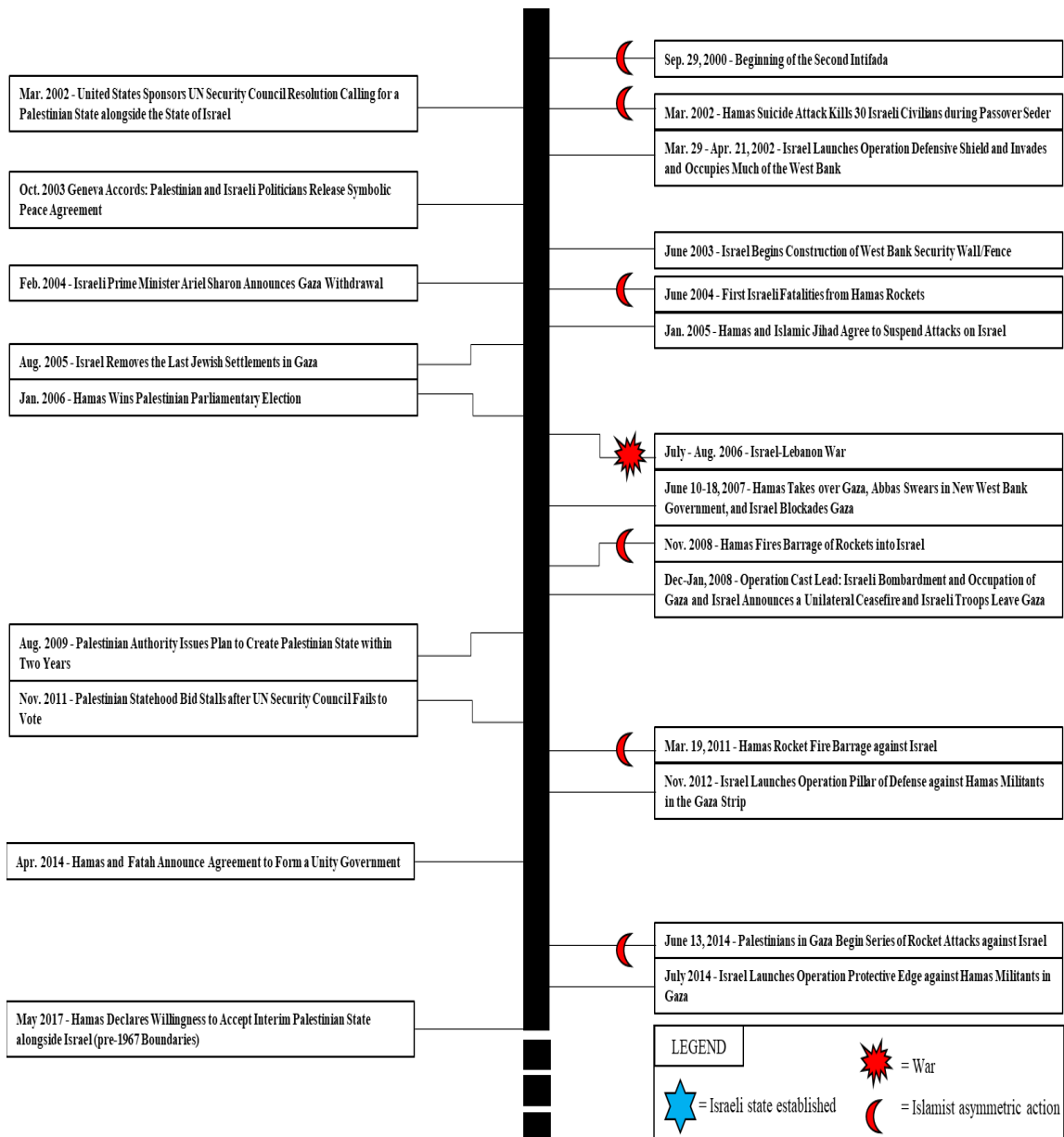


Figure 2 continued. Chronology of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. Created by author.

Asymmetric Conflict Exploits Values

Asymmetry occurs when there exists an imbalance. In this case, it is an imbalance of force, physical or cognitive, required to achieve objectives. No matter how it is conducted, asymmetric action involves the employment of strategies by a weaker force which counters an imbalance of power held by a superior force. According to Professor Amichai Cohen at Ono Academic College in Israel, asymmetry is advanced by an “organization with few heavy arms and a limited number of fighters . . . [an] organization that almost never follows these rules and has very little incentive to do so.”¹² This monograph’s scope, therefore, is narrowed to Hamas in the Gaza Strip since Hamas is the only Islamist group which is also a political governing entity in territory contested by Israelis and Palestinians.

In the circumstance of Hamas exploiting Israeli values, Islamists achieve asymmetry by countering the Israeli conventional force’s physical ability and offensive overmatch. In order to compete with Israel, effective Islamist action operates in what is known to scholars of conflict studies as the “gray zone”—an area that dwells between the traditional lines of conflict and peace. It also blurs the threshold necessary for a conventional forces’ response, i.e., conventional war, to asymmetry.¹³

An area through which Islamists create asymmetry in operations that provides a greater advantage in shaping regional perspectives is the moral realm. It is effective against Israel as a basis for promoting its own interests in the world. To that end, it is important to understand that asymmetric conflict is inherently and fundamentally moral. It relies on the exploitation of cultural values in order for Hamas to remain a contender that is able to fight against a much superior defense force. Islamist values, as depicted through ancient Islamic sacred law revealed in Ahmad

¹² Amichai Cohen, “Proportionality in Modern Asymmetrical Wars,” *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs*, accessed April 11, 2019, <http://jcpa.org/article/proportionality-in-asymmetrical-wars/>.

¹³ Joanne M. Fish, Samuel J. McCraw, and Christopher J. Reddish, *Fighting in the Gray Zone: A Strategy to Close the Preemption Gap* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, Army War College, 2004), v.

ibn Naqib al-Misri's *Reliance of the Traveler*, arise from a theological duty for Muslims to convert non-believers, or subjugate them as "others" (*dhimmi*). Toward achieving that end, a state of war must persist until the non-believers are either converted or submit to Islam.¹⁴ Most importantly, Islamic sacred law has deemed true the notion that all religions and religious affiliations were valid only in their eras.¹⁵ Since Islamists aim to rid the world of those who will not submit to Islam, no other religion is seen as a valid avenue to receive *Allah's* blessing. As such, the morality of what is now deemed allowable in asymmetric operations by prominent Islamist groups such as Hamas continues to shape modern ways by which asymmetric action can be effectively employed against a superior force. Toward Israel's response to Hamas' asymmetric strategy and operations, professor of international law at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Robbie Sabel, proclaims that "the international community has recognized a right to use force in self-defense targeting non-state actors in foreign territory to the extent that the foreign state cannot be relied on to prevent or suppress terrorist activities."¹⁶

Put simply, if creating asymmetry is the goal through which Hamas intends to survive, disrupt, and degrade Israel as a superior force, then exploiting values in asymmetric conflict is the way to achieve it. Ron Ben-Yishai, an award-winning Israeli journalist, astutely points out that Hamas follows the "*Muqawama* Doctrine" which is the "slow destruction strategy used to undermine Israel's staying power and ultimately wipe it off the map." He identifies three Israeli vulnerabilities that the doctrine exploits: the civilian front, the Israeli public's sensitivity to civilian and IDF casualties, and the sensitivity of Israel's political leaders to international public opinion."¹⁷ As such, Hamas consistently seeks ways to subvert the defensive measures erected by

¹⁴ Ahmad Ibn Naqib Al-Misri and Noah Ha Mim Keller, *Reliance of the Traveler: The Classic Manual of Islamic Sacred Law* (Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 1999), 602-603.

¹⁵ Ibid., 846.

¹⁶ Sabel, "Manipulating International Law as Part of Anti-Israel 'Lawfare'."

¹⁷ Calev Ben-Dor, "National Security and the Muqawama Doctrine," Vision to Reality, September 24, 2009, accessed April 16, 2019, <https://blogreut.wordpress.com/2008/10/29/national->

Israel and its defense force by inciting Israeli self-doubt, internal discord, and political weakness. *Muqawama* is in Hamas' name, it is spelled out as *Ḥarakat al-Muqāwamah al-ʿIslāmiyyah*, which translates as “zeal.”¹⁸ Campaigns exploiting Israel by going “over, under, and through” have not only created terror as previously mentioned, but it has also infused Hamas with a sense of Islamist legitimacy toward the fight against Israel.¹⁹ Hamas' end goal is the ejection of apostates from what is deemed Islamic holy land and the means by which to achieve it are constantly evolving.

The Gaza Strip case study focuses on Hamas discourse and action from late 2010 to April 2019. It focuses particular attention to Hamas' deception operations during a period of *tahdiah*, or calm, from 2010 to 2011, as well as the Great Return Marches between 2018 and 2019. It then examines Israeli discourse and action regarding what Hamas says and does in addition an exploration of the significance of asymmetric action against Israel. Therefore, in order to properly set the stage for Israeli and Palestinian Islamist conflict, it is necessary to understand how Islamists view reality. The research shows that asymmetric exploitation is inspired through interpretation of Islamic law in key Islamist books, most notably Seyyid Qutb's *Milestones* and Al-Misri and Keller's *Reliance of the Traveler*. As Qutb illustrates in his text regarding the way in which “true” Muslims should view life and morality: “Thus, only Islamic values are morals, Islamic teachings and safeguards, are worthy of mankind, and from this unchanging and true measure of human progress, Islam is the real civilization and Islamic society is truly civilized.”²⁰ Therefore, as Ben Reiff illustrates, “Mutual reliance on patient, attrition warfare has produced a

securitymuqawama-doctrine/. Calev Ben-Dor summarizes a three-part article depicting Ben-Yishai's characterization of the “*Muqawama* Doctrine.” Ben-Yishai is also a veteran war correspondent.

¹⁸ Jonathan Schanzer, *HAMAS vs. FATAH: The Struggle for Palestine* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 24.

¹⁹ Phyllis Bennis, *Understanding the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: A Primer* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2015), 180.

²⁰ Seyyid Qutb, *Milestones* (Damascus, Syria: Dar al-Ilm, 2003), 99.

situation in which this unwinnable conflict to certain to endure indefinitely unless either side dramatically changes its strategy... [Gaza] is merely the next episode in a dream with no end in sight.”²¹ Therefore, the way in which Israel and Hamas have acted and responded to each other can be described as asymmetric symbiosis, or “asymbiosis.”

Jewish, Muslim, and Islamist Values: a Comparison on Perspectives

The creation of Israel was a consequence of Jewish sufferings.

— Paul Johnson

Israeli Complex Identities

Since its inception, Israel has had to combat the notion perpetuated by its Muslim-majority neighbors that it was illegitimately established. Professor Ruth Gavison argues that, “Israel was established as the (ethnic) nation-state of Jews, and that it is justified that it continues to be the nation-state of Jews.”²² Forced to engage in several conflicts, Israel has had to violently defend itself since the UN established it as a sovereign nation.²³ Yet Israel has continually sought peaceable outcomes to preclude violence.²⁴ As Paul Johnson, respected historian of Jewish history, astutely points out: “One of the principal lessons of Jewish history has been that repeated verbal slanders are sooner or later followed by violent physical deeds. Time and again over the centuries, anti-Semitic writings created their own fearful momentum which climaxed in an effusion of Jewish blood.”²⁵

Therefore, Jewish morality is more than just a question of what it means to be a Jew in Israel. Jewish morality must account for notions such as what it means to be human, in addition to

²¹ Ben Reiff, "'Mowing the Grass' and the Force/Casualty Tradeoff: Israel's Predictable Response to the Gaza Protests," Middle East Centre. May 10, 2018, accessed April 16, 2019, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/mec/2018/05/10/mowing-the-grass-and-the-force-casualty-tradeoff/>.

