An Examination of Hamas and Why Terrorism has Emerged
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ABSTRACT

While the attacks of 9/11 were shocking for their audacity and effectiveness, they should not have surprised anyone. This was not the first incident as the United States has been the victims of countless bombings of U.S. embassies and planes, kidnappings, and shootings of American citizens. A large scale attack on American soil had been widely predicted by experts. With terrorism defined and accepted by many scholars it is not a new phenomenon. I will discuss one of the leading terrorist organizations in the world today, Hamas. This essay will explore Hamas, but mainly examine who they are and their origins, political motivations, tactics they use to realize their political objectives, and most importantly how this group relates to major debates for why terrorism and terrorist groups emerge.

Conflict and violence has existed since the beginning of history, whether it was between nations and states to even smaller scale conflicts between tribes. As time progresses and the world develops, the concept of conflict seems to evolve with it. While the attacks of 9/11 were shocking in their audacity and effectiveness, they should have surprised no one. This was not the first incident and certainly not the last of attacks, as bombings of U.S. embassies, hijackings of planes, kidnappings of innocent people, and assassinations of American citizens have been the norm. Terrorism is a phenomenon that is becoming more pervasive. It affects the manner in which governments conduct their foreign policy, the way people travel, and the manner in which people live their daily lives. Terrorism causes alterations in the role and structure of every aspect of government, security forces, travel, and business. But what is terrorism? According to Cindy Combs, author of Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century, terrorism is defined as an act composed of four elements. She states, "It is an act of violence, has a political motive or goal, perpetrated against innocent persons, and it is staged to be played before an audience whose reaction of fear and terror is the desired result" (Combs, 19). With terrorism defined and accepted by many scholars and experts as a new problem that will or has affected people world wide, I will discuss one of the leading terrorist organizations, Hamas. This essay will examine who they are and their origins, their political motivations, tactics they use to realize their political objectives, and most importantly, how this group relates to major debates for why terrorism and terrorist groups emerge.

Operating mainly in the Middle East region of Palestine is the terrorist organization commonly known as Hamas. Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement, was the creation of the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, which advocated the removal of foreign domination and influence in Islamic countries (Abu-Arm, 10). The Muslim Brotherhood is one of the most influential movements in the Islamic world with branches from all over the world. The goal of the Brotherhood is to recoup the Islamic manifest that once belonged to them. It advocates the expulsion of western forces, eradication of poverty, corruption, and political freedom by the laws of Islam. Hamas was created in 1987 by Sheikh Yassin at the beginning of the first Intifada. There were several Intifadas, but the first Intifada was a series of violent events between Palestinians and Israelis between 1987 and 1990 against Israeli military occupation in the occupied territories (Rubin, 175). Yassin, the Hamas ideologue and founder, who was then a preacher of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Gaza, saw an ideological dilemma emerging

with the Muslim Brotherhood. The dilemma that was arising questioned this participation in the Intifada. The Muslim Brotherhood could not actively participate in the first Intifada because their positions on the use of force were something that the Muslim Brotherhood did not support, so if they did "fight" in the Intifada, they would be contradicting their ideology. So clearly, if the Muslim Brotherhood Movement would decide to get involved by military force in the Intifada it would go against the ideological goals of their movement. The Muslim Brotherhood was angry with the treatment of the Palestinian people at the hands of Israeli forces. They were being mistreated, alienated, humiliated, and forced out of their homes. Zaki Chehab, author of the book Inside Hamas: The Untold Story of the Militant Islamic Movement, discusses this mistreatment of Palestinians. He states that, "many of them were forced to flee to Israel, where they are housed in specialty built villages following Israel's evacuation of Gaza" (Chehab, 69). The extent of the treatment and housing of Palestinians in Israel is unknown, but one can imagine that it was not good. Yassin, with his associates, had to find another way to join the Intifada without compromising the future of the movement they had built with the Muslim Brotherhood.