²² Gavison, “The National Rights of Jews.”

²³ Bennis, *Understanding the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict*, 12-14.

²⁴ Karsh, *Between War and Peace*, 8-9.

²⁵ Johnson, *A History of the Jews*, 579.

how war and peace are viewed, and from where moral obligations in war are derived. It is also found in an understanding that religion does not solely define Jewish identity. Instead, they are defined through history, culture, and nationality. Israel is a complex mixture of people. Not all Israelis are Jewish, some are Christian, Muslim, or secular. To that end, an understanding of what religion means to tradition, and how it shapes modern Israel, is key.²⁶

Even though the vast majority of Israelis are secular, moral instruction comes from God, and the teachings within the Torah.²⁷ Judaism, as a law and discourse-based religion, is deeply rooted in the area of justice. However, Judaism is an inadequate response to modern asymmetry since it provides guidance for Jews from a rearward view based on law established over several millennia.²⁸ As such, Jews have had to reimagine themselves through a meticulous management and keeping of their history while also maintaining an obedience to archaic traditions. Hence, the meaning of humanity, law, war, and peace all derive from ancient cultural notions found in the Old Testament and through practice over time. What this brings forth is the significance of Jewish and Israeli loyalty to tradition. This has translated into a conscious adherence to historical rituals to sustain their identity and the willingness for Jews to sacrifice themselves in order to ensure their continuation as a people.²⁹ Additionally, pacifism and aversion to warfare has defined Jewish culture for centuries.³⁰ Arab Islamist organizations have known this aspect and they exploit it through asymmetric action such as terror.³¹

²⁶ Dilip Hiro, *Sharing the Promised Land*, 42.

²⁷ Johnson, *A History of the Jews*, 149.

²⁸ Ibid., 553.

²⁹ Ibid., 554.

³⁰ Stuart Cohen, *Israel and its Army: From Cohesion to Confusion* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 18.

³¹ Meron Benvenisti, *Intimate Enemies: Jews and Arabs in a Shared Land* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 85; Rafael Castro explains that “Jewish scriptures and Jewish meekness corroborated that Islam was the ascendant faith,” which provided tacit acquiescence to Islam. This is found in article entitled “The Bible, Secularism, and Anti-Semitism” from the *Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies* at <https://besacenter.org/perspectives-papers/bible-secularism-antisemitism>.

Arguments over the necessity of applying religious law and historical ethics as a source for values continues to divide Israeli Jews.³² Religious influences, such as the Ten Commandments, serve not only as an ethical guide for Jewish morality, but also an avenue through which Jewish morality limits action. The traditional Jewish response to persecution had been flight or martyrdom.³³ Killing, for example, was strictly seen as reprehensible unless it is done in the act of self-defense, which Jews saw as inherent to the human condition. The act of killing indiscriminately was viewed as simply unjust to most Jews. Since the state of Israel is an extension and culmination of the Jewish community writ large, its use of violence and indiscriminate killing is seen as an aberration because of the high priority Jews put on the sanctity of life.³⁴

Given a state of such intense rivalry in the region, Israel's political adherence to Zionism has reversed its traditional restraint from warfare.³⁵ Zionism, both political and religious, is the belief that the Jewish people should and would return to *Eretz Yisra'el*, "the Land of Israel." Established by Theodore Herzl, Zionism traces its roots to the late 19th century with the ultimate goal being the creation of the sovereign state of Israel in order to escape the historical pattern of tragedies and travails experienced by European Jews.³⁶ Given that the Holocaust was a proximate catalyst to the creation of the state of Israel, a key insight to Jewish moral thought is the concept of "redemption through suffering."³⁷ Hence, the establishment of a sovereign state is the redemptive outcome earned through such horrid suffering. The ultimate goal for Jews, however, was to return to the land of Israel without dispossessing anyone, even the Arabs who inhabited

³² Gershon Hacohen, "A Question of Identity" (Paper, Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, September 16, 2018), accessed April 12, 2019, <https://besacenter.org/perspectives-papers/israel-jewish-identity/>.

³³ Cohen, *Israel and its Army*, 17.

³⁴ Johnson, *A History of the Jews*, 581.

³⁵ Cohen, *Israel and its Army*, 20.

³⁶ Cohen, *Israel and its Army*, 20.

³⁷ Johnson, *A History of the Jews*, 519.

the former land of Palestine.³⁸ As Israelis have experienced, such disagreement of land “occupation” with Arabs has led to continual conflict against them.

In the modern era, the religious past remains as a force in Israel as much as the secular past shapes modern perspectives.³⁹ A multitude of religious and nonreligious Jews are all combined to form a modern Israeli state aimed at being “the sovereign refuge of the imperiled Jew anywhere in the world.”⁴⁰ Both secular and religious Israeli citizens, Jewish or otherwise, have differing views on how Israeli society should exist, but a universal understanding that deadly attacks will continue helps to galvanize consensus toward planning a maximum-security state in order to meet those challenges.⁴¹

Thus, the priority of the state has become security.⁴² Hopes for finally achieving a peaceful existence for most Jews who escaped the disastrous circumstances and persecution in Europe during World War II were quickly scuttled for a more realistic understanding of the conditions which were becoming reality: perpetual, existential threats would abound for the foreseeable future.⁴³ Such realization was further exacerbated by the need to integrate refugees and immigrants from around the world toward building a viable, enduring Jewish state.⁴⁴ Ultimately, a sovereign, self-determining, and secure state with a defense force that actually defends them is what Israelis expect.⁴⁵

³⁸ Benvenisti, *Intimate Enemies*, 204.

³⁹ Dilip Hiro, *Sharing the Promised Land*, xix.

⁴⁰ Johnson, *A History of the Jews*, 581.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 533.

⁴² Dilip Hiro, *Sharing the Promised Land*, 299.

⁴³ Cohen, *Israel and its Army*, 20-23.

⁴⁴ George Mitchell and Sachar Alon, *A Path to Peace: A Brief History of Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations and a Way Forward in the Middle East* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016), 50.

⁴⁵ Gavison, “The National Rights of Jews.”

Palestinian Muslim

Thus in its origin the Muslim law of nations, in contrast to almost all other systems, was designed to be a temporary institution-until all people . . . would become Muslims.

— Majid Khadduri

What does it mean to be a Muslim? What does it mean to be a Muslim near the areas now controlled and governed by the state of Israel? Moreover, what does the conduct of war and negotiation for peace mean to Muslims who fight Israel? Notions of morality in the context of Islam as a society, and in the broader context of humanity for Muslims, are well-defined. A sense of *umma*, or “community,” is the overarching theme.⁴⁶ The moral code governing how and why for Muslim existence is delivered through scripture established in the Koran.⁴⁷

For true Muslims only *Allah* is the purveyor of law in its truest form. Since his divine law precedes both society and state, then every person must adhere to it no matter their allegiance to any earthly jurisdiction.⁴⁸ Toward understanding the enforcement of Islamic law, *jihad* is used as a framework for comprehending how Muslims must act regarding conduct with others.⁴⁹ Islamic law, therefore, necessitates that *jihad* is conducted against anyone who refuses to submit to it.⁵⁰

With regard to Muslim society writ large, as a source of contrasting values Islam depicts the world as being a constant struggle between two opposing forces: *dar al-Islam* and *dar al-harb*.⁵¹ The first, *dar al-Islam*, is the eternal force on Earth for good, cooperating with *Allah* (God) and his purposes to establish the values of peace, order, and all other essential conditions

⁴⁶ Karsh, *Islamic Imperialism*, 4.

⁴⁷ Qutb, *Milestones*, 9.

⁴⁸ Majid Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam* (Clark, NJ: Lawbook Exchange, 2010), 23.

⁴⁹ Qutb, *Milestones*, 53.

⁵⁰ Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 72-73.

⁵¹ Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, 52. S. K. Malik uses a slightly different spelling for each, *Darus-Salam* and *Darul-Harb*, respectively, but both interpretations mean the same. For is purpose, Khadduri's spelling is used.

for the continuation of harmonious human existence. Second, *dar al-harb* exists solely to perpetuate the defiance of Islam, or *Allah*. Therefore, it is incumbent upon every faithful Muslim, as their eternal goal, to invite non-believers into the state of rightful existence, *dar al-Islam*, through peaceable methods such as *dawa* (preaching the faith) or through the power of persuasion.⁵² If, however, non-believers refuse to submit to Islamic overtures of amiable ways then other, more forceful, means must be employed. Logically then, if those who do not submit to Islam as the true following of *Allah*'s will, *jihad* is the only appropriate way for Muslims to act in defense of eternal law.⁵³

Given the polarity between these two modes of human existence, the Koran has provided Muslims a guide toward understanding their inherent rift with Jews since Muslims have always viewed Jews as *dhimmi*, or "others."⁵⁴ The justification of violence, therefore, comes from Islamist interpretation of Koranic verses which call for the requirement for every non-Muslim to submit to Islam.⁵⁵ To that end, *jihad* must be used as an instrument for "both the universalization of religion and the establishment of an imperial world state."⁵⁶ Muslim goals, therefore, require the submission of all others to the Islamic faith. Currently, Israel is viewed as an enemy whose occupation of Palestinian land only serves to besmirch Muslim reputation throughout the region. Israel must not be allowed to exist. As Efraim Karsh puts it, the establishment of Israel "crystallizes the core of the pan-Arabic rejection of the Jewish right to statehood."⁵⁷ Contrast this mode of existence to Israel's neighboring Arabs, Palestinians, and Arab states. Put simply, for Palestinian Muslims to negotiate with Jews toward achieving a final, peaceful settlement in Israel

⁵² Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, 57. Khadduri later goes on between pages 83-87 to distinguish between those who are obliged or not obliged to conduct *jihad*, which is described through sets of parameters.

⁵³ Malik, *The Quranic Concept of War*, viii.

⁵⁴ Al-Misri and Keller, *Reliance of the Traveler*, 607-608.

⁵⁵ Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, 59.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁵⁷ Karsh, *Islamic Imperialism*, 135.

would constitute an act of betrayal of those Islamic principles essential to who they are - one they would not accept.⁵⁸ There is a people whose religious texts have historically promoted positions of power over all other humans who were not Muslim.⁵⁹

“Palestinian” refers to a regional ethnic term for a group who has lived in the ancient land of Palestine for thousands of years. According to authors Gregory Harms and Todd Ferry, Palestinians are a people who share historical roots with Jews going back from the “Canaanites to the Romans.” Although Jews and Palestinians share a historic claim to the land, there had been no ancient “blood feud” between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Muslims.⁶⁰ Instead, the establishment of the sovereign state of Israel after World War II, and the influx of Israeli immigrants, within lands that were once shared has created the rift between Israel and the Palestinians.⁶¹ Since then, the UN has defined Palestinian refugees affected by the wars with Israel as “persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict.”⁶² However, “Palestinian” as an ethnicity was historically derived from the Palestine Mandate which emerged from the League of Nations in 1917.⁶³

Understanding this notion helps to define the precarious position that Palestinians currently face. Palestinians were, according to their argument, driven out of their land by Israelis in 1948 for fear of safety during the wars which occurred between Israel and its Arab neighbors

⁵⁸ Benvenisti, *Intimate Enemies*, 204-205.

⁵⁹ Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam*, 73.

⁶⁰ Harms and Ferry, *The Palestine-Israel Conflict: A Basic Introduction*, 3rd ed., 21.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 93-94.

⁶² "Palestine Refugees," UNRWA, accessed April 17, 2019, <https://www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees>.

⁶³ The Avalon Project, “The Palestine Mandate,” accessed April 16, 2019, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/palmanda.asp.

upon its establishment.⁶⁴ Author George Mitchell has also argued that many Palestinians had been forced into refugee status since Israel had now occupied the land as a sovereign state. Moreover, he writes that “the Arab states would not allow Palestinian refugees to assimilate, and Israel prevented their return.”⁶⁵ As such, Palestinian nationalism and identity is shaped by their confrontation with the “Zionist movement and the state of Israel,” and this has allowed them to rely on Islam as “instrument . . . in constructing the Palestinian national identity.”⁶⁶ Such relegation to Israeli dominance inside of what they consider their former land has developed into an Islam-inspired resistance. This has manifested itself through the formation of Hamas.⁶⁷

The next section discusses how Hamas, as a representative of the Palestinian resistance against Israel, has been steadfast in their goal toward gaining an independent state. Their founding charter calls for the return of Islamic endowment lands (*waqf*) taken by Israel, and *jihad* is the way through which it should occur.⁶⁸ To achieve this, Palestinians have adapted their tactics against Israel over time, ranging from non-violent protests to lethal rocket attacks. An understanding of their struggle, then, has validated the rise in power of Palestinian Islamist organizations such as a Hamas to wage perpetual war against, and gain independence from, Israel.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Clyde Mark, *The Palestinians: Current Issues and Historical Background* (New York: Nova Science, 2003), 75.

⁶⁵ Mitchell and Alon, *A Path to Peace*, 51-52.

⁶⁶ Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 13.

⁶⁷ Dilip Hiro, *Sharing the Promised Land*, 256.

⁶⁸ Mishal and Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas*, 181.

⁶⁹ Kuriansky, *Terror in the Holy Land: Inside the Anguish of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 7; Additional information on Palestinian international legalistic manipulations is found in Robbie Sabel’s article “Manipulating International Law as Part of Anti-Israel ‘Lawfare,’” *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs*, http://jcpa.org/overview_palestinian_manipulation/manipulating_international_law/.

Islamists

Whoever fights them with his hand is a believer, whoever fights them with his tongue is a believer, whoever fights them in his heart is a believer, Beyond that, there is not a mustard grain of faith.

- Al-Misri and Keller

Palestinian Islamists view Israel, and those who support it, as oppressors. They consist of Palestinians who aim to disrupt, and ultimately destroy, Israel.⁷⁰ The impetus for such action resides in valuing justice against those who are deemed “apostates” of Islam. To Palestinian Islamists, the Jews’ continued adherence to the Torah denies Islam as the true world religion.⁷¹ Having values grounded in such a firm foundation by their interpretation of the Koran through the sacred law allows Islamists to contest the values and goals of Israeli Jews. Such values strictly embody Koranic principles toward carrying out *Allah’s* will as interpreted by sacred law, even if it results in martyrdom (*shaheed*).⁷² It is through Palestinian Islamists’ ability to place into effect the symbiotic relationship of governance in Gaza and indoctrination of its zealots toward executing a more intense, Islamist-inspired *jihad* against Israel. Hence, such differences in values and action toward Israel has confounded the Israeli Government, defense force, and people.⁷³

Palestinian Islamists maintain strict adherence to interpretations of the Koran which, therefore, establish religious justification of prescribed kinetic and non-kinetic action against the state of Israel. Al-Misri and Keller’s *Reliance of the Traveler* provides instruction on such action

⁷⁰ The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) provides invaluable insights toward comparing and contrasting internal and external messaging and intent of Hamas. MEMRI translates and compiles media from across the Middle East. MEMRI, “Head of Hamas’ Political Bureau, Khaled Mash’al, in Interview Two Days after Flotilla Incident: The Resistance Front Is Creating a Situation in Which Israel Can No Longer Win,” Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), June 3, 2010, accessed February 24, 2019, <https://www.memri.org/reports/head-hamas-political-bureau-khaled-mashal-interview-two-days-after-flotilla-incident>.

⁷¹ Al-Misri and Keller, *Reliance of the Traveler*, 598.

⁷² Matthew Levitt, *HAMAS: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 8.

⁷³ Levitt, *HAMAS: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad*, 33.

in the form of Islamic sacred law.⁷⁴ *Reliance of the Traveler* is a seminal source from the 14th century that provides Islamic theological reasoning for how Muslims should conduct their lives in addition to how they should interact with non-Muslims. The text has been used toward the justification of Islamist action in *jihad* and terrorism for several centuries.

Specific to Palestinian Islamist action against Israel, Islamists have employed several means since Israel's establishment: suicide bombing, capturing and killing civilians and military personnel, using missile weaponry on the Israeli population, transforming non-traditional means into projectiles such as Improvised Explosive Devices, and breaking treaties. Not only are these allowed in sacred law against non-believers, but the religious struggle for Islamic dominance over Israel also mandates such action.⁷⁵ For this reason, Islamists remain the proverbial thorn in Israel's side.⁷⁶

Hamas

According to the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, the most prominent Islamist groups which have perpetuated attacks against Israel are The Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, and Hamas.⁷⁷ Translated as "Islamic Resistance Movement," Hamas is an Arabic acronym for *Ḥarakat al-Muqāwamah al-ʿIslāmiyyah* which is also a synonym for "zeal."⁷⁸ Its *raison d'être* upon founding has been to liberate Palestine from Israeli occupation, to

⁷⁴ Al-Misri and Keller, *Reliance of the Traveler*, 599. This text is authoritative due to its Islamic legalistic foundation dating back to the 14th century which interprets how Muslims should conduct their lives as faithful servants of Islam according to Sharia Law.

⁷⁵ Qutb, *Milestones*, 63.

⁷⁶ Beverley Milton-Edwards and Stephen Farrell, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010), 14-15.

⁷⁷ The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, "Terrorist Organizations," The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, April 11, 2019, accessed April 11, 2019, <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/terrorist-organizations>. For more information about Hezbollah, see Joshua L Gleis and Benedetta Berti, *Hezbollah and Hamas: A Comparative Study*, (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012); Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004); Judith Palmer Harik, *Hizballah: A Legacy of Terror* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004).

⁷⁸ Schanzer, *HAMAS vs. FATAH: The Struggle for Palestine*, 24.

include the return of all Palestinian refugees into the borders of the state of Israel.⁷⁹ Founded in 1987, this Palestinian fundamentalist group currently serves as a governing organization that won a plurality in the Palestinian Authority elections in 2006.⁸⁰ Because of violent disagreements in 2006 and 2007 between Hamas and the other leading Palestinian political party, Fatah, its claim to power in the Palestinian Authority Government was constantly contested.⁸¹ Since Hamas traces its roots to Islamist teachings from the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, it views itself as the true champion of the Palestinian people.⁸² As such, the continued violent disagreement between Fatah and Hamas resulted in a split of governance in 2007 wherein Fatah governs the West Bank and Hamas has been relegated to governing the Gaza Strip.⁸³ Yet, as the evidence shows, it is less effective as a government and more efficient as a militant organization who frequently conducts aggressive action against Israel from the Gaza Strip.⁸⁴ Although Hamas was founded as an offshoot of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, it has since taken on a character of its own in the struggle to liberate Palestine.⁸⁵

In 1989, Israel outlawed Hamas.⁸⁶ Unfortunately, by outlawing Hamas, Israel inadvertently bolstered their credibility as a true *jihadist* organization—one that would sustain the fight against Israel, whom they blame for the overall condition of the Palestinians. Due to Israel's perpetual conflict with Hamas, its status and struggle against Israel was made known across the

⁷⁹ Gleis and Berti, *Hezbollah and Hamas*, 119.

⁸⁰ Khaled Hroub, *Hamas A Beginners Guide* (London: Pluto Press, 2010), 151.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 160-161.

⁸² Schanzer, *HAMAS vs. FATAH*, 150. Schanzer provides additional information by writing that many current Islamist organization ideologies have been inspired by teachings of the Muslim Brotherhood. For a concise explanation, see pages 13-20. Further, he explains how Hamas was intended by Israel to be an opposition group of Fatah and, therefore, weaken Palestinian opposition to Israel over time.

⁸³ Hroub, *Hamas A Beginners Guide*, 161-66. These pages provide deeper insight on how and why Hamas was dislocated from preeminence as the sole Palestinian leader after winning a majority in the election in 2006.

⁸⁴ Milton-Edwards and Farrell, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, 131.

⁸⁵ Schanzer, *HAMAS vs. FATAH*, 24.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

world—specifically in Islamist communities.⁸⁷ Hamas strategy toward ejecting Israel from its lands has been three-fold: 1. social welfare activity aimed at bolstering domestic support for its actions; 2. political activity which counters not only the Israeli governments goals in the land, but also the societal goals of the moderate politicians within the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO); and; 3. terrorist activities as part of a broader *jihad* that does not discriminate between soldier or civilian in Israel, the West Bank, or the Gaza Strip.⁸⁸

Through the guise of social benevolence comes the coaxing and coercion of Palestinian citizens to armed resistance which spans the conflict spectrum from marching in protest to suicide bombers devastating populated cafes or shopping centers.⁸⁹ Put simply, Hamas is a multi-faceted organization that is able to persistently conduct *jihad* against Israel by leveraging legitimacy and funds gained through overt moral works in order to sustain covert asymmetric acts.⁹⁰ Such action has continually misled not only the Palestinian population, but also the opinion of the international community.⁹¹ Matthew Levitt, writing in 2006 about Hamas, aptly states:

If Hamas has one supreme objective, it is to mutate the essentially ethno-political Palestinian national struggle into a fundamentally religious conflict. Accomplishing this goal entails transforming Palestinian society . . . into a more religiously zealous and politically strident one. . . .Unfortunately, Palestinians live in an environment that by its very nature creates social preconditions that Hamas is able to use to its advantage in its radicalization campaign.⁹²

The essential function of Hamas is one which has replaced traditional governmental services with extreme Islamist ideology. Hamas seeks to “reshape the political consciousness of educated youth,” in order to maintain a constant stockage of fresh, radicalized adolescents in the

⁸⁷ Schanzer, *HAMAS vs. FATAH*, 34.

⁸⁸ Levitt, *HAMAS: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad*, 8.

⁸⁹ Hroub, *Hamas A Beginners Guide*, 50-54.

⁹⁰ Levitt, *HAMAS: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad*, 32.

⁹¹ Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: A History from Within* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2007), 37.