Yassin decided that the way to join and fight in the Intifada was to create a separate organization without any ties to the Muslim Brotherhood. Hamas, a Sunni Muslim movement, was created as that military response to join the fight in the first Intifada. Yassin wanted to create a separate organization in which the Muslim Brotherhood could disclaim and escape Israeli retribution if the Intifada failed, but could also benefit by claiming the organizations as a branch of its own movement, if it was a success (Barsky, 3). Yassin saw this as an opportunity to create an organization known as Hamas, which means "zeal" in Arabic, to expel all Israeli forces from Palestine and to eventually create a Muslim state with Islamic values throughout society.

The Hamas movement began as a way to get out of a dilemma within the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood. As a result of this difference Hamas was formed as the military wing of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood. Hamas seeks to build a society based on loyalty to Allah. Hamas' goals and strategies are stated in the thirty-six article charter issued in August 1988, which contains the philosophy of the movement, positions on central issues in Palestine, as well as other Islamic movements (Abu-Amr, 12). The main goal of the Hamas movement is stated in article six of their charter that reads, "The Islamic Resistance Movement is a distinct Palestinian movement which owes all its loyalty to Allah, derives from Islam its way of life and strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine" (Rubin, 54). Hamas is opposed to the existence of Israel in Palestinian lands. According to article eleven of their charter, the territory of Israel as well as the rest of the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip are an indisputable Islamic "waqf," which means that the land of Palestine is an Islamic trust that can never be surrendered to non-Muslims (Rubin, 54). Hamas calls for an eventual creation of an Islamic country within Israel. Hamas believes that the only way of achieving this is to eliminate by any means the existence of Israel by any means. Hamas also states in their charter that it is a religious duty for all Muslims to fight against the struggle against Israel (Rubin, 55). According to articles thirteen and fifteen, "There is no solution to the Palestinian problem except by *jihad*. The initiatives, proposals, and international conferences are but a waste of time...When an enemy occupies some of the Muslims lands, *jihad* becomes obligatory on every Muslim" (Rubin, 55-56). With all goals and ideological philosophies stated in their charter they believe that there is no peaceful solution.

The elements and tactics that Hamas has put in place to achieve their political objectives are numerous and wide ranging. Hamas has carried out acts of violence against Israeli civilians and soldiers, including suicide bombings, car bombings, kidnappings, drive-by-shootings, and stabbing attacks (Barsky, 10). However, suicide attacks seem to be the most popular form of violent action that Hamas uses, but by no means the only way of fighting against the Israelis.

According to Hamas, as mentioned before, the only solution to eventually creating an Islamic state within Israel is *jihad.* Hamas uses suicide attacks because they see them as most effective in fighting Israel. From September 2000 to early 2004, Hamas carried out 425 terrorist attacks of various kinds against Israel and, as a result, killed 377 Israeli civilians and soldiers and wounded 2,076. Thus far, the weapons that Hamas has most commonly used include hand grenades, rifles, belts packed with explosives, and rockets (Barsky, 10). Yehudit Barsky, the Director of the American Jewish Committee's Division on Middle East and International Terrorism, states in his article "Hamas- the Islamic Resistance Movement of Palestine," that a speaker of Hamas claimed,

> "The world has to understand such operations are not suicide bombings. They are martyrdom operations. These are the most honorable and precious of sacrifices for achieving national and religious goals to end Palestinian suffering…I think that they are very effective in convincing the Israelis" (Barsky, 8).

With attitudes like these that are used to help indoctrinate most of their suicide bombers, it is no surprise that they believe this a very effective manner of achieving results. Effectiveness and cheapness of using such tactics and methods make members of Hamas believe that this is the optimal way of fighting a *jihad.* The cost of such an attack is approximately \$142 and the consequences that it causes cannot be measured in dollars (Barsky, 9). Hamas continues to use violence as a means to expel Israeli forces and hopefully one day establish an Islamic country within Israel.