⁹² Levitt, *HAMAS: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad*, 107.

war against Israel's existence.⁹³ Through indoctrination, Islamist ideology has set into motion a cultural education process in young Palestinians which has perpetuated the conflict in the name of *Allah*.⁹⁴

Hamas' goal is to "resist occupation and confront Zionist aggression" and maintain Palestinian unity toward that end.⁹⁵ The strategy to achieve their goal emerges primarily from Hamas' charter document promoting a pan-Islamist revolution. Vital to that strategy is *jihad*.⁹⁶ Hamas perpetuates *jihad* through terror which enables suicide bombers and aid programs that support family members of those who are martyred. It is done through guaranteed funding for the terrorists and their families once the bombing is carried out. Such assurance of financial stability for the most poverty-stricken, coupled with the notion of dying as a hero and martyr through destructive action against the enemy, lulls the most impoverished of the population into placing false hope and faith in the Hamas organization.⁹⁷

Conflict with Israel continues because Hamas' leadership and governing body refuses to engage by any other form than aggression and violence.⁹⁸ Indelible to its existence is the understanding that Hamas considers the occupation of the "land of Palestine as indivisible" and not negotiable.⁹⁹ Such an understanding propagates from the notion that Israel and its people are an illegitimate occupying entity on what is known to the Islamists as "*waqf* territory," or, land

⁹³ Kuriansky, *Terror in the Holy Land*, 167.

⁹⁴ Sociology reinforces the indoctrination concept: "His resentment and rage may even serve as decisive ratifications of his socially defined identity as an inferior being, since his betters, by definition, are above these brutish emotions. He is imprisoned in the objective reality of his society." Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor, 1966), 165; Levitt, *HAMAS: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad*, 17.

⁹⁵ Tamimi, *Hamas: A History from Within*, 148.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁹⁷ Levitt, *HAMAS: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad*, 59-60.

⁹⁸ Karsh, *Islamic Imperialism*, 214.

⁹⁹ Zaki Chehab, *Inside Hamas: The Untold Story of the Militant Islamic Movement* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 202-203.

that has been endowed by *Allah* to all Muslim generations until the end of time.¹⁰⁰ In accordance with sacred law as defined by al-Misri and Keller, establishing an endowment such as a *waqf* is portrayed by Islam as being an act of worship and, as such, cannot be owned by non-believers.¹⁰¹ Therefore, since Jews have no right to live on Palestinian lands and Israel has no right to exist despite the international community's pronouncement in 1948, then Hamas has concluded that the end result must be the elimination of Israel.¹⁰²

Modern Gaza Strip

Gaza will become a fire blazing beneath the feet of the occupiers.

— Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam Brigade

In order to eliminate Israel, Hamas resists from the Gaza Strip using an asymmetric strategy. Specifically, from 2010 to the present, Hamas has used values exploitation to create an asymmetric advantage over Israel. This section explores what Hamas has said and compares it to what they actually have done, and why. This way, Hamas' political strategy and operations are identified in order to contrast them in the next section with Israel's response. Ultimately, Hamas aims to maintain and exploit asymmetry at a cognitive-political level since it cannot compete with Israel in a direct military confrontation on a physical level.¹⁰³

Hamas' political strategy involves deception against Israel while maintaining its support and coordination of Palestinian resistance. According to Hamas political bureau head, Khaled Mash'al, "Outwardly, [we in] Gaza speak of reconciliation and building, but the truth is that most

¹⁰⁰ Levitt, *HAMAS: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad*, 31.

¹⁰¹ Al-Misri and Keller, *Reliance of the Traveler*, 453-454.

¹⁰² Tamimi, *Hamas: A History from Within*, 56.

¹⁰³ Amos Yadlin, "A Sense of Victory by both Hamas and Israel: A Recipe for Escalation in Gaza?," *The Jerusalem Post*, April 12, 2018, accessed April 5, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/gaza-news/A-sense-of-victory-by-both-Hamas-and-Israel-A-recipe-for-escalation-in-Gaza-549470/Palestinians-prep-5000-kite-bombs-to-mark-end-of-Ramadan-in-Gaza-559981>.

of [our] money and effort is directed toward resistance and military preparations.”¹⁰⁴ The deception was exemplified in 2011 through their supposed adherence to a *tahdiah*, or calm, with Israel in order to cool tensions and reduce the ongoing conflict.¹⁰⁵ The basis for *tahdiah* is found in sacred law under the Islamic notion of *hudna*, or “truce,” which is permissible in sacred law for the rebuilding of forces in order to continue *jihad*.¹⁰⁶ Toward assuring the peace, Hamas went so far as to declare that its security forces would “hunt down those who are firing missiles, to arrest them . . . and to punish them, treating them as perpetrators of serious offenses.”¹⁰⁷ Outwardly, Palestinian Islamists who launched attacks on Israel were deemed criminals against a fragile reconciliation between Hamas and Israel. Inwardly, as the evidence shows, the message was clear: resist.

Hamas’ use of the concept of *tahdiah* reflected a duality. On one hand, it wanted to avoid an Israeli conventional retaliation that “would cause it severe damage and undermine its control over Gaza.”¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, it used the *tahdiah* as a cover for continuing to prepare terrorist attacks against Israel, to include kidnapping Israeli citizens. Hamas’ political-cognitive-strategic aim was to buy itself time to continue its deadly resistance against Israel.¹⁰⁹

The covert messages Hamas spread against Israel, despite the *tahdiah* which lasted from March 2010 to April 2011, had continued to illustrate that the “war of minds” between

¹⁰⁴ MEMRI, “Website of ‘Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam Brigades – Hamas’ Military Wing - Details Weapons Manufactured in Gaza to be Used Against Israel, Including Suicide Belts, Anti-Tank Mines, Rockets and Mortars, and Others,” MEMRI, August 1, 2010, accessed April 4, 2019, <https://www.memri.org/reports/website-izz-al-din-al-qassam-brigades-hamas-military-wing-details-weapons-manufactured-gaza>.

¹⁰⁵ C. Jacob, “Hamas’s Gaza – Four Years Later; Chapter 2: Hamas’s Military Conduct vis-à-vis Israel,” MEMRI, July 21, 2011, accessed April 5, 2019, <https://www.memri.org/reports/hamass-gaza-%E2%80%93-four-years-later-chapter-2-hamass-military-conduct-vis-%C3%A0-vis-israel>.

¹⁰⁶ Al-Misri and Keller, *Reliance of the Traveler*, 604.

¹⁰⁷ C. Jacob, “Hamas’s Gaza – Four Years Later; Chapter 2: Hamas’s Military Conduct vis-à-vis Israel.”

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

Palestinians and Israelis had not ended.¹¹⁰ Vowing to make the lives of Israelis an “unbearable hell,” Hamas sustained the promise that it would “remain forever loyal” to resisting Israel until it had liberated “all of the land of Palestine.”¹¹¹ Moreover, former Hamas senior adviser, Ahmad Yousuf, proclaimed during the *tahdiah* that “resistance is a legitimate right, as are the weapons.”¹¹² This further elucidates the fact that what Hamas says to others, and themselves, is diametrically opposed to what they say to Israel. Even still, during this time, Palestinian Islamists maintained rocket attacks against Israel while Hamas continued to place any blame for escalation in conflict on Israel itself. This action prompted Hamas official Mahmoud al-Zahhar to call the firing of rockets “suspicious,” going so far as to say that Israel was encouraging it. He also stated: “The enemy wants to portray the operations it is carrying out as self-defense by [saying that they are] a response to the firing of missiles from the Gaza Strip.”¹¹³

Further, Palestinian Islamists continued to conduct suicide operations during the *tahdiah* which were aimed at reinforcing the unifying message of resistance at any cost. A Hamas spokesman for the families of the suicide bombers stated: “We are ready to sacrifice our children, ourselves, and our money to declare ‘there is none but Allah,’ and to liberate the homeland.”¹¹⁴ This provides evidence of the contrast between the value of life between Israel and Hamas. To that end, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy further expands Hamas moral asymmetry in the way *Muqawama* Doctrine exploits Israeli values by writing: “The essence is to spill blood,

¹¹⁰ Middle East Media Research Institute, “Website of 'Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam Brigades - Hamas' Military Wing - Details Weapons Manufactured in Gaza to be Used Against Israel, Including Suicide Belts, Anti-Tank Mines, Rockets and Mortars, and Others.”

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Middle East Media Research Institute, “Hamas's Gaza – Four Years Later; Chapter 2: Hamas's Military Conduct vis-à-vis Israel.”

¹¹³ C. Jacob, “Hamas’s Gaza – Four Years Later; Chapter 2: Hamas’s Military Conduct vis-à-vis Israel.”

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

and since that is the case, it is better to focus on the civilian population as the primary target.”¹¹⁵

Hamas’ goal during the period of calm was to reduce conflict in order to consolidate its resources and military power in the Gaza Strip. Evidenced later through an examination of the Great Return March, Hamas is willing to sacrifice its citizens where Israel is not. Therefore, as illustrated throughout the false pretense of *tahdiah*, the uneasy peace was not a peace at all. It was a way to lull Israel into a premeditated sense of calm which allowed Hamas to regroup and re-equip itself.

While Hamas has said one thing and does another against Israel, it also maintains a responsibility to govern the Gaza Strip, which it has done poorly. As the government in Gaza, Hamas portrays itself as one that is “moral, clean, and uncorrupted,” but it has been shown to be the exact opposite.¹¹⁶ Palestinian journalist Majed Kayali, in a scathing review of Hamas’ governance, states that “Hamas doesn’t know what it’s doing in Gaza, and that what has occurred there is proof of the disintegration of the Palestinian national movement.”¹¹⁷ Further clarifying the poor conditions in the Gaza Strip, he goes on to write how Hamas itself is to blame for everything that has happened to the Palestinians. Since 2006, it has used political Islam to exploit democratic elections toward gaining power instead of properly governing a society.¹¹⁸ Such exploitation not only affects Gazans and their living conditions, but it also ensures the continued reliance on, and empowerment of, Hamas.

¹¹⁵ "The Muqawama Doctrine," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, accessed April 16, 2019, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-muqawama-doctrine>.

¹¹⁶ C. Jacobs, Hamas’s Gaza – Four Years Later; Chapter 3: Hamas’s Administration of Gaza,” MEMRI, July 22, 2011, accessed April 4, 2019, <https://www.memri.org/reports/hamass-gaza-%E2%80%93-four-years-later-chapter-3-hamass-administration-gaza>.

¹¹⁷ MEMRI, “Palestinian Journalist: Hamas Rule in Gaza – A Decade of Failure and Damage to The Palestinian Cause,” MEMRI, July 11, 2017, accessed April 5, 2019, <https://www.memri.org/reports/palestinian-journalist-hamas-rule-gaza-%E2%80%93-decade-failure-and-damage-palestinian-cause>.

¹¹⁸ MEMRI, “Palestinian Journalist: Hamas Rule in Gaza – A Decade of Failure and Damage to the Palestinian Cause.”

While Hamas remains in power and controls the Gaza Strip, its failings create the environment which causes discontent within Palestinians.¹¹⁹ Another Palestinian journalist, Dalia al-Afifi, provides commentary regarding the ongoing conflict with Israel, “As a people under occupation, we Palestinians have the right to employ every kind of resistance sanctioned by international law in order to end this hated occupation. But there is [such a thing as] responsibility and delicate considerations, which resistance movements must place at the head of their priority-lists and calculations.”¹²⁰ Al-Afifi acknowledges that resistance is also a form of warfare. Yet, understanding the precarious position that most Gazans are in, she calls on Hamas to utilize common sense when fighting Israel. The Gaza Strip is such a small area that conventional destruction and devastation affects everyone in it.¹²¹

To that end, Hamas’ failings as a governing body has caused internal strife amongst its people. Protests against the Hamas government has increased since 2017. Such protests are aimed at calling out Hamas for the poor state of affairs within the Gaza Strip due to Hamas’ dictatorial approach at governing. It has employed its security apparatus to attack protestors “at a mass demonstration in Gaza . . . using fists, clubs, and tear gas” and “[releasing] criminal detainees . . . set loose on the protestors.”¹²² Hamas routinely oppresses and uses its own people as a weapon in order to maintain power and perpetuate Palestinian anxiety against Israel. This has resulted in increased internal unease toward Hamas and a blistering, outward discontent toward Israel by Palestinians.¹²³ Given the poor state of affairs in the Gaza Strip exacerbated by Hamas,

¹¹⁹ C. Jacobs, “Hamas's Gaza – Four Years Later; Chapter 3: Hamas's Administration of Gaza.”

¹²⁰ MEMRI, “Palestinian Columnist: Hamas Did Not Win the War, Only Brought Suffering Upon Gazans,” MEMRI, August 11, 2014, accessed April 5, 2019, <https://www.memri.org/reports/palestinian-columnist-hamas-did-not-win-war-only-brought-suffering-upon-gazans>.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² MEMRI, “Palestinian Journalist: Hamas Rule in Gaza – A Decade of Failure and Damage to the Palestinian Cause.”

¹²³ MEMRI, “Hamas Members, Supporters Criticize Its Suppression of Economic and Social Protests In Gaza,” MEMRI, March 26, 2019, accessed April 4, 2019, <https://www.memri.org/reports/hamas-members-supporters-criticize-its-suppression-economic-and-social-protests-gaza>.

Palestinians have continually relied on conflict toward attacking the Israeli population in order to allay their grievances. Given this point, action against Israel through lethal and nonlethal means are frequently carried out.

In terms of lethal action, the Al-Qassam Brigades have managed Hamas' military operations since their establishment in 1991.¹²⁴ They are the primary actors which carry out the resistance.¹²⁵ They are responsible for acquiring arms and arranging operations for Hamas. The brigades "buy, manufacture, and smuggle" weapons in order to "produce the glory and honor of the *umma*" and achieve a "balance of terror" against Israel.¹²⁶ The Al-Qassam Brigades utilize rockets, mortars, and are exceptionally keen on "martyrdom attacks [suicide bombings] . . . [that] became a strategic weapon" which Israel has grown to fear.¹²⁷

These deadly operations, however, have become more subtle and devious in their execution since Hamas began its governance over the Gaza Strip in 2007. Since then, Hamas has constantly used rockets, mortars, tunnels, fire balloons, drones, and suicide bombings to advance the Palestinian notion of "existing is resisting."¹²⁸ Under the auspices of nonviolent protests against Israel, as recently as March 2018, Palestinian "social activists" arranged what is known as "The Great Return March." To the satisfaction of Hamas' leaders, these marches evolved into weekly occurrences aimed at provoking an international backlash which shames Israel as "occupiers."¹²⁹

¹²⁴ Jeroen Gunning, *Hamas in Politics: Democracy, Religion, Violence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 40-41.

¹²⁵ Tamimi, *Hamas: A History from Within*, 63.

¹²⁶ MEMRI, "Website of 'Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam Brigades – Hamas' Military Wing - Details Weapons Manufactured in Gaza to be Used Against Israel, Including Suicide Belts, Anti-Tank Mines, Rockets and Mortars, and Others."

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Seth Frantzman, "The 'Existing is Resisting' Gaza Protest Is Working-Analysis," *The Jerusalem Post*, March 31, 2018, accessed April 4, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/The-existing-is-resisting-Gaza-protest-is-working-analysis-585267>.

¹²⁹ MEMRI, "Gaza Strip Initiative, in Collaboration with Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Supporters of Fatah's Muhammad Dahlan: Masses Will Throng to Border with Israel to Demand Right of

According to the organizers, the impetus for these marches emerged as a rejection of President Donald Trump's message toward achieving a "deal of the century" which would "eliminate the problem of the refugees," thereby threatening to diminish the importance of the Palestinian cause with regard to the struggle against Israel.¹³⁰ Used as a way to escalate tensions between Gaza and the state of Israel, protesters demand the right to march (return) to what they believe is occupied Palestinian land within Israeli borders.¹³¹ As previously mentioned, Israel is viewed by Palestinian Islamists as existing and governing on what is considered *waqf* territory, or land that has been endowed by *Allah* to all Muslim generations until the end of time.¹³² This has provided the marchers moral legitimacy toward seeking ways to violently oppose Israeli barriers which impede their "return" to ancestral lands.¹³³ The apparent peaceful intention for these marches, however, is for Gazans to march to border fences with Israel in order to "restore [their] rights and nonviolently return to [their] land . . . [their] home, armed with . . . international law, human rights principles, and the support of the free peoples of the world."¹³⁴ The Great Return March was initially promoted in March 2018 by its organizers as a way to tip the moral scales against Israel by depicting the Israeli "siege" on the border as being the catalyst for the poor conditions in Gaza.¹³⁵ Although nonviolence has been highlighted as a key function of the

Return," MEMRI, March 22, 2018, accessed April 4, 2019, <https://www.memri.org/reports/gaza-strip-initiative-collaboration-hamas-palestinian-islamic-jihad-and-supporters-fatahs>.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Anna Abumaria, "Palestinians Prep 5,000 Kite Bombs to Mark End of Ramadan in Gaza," *The Jerusalem Post*, June 14, 2018, accessed February 24, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Palestinians-prep-5000-kite-bombs-to-mark-end-of-Ramadan-in-Gaza-559981>.

¹³² Levitt, *HAMAS: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad*, 31.

¹³³ This is compatible with the perspective Joseph Nye takes on legitimacy, he states that it is "a widespread belief that an actor or action is right." For more see Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Future of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), 41-42.

¹³⁴ Middle East Media Research Institute, "Gaza Strip Initiative, in Collaboration with Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Supporters of Fatah's Muhammad Dahlan: Masses Will Throng to Border with Israel to Demand Right of Return."

¹³⁵ Middle East Media Research Institute, "Gaza Strip Initiative, in Collaboration with Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Supporters of Fatah's Muhammad Dahlan: Masses Will Throng to Border with Israel to Demand Right of Return."

marches so as to gain international legitimacy with regard to their struggle, actions taken against Israel at the border illustrates a different reality.

Accordingly, Hamas' political bureau has affirmed that it is "at the heart" of the march.¹³⁶ Hamas, and its operatives, have co-opted the marches in order to achieve its political strategy and exploit cognitive asymmetry with Israel at the border. According to Eric Mandel, an Israeli contributor to the *Jerusalem Post*, Hamas has conducted a "well-coordinated and financed operation" that has sent "thousands of Gazans to challenge the security barrier . . . [its] strategy is to use civilian shields embedded with terrorists . . . to breach the Israeli international border, provoking a violent Israeli response."¹³⁷ Although the march's narrative stresses nonviolence, "Hamas is promoting [it] as an aspect of the struggle against Israel, in addition to the armed struggle."¹³⁸ For an event aimed at garnering international sympathy for the Palestinians against Israel, Hamas' statement about it being an extension of the armed struggle is telling. Again, what they have said with regard to nonviolence is not the same as what they have violently done and promoted.

Activist Abu Ratima, in an article published on a website affiliated with Palestinian Islamists, proclaims that "the current international climate will help the Palestinians in this non-violent activity . . . [Israel] cannot kill unarmed refugees." Yet he goes on to assert that some of the protestors will (and should) be killed during the march. They justify the deaths of their people by stating that breaching the border fence would signify a substantial "national achievement" given that "thousands of victims have fallen in the wars without [achieving] any political

¹³⁶ Middle East Media Research Institute, "Gaza Strip Initiative, in Collaboration with Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Supporters of Fatah's Muhammad Dahlan: Masses Will Throng to Border with Israel to Demand Right of Return."

¹³⁷ Eric Mandel, "Could a Mass March on Jerusalem Ignite the Middle East," *The Jerusalem Post*, April 11, 2018, accessed April 5, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Could-a-mass-march-on-Jerusalem-ignite-the-Middle-East-549537>.

¹³⁸ Middle East Media Research Institute, "Gaza Strip Initiative, in Collaboration with Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Supporters of Fatah's Muhammad Dahlan: Masses Will Throng to Border with Israel to Demand Right of Return."

results.”¹³⁹ Put simply, Hamas and their activist sympathizers are able to spin the message toward the international community and blame the deaths of marchers as a response by Israel to Israeli embarrassment for failing to properly address the declining situation in the Gaza Strip.¹⁴⁰ By adjusting the resistance strategy from overt acts of violence to using thousands of its people on the border as a feint for nonviolent protest, Hamas has tried to outwit Israel and provoke it to overreact. Israel has, unfortunately, been forced to use violent means in response to the attempted breaches of the border fence by “terror squads” from the Gaza Strip during the marches.¹⁴¹ But, Israel has taken a metered approach toward responding to Hamas aggression through precision strikes on key targets within the Gaza Strip so as to not solicit international condemnation.¹⁴²

Hamas responded to the attack by spreading propaganda aimed at delegitimizing Israel on the world stage. They stated that the Israeli “strikes of resistance positions in Gaza” portrays the “deep internal crisis and the state of confusion the Zionist entity is experiencing over the success of the Palestinian masses.”¹⁴³ What is not mentioned is that those who were killed by Israel were part of an Islamist network whose aim was to destroy property and kill Israelis.¹⁴⁴ For all its failures, Hamas has been able to claim victory via propaganda to its people during the conduct of these marches. Toward its own legitimacy in the region, Hamas has stated that it has “reclaimed

¹³⁹ Middle East Media Research Institute, “Gaza Strip Initiative, in Collaboration with Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Supporters of Fatah's Muhammad Dahlan: Masses Will Throng to Border with Israel to Demand Right of Return.”

¹⁴⁰ Abumaria, “Palestinians Prep 5,000 Kite Bombs to Mark End of Ramadan in Gaza.”

¹⁴¹ Tovah Lazaroff and Herb Keinon, “Netanyahu: We'll Strike at Those Who Strike at Us,” *The Jerusalem Post*, April 10, 2018, accessed April 5, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/gaza-news/Netanyahu-Well-strike-at-those-who-strike-at-us-549332>.

¹⁴² The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, “Palestinian Violence and Terrorism Against Israel, 2018: Data, Nature and Trends.”

¹⁴³ Lazaroff and Keinon, “Netanyahu: We'll Strike at Those Who Strike at Us.”

¹⁴⁴ The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, “Palestinian Violence and Terrorism Against Israel, 2018.”

the leadership of the Palestinian struggle” since it was able to successfully conduct operations on the border at a level that did not spark a conventional war with Israel.¹⁴⁵

But, what if the marchers actually breached the border fence? Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations stated during a speech to the General Assembly that the protestors “would seize Tel Aviv, and Haifa, and Jerusalem, and replace the Jewish State... [since the march] was a violent assault on Israel by Hamas.”¹⁴⁶ However, Israel still received international criticism for the deaths of Gazan protestors.¹⁴⁷ The situation in the Gaza Strip despite the self-proclaimed successful marches remains dire, however. In order to distract its citizens, as recently as March 2019 Hamas conducted rocket attacks against Israel.¹⁴⁸ This was done to direct attention away from the “social and economic protests against it that have been taking place in the Gaza Strip.”¹⁴⁹

It is plain to see that what Hamas has said as compared to what it has done since its existence and recently is in direct contravention with reality. As shown, overtures of reconciliation and relationship building with Israel as exemplified during the *tahdiah* have been proven to be a deception tactic. Promising other Islamist organizations in the region that they will continue the conflict, Hamas has held tightly to the notion that lying is acceptable in order to gain an advantage. What Israel forgets when Hamas offers peace, however, is that Islamic sacred law justifies the breaking of a truce so long as it benefits them.¹⁵⁰ The transition from non-violence

¹⁴⁵ Yadlin, “A Sense of Victory by both Hamas and Israel.”

¹⁴⁶ United Nations, “Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and Palestine - UN General Assembly.” Filmed June 13, 2018, YouTube video, 2:43:12. Posted June 13, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1VvIr-U6po&spfreload=10>.

¹⁴⁷ Yadlin, “A Sense of Victory by both Hamas and Israel.”

¹⁴⁸ The rocket attacks could have been conducted by other Islamist groups, such as The Palestinian Islamic Jihad or Hezbollah. However, since the attack came from the Gaza Strip it was attributed to Hamas.

¹⁴⁹ Middle East Media Research Institute, “Hamas Members, Supporters Criticize Its Suppression of Economic and Social Protests in Gaza.”

¹⁵⁰ Al-Misri and Keller, *Reliance of the Traveler*, 604.

during *tahdiah*, to placing blame on Israel for Palestinian Islamist actions has helped Hamas to successfully spread propaganda to its people in the Gaza Strip.

Unfortunately, Hamas is a failed governmental organization whose own people are beaten and oppressed by its security apparatuses in order to hold on to power. This is done at the same time Hamas claims to embody the legitimate Palestinian struggle and resistance against Israel. As seen in this case study, its overt strategy has been to use a tactical pause in conflict by the use of *tahdiah* in order to continue to resist Israel nonviolently. Once it shifted to carrying out violent attacks, the conditions in the Gaza Strip continued to worsen. These indigent circumstances have led to protests within the Gaza Strip and along the border fence with Israel so as to escape such conditions. These conditions then led to the organization of return marches which continued the struggle under the illusion, yet again, as nonviolent. Since Palestinians have ultimately placed the blame for their squalid existence in the Gaza Strip on Israel, Hamas' political strategy capitalizes on the environment of uncontrollable Palestinian rage against Israel.¹⁵¹ Instead, as discussed in the next section, they should look internally and seek to change their own "representative" government.

Israeli Discourse, Dilemmas, and Action

Gaza is a container of explosives awaiting combustion.

— Noa Shusterman

This section explores Israeli discourse and action *vis-à-vis* Hamas and their operations against Israel in order to expose the moral challenge that asymmetric strategy possesses. To that end, the *Jerusalem Post*, *Haaretz*, and *Aretz Sheva* (Israeli National News) newspapers and editorials provide unique perspectives toward understanding how Israelis and the IDF respond to Hamas. The evidence shows that little difference exists between what the Israelis say and what

¹⁵¹ Bennis, *Understanding the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict*, 2-3.

they do, and that they are even willing to adapt to new challenges. Israel says that it will protect its sovereignty, borders, and population and it does just that.¹⁵² Given the recent escalation in tensions on the border with Gaza in 2018, Israeli perspectives have become apathetic with regard to Hamas and the plight of their Palestinian citizens.¹⁵³ Yet, although Israeli apathy to the plight of Palestinians on the Gaza strip has increased, they realize their responses to Hamas must be measured to guarantee that the international community sees Israeli actions as legitimate responses to ensure its security and sovereignty.¹⁵⁴

Since taking over the Gaza Strip in 2007, Hamas has operated the same way: they maintain pressure on Israel by protesting at the border, carrying out rocket attacks, and conducting suicide bombings in order to demand concessions and international attention.¹⁵⁵ The addition of the return marches in 2018 signified a shift in Hamas' approach. The intent for these marches is to shame Israel in the international arena for occupying Palestinian lands and blame them for the poor conditions in Gaza. Further, through the "return marches" Hamas is setting a morality trap. It is trying to provoke a violent response to non-violent action by using civilians on the front lines. The trap also seeks to solicit an international condemnation resulting from a seemingly disproportionate Israeli response to "peaceful" marches along the border in order to challenge Israel's moral ethos.¹⁵⁶ As such, the balancing act between lethal and nonlethal action is challenging for Israel given the need for security at the border in addition to securing its citizens against lethal (i.e., rocket-see figure 3) attacks from the Gaza Strip.

¹⁵² Lazaroff and Keinon, "Netanyahu: We'll Strike at Those Who Strike at Us."

¹⁵³ Reuters, "Israelis on Gaza Border Unmoved by Palestinian Protests," *The Jerusalem Post*, April 8, 2018, accessed April 5, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Israelis-on-Gaza-border-unmoved-by-Palestinian-protests-549154>.

¹⁵⁴ Lazaroff and Keinon, "Netanyahu: We'll Strike at Those Who Strike at Us."

¹⁵⁵ Frantzman, "The 'Existing is Resisting' Gaza Protest Is Working-Analysis."

¹⁵⁶ Mandel, "Could a Mass March on Jerusalem Ignite the Middle East."

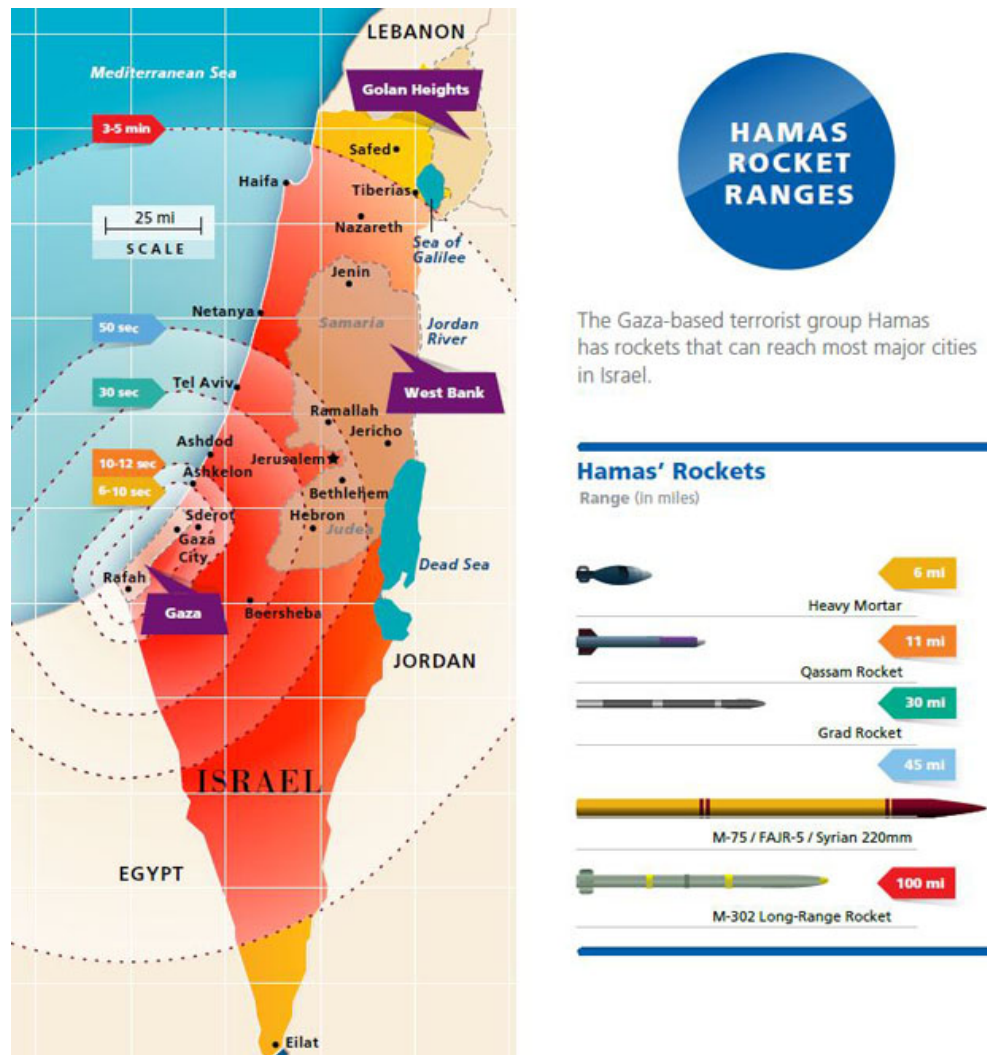


Figure 3. Hamas Rocket Ranges. Jewish Virtual Library, “Rocket Threat to Israel: Hamas Rocket Range from Gaza,” accessed April 9, 2019, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/hamas-rocket-range-from-gaza>.

The morality trap appears to have worked. Israel’s response to Hamas’ action is what the world pays attention to, not Hamas’ violent actions themselves.¹⁵⁷ For example, in March 2018 the United Nations Relief and Works Agency condemned the IDF for their use of lethal force at the border, which they blame for the “tragic and unnecessary loss of [Palestinian] lives.”¹⁵⁸ This

¹⁵⁷ Mandel, “Could a Mass March on Jerusalem Ignite the Middle East.”

¹⁵⁸ Zachary Keyser, “UNRWA Report on Gaza’s Protests: Tragic and Unnecessary Loss of Lives,” *The Jerusalem Post*, March 31, 2019, accessed April 4, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/UNRWA-report-on-Gaza-March-of-Return-protests-one-year-on-585331>.

condemnation was delivered despite the UN acknowledging that Hamas and the protestors have used violence against Israel as well. United Nations Relief and Works Agency continues its report by stating that:

While protests have continued to be largely non-violent and the vast majority of those in attendance are unarmed, there are often reported incidents of stone throwing as well as . . . attempts to damage the fence and . . . some demonstrators flew kites or balloons towards Israel that carried burning rags and damaged Israeli property . . . [also] the throwing of explosive devices—including hand grenades and Molotov cocktails.¹⁵⁹

The pattern by which Hamas continues to operate against Israel at the border foments Israeli apathy since Hamas continues to refuse to negotiate with Israel regarding a de-escalation of tensions. Border resident and grocery store owner Ahuva Avraham stated, “I don’t feel empathy for them [Palestinians]. I would be happy if we could live in peace, but they don’t want to sit and talk with us.”¹⁶⁰ The longer these protests occur, the more incensed Israelis grow about the situation at the border. Given the context of what Hamas has said and done over the years, a cease-fire seems to be the only viable option given the distrust of Hamas by Israeli leaders.¹⁶¹ Israelis are aware of the dire conditions that Gazans experience daily, but place the blame squarely on Hamas’ inability to govern. For example, former IDF Southern Command commander Yom Tov Samia points out that “Hamas receives 650 truckloads of equipment a day.” But instead of using the supplies to care for its people Hamas leaders enrich themselves by selling the goods and pocketing the profits.¹⁶²

Decrying the situation at the border as the result of a political “stalemate,” Israeli citizens are aware that Hamas’ leadership, particularly former Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, “knew he was sending people to their death.” This is because Hamas realizes that “Israel would never allow

¹⁵⁹ Keyser, “UNRWA Report on Gaza's Protests: Tragic and Unnecessary Loss of Lives.”

¹⁶⁰ Reuters, “Israelis on Gaza Border Unmoved by Palestinian Protests.”

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Shimon Cohen, “There's No Siege on Gaza,” *Arutz Sheva*, May 2, 2018, accessed April 9, 2019, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/241565>.

Gazans to enter Israel. . . [since] the IDF had reinforced border patrols in preparation for the [return marches].”¹⁶³ Israeli discourse is further shaped by an understanding that Hamas has coordinated these return marches out of the desperation. Such desperation is the result of the mismanagement of its resources and people, and through the loss of regional financial sponsorship by moderate Arab countries like Qatar.¹⁶⁴ New York University Fulbright scholar Noa Shusterman comments that, “The situation in Gaza is a human tragedy . . . By mobilizing groups from across the Strip, Hamas is manifesting its power to show that it can still pull a few rabbits out of the hat, and that it won’t go out without a fight.” Shusterman also states that Israeli leaders’ first obligation is toward ensuring the protection of its citizens. To that end, allowing “return march” protestors to breach the border fences would result in catastrophe.¹⁶⁵

Security and protection of Israelis are sacrosanct to its elected leaders. Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman also understands the pattern by which Hamas acts. Classifying the return marches as a Hamas operation he states: “Everyone has a connection to Hamas. Those who are trying to challenge us at the border and breach it belong to Hamas’ military wing.”¹⁶⁶ As such, he does not believe that there are any innocent Gazans. His cynical mindset is justified given the evidence he provides of Hamas utilizing journalists, media personnel, and even ambulances to carry out terror attacks.¹⁶⁷ Jack Engelhard, international bestselling Jewish novelist, feels that the sentiments shared by Israelis do not go far enough with regard to Hamas. He says that Israel must take back the language which defines Hamas. “Hamas is ISIS,” he states, “always was, hence

¹⁶³ Noa Shusterman, “Gaza Will Get Worse Before It Gets Better,” *The Jerusalem Post*, April 8, 2018, accessed April 5, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Gaza-will-get-worse-before-it-gets-better-549181>.

¹⁶⁴ Shusterman, “Gaza Will Get Worse Before It Gets Better.”

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Tovah Lazaroff, “‘There Are No Innocents in Gaza,’ Says Israeli Defense Minister,” *The Jerusalem Post*, April 8, 2018, accessed April 5, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/There-are-no-innocents-in-Gaza-says-Israeli-defense-minister-549173>.

¹⁶⁷ Tovah Lazaroff, “‘There Are No Innocents in Gaza,’ Says Israeli Defense Minister.”

Israel is fighting the world's problem. Inasmuch as Israel is able to be more frightening than Hamas, it should . . . and see how that works.”¹⁶⁸ Hamas' pattern of deceitfully “nonviolent” protests coupled with deadly attacks have caused the deterioration of Israeli sympathy regarding the plight of Palestinians in Gaza.

Despite Israeli apathy and in an attempt to shift the conflict's narrative, the IDF's response has been calculated. It has adapted by their need to deter violence in addition to ensuring the safety of Israelis along the border. For example, in April 2018, protestors (and Hamas fighters) turned to burning thousands of tires to create a smoke screen during the return marches along the border.¹⁶⁹ As such, the IDF's countermeasure to the protestors' burning thousands of tires at the border has been to simply utilize giant fans to blow the smoke away. Israel has continued to stress the point to Hamas, and the protestors, that the “border fence [is] a military zone and warned [that] the IDF would not allow it to be breached.”¹⁷⁰ Hamas, despite the peaceful marching it has portrayed, has since attempted to breach the fence with violence. The IDF reports that in April 2018 a “terror squad” was thwarted while emplacing IEDs in the sand along the border. It then retaliated by attacking a Hamas compound “in response to [the] attempted infiltration.”¹⁷¹ Responding to Hamas' violence with precision strikes shows that Israel is attempting to avoid falling into the morality trap which Hamas has set.

Israeli citizens and the IDF are aware of the pattern by which Hamas acts, and it therefore shapes the discourse toward how they respond. But, what has emerged from Israel's measured response to the return marches is a forced adjustment in Hamas' calculus for action against Israel.

¹⁶⁸ Jack Engelhard, “There Is No Hamas. We Have to Win Back the Language,” *Arutz Sheva*, January 11, 2015, accessed April 9, 2019, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/17805>.

¹⁶⁹ Hagay Hacoen, “Into the Black Smoke: Inside the 'Great March of Return,’” *The Jerusalem Post*, April 6, 2018, accessed April 5, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Into-the-black-smoke-Inside-the-Great-March-of-Return-549035>.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Lazaroff and Keinon, “Netanyahu: We'll Strike at Those Who Strike at Us.”

Acquiescing to the reality that they cannot compete on a physical level, Hamas has reverted to low-tech, asymmetric innovation through their use of explosive devices and hand grenades at the border fence. This adjustment shifts Hamas' strategy from an overreliance on rockets, mortars, tunnels, fire balloons, drones, and suicide bombings to the notion of "existing is resisting," even if it means sacrificing Palestinians at the border.¹⁷² While Hamas is trying to illicit an overreaction by the IDF in order to recapture international attention, Israelis understand that they gain nothing from an overreaction.¹⁷³ If Israel relies too heavily on lethality to deal with the protests, its legitimacy is eroded in the international community given the poor conditions that Gazans face each day.¹⁷⁴ Israel also understands that Hamas is willing to sacrifice its own people to gain "propaganda points." These points would help in shaping the international message against Israel. But, Israel is not giving in to such pressure at the border by relying on its physical strength.¹⁷⁵

The overall socio-political score from the marches is not settled, however. Each side has justification for claiming success. For Israel, its defense force was effective at deterring any breach of the border fence thereby preventing a massive Palestinian incursion into sovereign Israeli territory. It was also able to avert casualties on a large scale by avoiding excessive lethal action while thwarting terrorist activity along the border.¹⁷⁶ For Hamas, although it suffered the loss of many members within the ranks of its military apparatus embedded in the marches, it was able to regain international attention to its struggle in Gaza. Where Hamas failed operationally, however, was its inability to maintain international community sympathy and belief that its return

¹⁷² Frantzman, "The 'Existing is Resisting' Gaza Protest Is Working-Analysis."

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Keyser, "UNRWA Report on Gaza's Protests: Tragic and Unnecessary Loss of Lives."

¹⁷⁵ Frantzman, "The 'Existing is Resisting' Gaza Protest Is Working-Analysis."

¹⁷⁶ Yadin, "A Sense of Victory by both Hamas and Israel."

marches were nonviolent; Hamas' failed terror attacks at border fence breach proved otherwise.¹⁷⁷

Both sides are conducting parallel maneuvers in a learning contest. Israel seeks to weaken Hamas' military capacity in the Gaza Strip, while Hamas aims to reduce the distress of its people through potential concessions gained by maintaining the struggle against Israel.¹⁷⁸ Hence, asymmetry is found through an understanding that Hamas' cognitive-political strategy of the return marches was aimed toward rupturing both cognitive and physical boundaries on the Israeli border.¹⁷⁹ Israel's physical dominance at the border has not only prevented Hamas' success thus far, but it has also forced Hamas to revert back to overt acts of violence against it.¹⁸⁰

To date, the discourse regarding the return marches, Hamas, and the Gaza Strip remains contentious at best.¹⁸¹ The Israeli sentiment toward the notion of reoccupying the Gaza Strip is clear, however: no! Opinions shared by Israelis such as Ehud Eilam, illustrate that such action "would entangle Israel in the Gaza morass, with all its heavy costs on the human, political, military, and economic levels . . . Israel should stay out of the Gaza Strip because another occupation would be too costly."¹⁸² Eilam proclaims that recapturing the Gaza Strip would be a bad move for Israel. Instead, he recommends that the IDF should adapt to Hamas' deception by emanating the illusion that a military reoccupation of Gaza remains a viable option. That way,

¹⁷⁷ Yadlin, "A Sense of Victory by both Hamas and Israel."

¹⁷⁸ Kobi Michael, *Israel's Strategic Choice in Face of the Hamas Dilemma*. Tel Aviv, Israel: The Institute for National Strategic Studies, (2019), accessed April 12, 2019, <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/israels-strategic-choice-face-hamas-dilemma/>.

¹⁷⁹ Yadlin, "A Sense of Victory by both Hamas and Israel."

¹⁸⁰ Middle East Media Research Institute. "Hamas Members, Supporters Criticize Its Suppression of Economic and Social Protests in Gaza."

¹⁸¹ For a much broader understanding of the Israeli discourse, opinion editorials during this period found within the *Jerusalem Post*, *Haaretz*, and *Aretz Sheva* newspapers are a valuable resource.

¹⁸² Ehud Eilam, "Should Israel seize the Gaza Strip?," *The Jerusalem Post*, April 2, 2019, accessed April 4, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Should-Israel-seize-the-Gaza-Strip-585562>. While the opinion of every Israeli about what the right solution is for dealing with the Gaza Strip cannot be obtained, Micah Halpern offers the same perspective as Ehud Eilam in his "No simple solution for Gaza" article.

Hamas is the belligerent that is influenced by cognitive-political maneuvering toward accepting a long-term cease fire with Israel.¹⁸³ Such an action, if successful, may increase domestic pressure on Hamas so that Israel can continue to outmaneuver Hamas at its own game. During the return marches, the IDF has demonstrated by its actions in response to the protestors and lethal attacks from Hamas that it is able to take a more measured approach in dealing with asymmetry. By relying less on massive retaliatory strikes on the Gaza Strip that Hamas could use for “propaganda points” and more on precision strikes and “giant fans,” the IDF is illustrating that it can adapt to conditions enabling it to succeed in the cognitive-political and physical arenas.¹⁸⁴

The cat-and-mouse game that Palestinian Islamists such as Hamas have played against Israel for decades is morphing into one where the rules are changed. Micah Halpern has opined in the *Jerusalem Post* that the IDF leadership’s strategy has evolved toward slowly closing the asymmetric gap against Hamas. By targeting Hamas’ senior leadership and arresting its mid-level henchmen, the IDF is proving astute at taking the fight to the ones who organize and set the conditions for resistance.¹⁸⁵ Israel has grown quite aware of the hit it takes against its international credibility when a disproportionate lethal response kills Gazan civilians in addition to Hamas fighters. Given that Hamas has been relatively successful at propagandizing and spreading the victimhood narrative in the region, the IDF is actively seeking to remove their ability to do so. If Hamas was able to breach the fence, the IDF would most assuredly take any action that is necessary (lethal or nonlethal) toward protecting Israel’s sovereignty. The same is true for rocket or kite attacks originating in the Gaza Strip. But, if the recent examples provided

¹⁸³ Ehud Eilam, “Should Israel seize the Gaza Strip?” Israel obtained control of the Gaza Strip after the Six Day war in 1967. After the Camp David Accords peace agreement with Egypt in 1978, Israel relinquished control of the Gaza Strip to the regime which would later become the Palestinian Authority.

¹⁸⁴ Micah Halpern, “No Simple Solution for Gaza,” *The Jerusalem Post*, April 2, 2019, accessed April 4, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/No-simple-solution-for-Gaza-585561>.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

serve as a guide, the IDF responds proportionally, precisely, and logically. To that end, Halpern further states: “Israel acted maturely and with restraint. Kudos to Israel”¹⁸⁶

Looking forward, former Israeli Air Force General, Amos Yadlin, provides astute recommendations for actions Israel and the IDF should take in response to Hamas. First, Israel “must continually stress the fact that it is the legitimate party, and it is defending a recognized international border . . . after withdrawing fully from every centimeter of the Gaza Strip and dismantling all its settlements there.”¹⁸⁷ Next, Israel needs to provide clarification to the international community toward the proportionality of its use of lethal action against the protestors. The IDF assumes unacceptable risk by not doing what it must to stop Hamas from breaching its borders and preventing terror. In terms of regional diplomacy, it must maintain open and clear communication with its Arab partners so as to countermand the propaganda that is spread by supporters of Hamas in Arabic media. Lastly, Israel and the IDF must come to grips with the realization that Hamas is continually adapting to Israel’s responses. So, it must follow suit. This way, Israel avoids fighting “last week’s war” so that it is actively anticipating Hamas’ next move.¹⁸⁸

Thus, discourse within Israel is complex yet the responses to Hamas have adapted to meet its persistent and continual violent challenges to Israeli sovereignty and international proportionality standards from March 2018 to April 2019.¹⁸⁹ The IDF has adjusted its response to the ever-evolving cognitive-political maneuvering conducted by Hamas over the previous year. Instead of an overreliance on physical strength it has pivoted to proportionate, precise lethality and nonlethal actions which negate attempts at asymmetry such as using giant fans. Proportionality is key toward maintaining an upper hand as a sovereign state whose international

¹⁸⁶ Micah Halpern, “No Simple Solution for Gaza.”

¹⁸⁷ Yadlin, “A Sense of Victory by both Hamas and Israel.”

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Cohen, “Proportionality in Modern Asymmetrical Wars.”

legitimacy is constantly challenged.¹⁹⁰ With an understanding that sympathy in the international community remains with Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, Israel has taken a more measured approach. This has been done to force protestors to take a harder look at the Hamas government. As an editorial points out in the left-of-center news source *Haaretz*:

Even if Hamas is in command of the demonstrations along the border fence, it cannot force people to risk their lives. Some of the protestors near the fence have also participated in the socioeconomic protests that have erupted in Gaza . . . The Hamas regime interpreted the demonstrations as being directed at the regime itself, and therefore moved to quickly suppress them.¹⁹¹

What this demonstrates is that restrained Israeli responses to recent action against it seem to be working in the sense that Palestinians are now protesting against the cause of their economic strife in the Gaza Strip. Although they are suppressed, Palestinians are holding Hamas responsible for Gazan conditions.

Understanding Asymmetric Symbiosis

The research has shown that the discourse concerning Israeli security against Hamas' operations exploiting asymmetry is complex on both sides. Since the scope of Israeli thought has focused particularly on how border residents and security experts view Palestinian action during the return marches, apathetic sentiments have become more apparent. Despite such apathy by its citizens, the IDF has continued to adapt and take a more measured approach to the violence that threatens Israeli sovereignty on its border. Understanding that each lethal response provided by the IDF to Hamas' aggression is open for critique at the international level, the IDF now relies more on proportion and precision instead of overwhelming retaliatory strikes.¹⁹² Israel is aiming to maintain its legitimacy as a state that is protecting its sovereignty and internationally

¹⁹⁰ Gregory Reichberg, Endre Begby, and Henrik Syse, *The Ethics of War: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2013), 242.

¹⁹¹ Haaretz, "Risk of a Gaza Conflagration: We Must Seek Fundamental Change in the Policy of Blockading Gaza and Severing It from the World," *Haaretz*, March 29, 2019, accessed April 9, 2019, <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/editorial/risk-of-a-gaza-conflagration-1.7066210>.

¹⁹² For a more in-depth discussion on proportionality with regard to asymmetric conflict, see Cohen, "Proportionality in Modern Asymmetrical Wars."

recognized borders. Given the adjustment to how the IDF responds, Hamas now has less of a narrative to shape international messaging. In order to avoid fighting “last week’s war” the IDF’s ability to maintain adaptability is critical toward outsmarting Hamas. Adhering to the principles of proportionality implies a deliberate Israeli attempt to redirect the sociopolitical pressure of poor, hungry, and beleaguered Palestinians in Gaza toward Hamas’ failure to govern responsibly.

Hamas is a failed government and Islamist organization whose own people are exploited, beaten, and oppressed by its security apparatuses in order to hold on to power in the Gaza Strip.¹⁹³ Such failings as a governing body has perpetuated internal strife amongst its people. Not only has Palestinian anxiety for the poor conditions in Gaza resulted in violence against Israel, but protests against the Hamas government have also increased since 2017. The “corruption, hedonism, and ostentatious” governance practiced by Hamas is not going unnoticed by its people.¹⁹⁴ Since it is unable to mitigate the impoverished conditions in the Gaza Strip, Hamas consistently reverts to that which it knows best—violence against Israel.

Hamas has aimed to achieve asymmetry at a cognitive-political level since it is unable to compete with Israel on a physical level. This asymmetry is carried into the differences between Hamas’ external messaging and its internal actions. In 2010 Hamas outwardly promoted reconciliation and rebuilding with Israel. Inwardly, however, it perpetuated the message that *jihad* would be conducted by any means necessary. Reverting to instruction in sacred law which permits a truce in order to regroup, Hamas secured a period of calm with Israel. During this time, Hamas reinvigorated its military and restocked its equipment while also consolidating its power in the Gaza Strip. This was done in order to covertly continue its *jihad* against Israel. Instances of rocket attacks against Israel during the *tahdiah* were blamed on Israel itself as an excuse for the IDF to conduct security operations in the Gaza Strip. It was a measure of deception by Hamas to

¹⁹³ Middle East Media Research Institute, “Hamas Members, Supporters Criticize Its Suppression of Economic and Social Protests In Gaza.”

¹⁹⁴ C. Jacobs, “Hamas’s Gaza – Four Years Later; Chapter 3: Hamas’s Administration of Gaza.”

manipulate the rocket attack message so as to propagate a “victimhood” narrative to the international community. As shown, peaceful pretenses were stricken as Hamas’ pattern of violent action against Israel continued throughout the period of the *tahdiah*.

Since then the pattern has been evident: in its latest asymmetric strategy, Hamas maintains pressure on the border with Israel while also launching rocket and mortar attacks in order to gain international attention and demand concessions from Israel. The strategy itself has relevance in its target – Israel’s moral ethos. Hamas is acting out of the culmination of desperate conditions in the Gaza Strip, for which it blames Israel. Therefore, it organized and conducted the Great Return March which has continued since March 2018. Calling forth themes similar to what was broadcast during the *tahdiah*, the activists who organized the marches claimed that they were peaceful and non-violent. Hamas, however, stated that it was at the “heart” of the movement. Further effecting its cognitive-political strategy in an asymmetric way at the border fence, Hamas sought to undermine Israeli sovereignty and embarrass it in the international community by using protesting Gazans as a means to an end.¹⁹⁵ Violence conducted in the midst of nonviolent marches allowed Hamas to challenge the IDF in the hopes that it would respond disproportionately because the IDF has historically responded to violent attacks by Hamas with an overreliance of physical means. The IDF had previously responded out of frustration and anxiety for the safety of its people perpetuated by distrust Israeli leaders have for Hamas. However, Israel has become more aware of the deception strategy implemented by Hamas during the return marches, and the IDF has adapted.

Unfortunately, Palestinian conflict against Israel will continue. Hamas’ leadership refuses to negotiate peace with Israel since they believe that Jews have no right to live on Palestinian lands, and Israel has no right to exist as a state. Specifically in the Gaza Strip, Palestinian

¹⁹⁵ Middle East Media Research Institute, “Gaza Strip Initiative, in Collaboration with Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Supporters of Fatah's Muhammad Dahlan: Masses Will Throng to Border with Israel to Demand Right of Return.”

“national identity” has been defined by confrontation with Israel as a state and Zionism as a movement.¹⁹⁶ As such, Islamists like Hamas continue to rely on Islamic sacred law to shape their asymmetric strategic *jihad* against Israel which is aimed at Israelis’ moral core.

For Israel, discourse continues to be intricate concerning its statehood, sovereignty, and security given the nature of mixed opinions in a democratic government. Israel was “established to respond to Jews’ need for self-determination.”¹⁹⁷ Yet, since its establishment one thing remains clear: Israel’s political adherence to Zionism toward combating existential threats has reversed its ancient, philosophical abhorrence to war. The priority of the Israeli people and of the state has become security given the perpetual state of conflict it has had to endure.

By comparing Israeli, Palestinian, and Islamist values this monograph identified what is important to each. Additionally it has examined what each one says and does in response to the other in the recent confrontation in the Gaza Strip. The most common element arising from the research is that values have shaped both Israelis and Palestinians. The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians has not been a “blood feud” lasting for centuries.¹⁹⁸ It is not over who “owns” the land either. Rather, it is about what the land “means.” For Israeli Jews, the notion of “redemption through suffering” reminds them that the establishment of the state of Israel is a result of millennia of dispersion and persecution. It is a home that has existed since the Old Testament. For Palestinian Muslims, the notion of “existing is resisting” provides a sociopolitical basis for them to maintain the struggle against the Zionists who occupy their land, and toward Palestinians’ eventual return home.¹⁹⁹ There is a land that is an irrevocable inheritance for which Islam has granted them. But, to Islamists organizations like Hamas, it means a land that has been

¹⁹⁶ Mishal and Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence*, 13.

¹⁹⁷ Gavison, “The National Rights of Jews.”

¹⁹⁸ Harms with Ferry, *The Palestine-Israel Conflict*, 21.

¹⁹⁹ Frantzman, “The ‘Existing is Resisting’ Gaza Protest Is Working-Analysis.”

invaded and illegally occupied. Thus, justice is demanded through violent *jihad* as prescribed by Islamic sacred law.

The research has shown that asymmetric warfare is grounded in a recognition that asymmetric military confrontation is essentially moral. Hamas has continually made a conscientious decision to design military strategies toward exploiting Israeli morals through Islamist military action. Israel and Hamas' relationship of parallel maneuvering in an interactive, asymmetric learning contest has become symbiotic in nature. Therefore, the way in which Israel and Hamas have acted and responded to each other is "asymbiosis." The end result has become perpetual focus on security for Israel and constant need to exploit values via asymmetry for Hamas. Ultimately, the evidence has illustrated that precision and proportion are the most effective responses to values exploitation in asymmetric conflict.

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