A prime example of the audacious and violent acts that Hamas has taken responsibility for is the suicide bombing of Tel-Aviv at the Dolphin Disco. On June 1, 2001, twenty-one people were killed and 120 were wounded when a suicide bomber blew himself up outside a disco (Chehab, 207). The suicide bomber was socializing with a group of teenagers, who were standing in line to enter the disco when he detonated the explosives strapped to his body. The explosive charge contained metal objects including screws and balls that were designed to increase the extent of injuries (Chehab, 207). Hamas declared responsibility for the attack and justified them as being the only way to get their point across.

There are countless theories to explain why terrorism and terrorist groups have emerged. All of the theories that have been proposed make excellent claims, but can one really say that terrorism has emerged because of one factor? Could it be a combination of factors? A further examination of terrorist groups like Hamas will be useful in analyzing the roots of terrorism. Comparing the roots of Hamas to already proposed theories will provide one with a point of reference as to what caused this group to emerge as a terrorist organization. Further studies will be necessary, but the study of Hamas and what inspired them to turn to terrorism will be a stepping stone for understanding the reasons behind terrorism and terrorist groups' emergence.

The very notion of defining the roots of terrorism is obscure. There are a vast number of theories that each portrays different roots of terrorism, ranging from the cultural to the political. Even though the roots of terrorism cannot fully be traced to one factor, one thing is certain, that all the blame is usually directed towards Muslims. Is it fair to say that all Muslims rise to terrorism? What is the difference between a "good" Muslim and a "bad" Muslim? Author and political scientist Mahmood Mamdani in his book, Good Muslim, Bad Muslim, dispels the idea of a "good" and "bad" Muslim because he believes that these judgments refer to political rather than cultural or religious identities. He claims that the policies of the West, especially those of the United States, are responsible for the current rise of terrorism. Mamdani states that one must look at contemporary times to see contemporary problems. Through his book, Mamdani argues that political Islam emerged as a result of the modern encounter with Western power, and that the

terrorist movement is a more recent phenomenon that followed America's embrace of proxy war during the Cold War.

Mamdani argues that the policies produced during the Cold War from the West are to blame for the current rise in terrorism. He claims that the West, especially the United States has welcomed terrorism to fight off its proxy wars after its defeat in Vietnam. After the defeat in Vietnam, the U.S. had to learn and adopt new methods of fighting communism and nationalism without being directly involved. The U.S. decided that the best way to approach this was to engage in "proxy wars" during the Cold War. The U.S. knew that it could not send its own troops to fight this war, but what they did know was that they could harness support from diverse militant nationalist regimes to fight against the Soviets. This is exactly what the U.S. did. America was determined to triumph in this ideological battle by any means necessary. The U.S. knew that it could not engage in another Vietnam War, so it was determined to use covert operations and assistance from diplomatic, military, and economic aid to fight against the Soviets. Mamdani argues that these covert operations in addition to military aid, economic aid, diplomatic support, and training of individuals to fight communism is where the tactics of terrorism were learned.

The United States at the time adopted terror as a strategy to fight the Cold War. Mamdani now argues that America and the Cold War are to blame for the current rise in terrorism. Mamdani claims that the roots of terror can be traced to the political agenda of the United States at the time of the Cold War. He asserts that, "The United States came to see the acceptance of terror as the means to an international public good. It did this in two ways: by privatizing and by internationalizing the main operations in the war" (118).
The sponsorship of terrorist movements by the US as a way of dealing with the perceived threat of Soviet influence in those regions is a cause of the rise of terrorism. The tactics of terrorism were learned by Muslims from the US, who trained them in the skills and knowledge to use terrorist tactics. Terrorism is now being used against the United States and other Western powers in a quest to fulfill their political objectives of establishing Islamic countries. Mamdani argues that the roots and know-how of terrorism can be traced to the proxy wars that the West, especially the United States, embraced to fight communism. A proxy war is where one power, in this case the United States uses a third party to supplement the direct fighting on their behalf. To better explain himself, Mamdani provides an illustration of the strategies the U.S. applied in the proxy war in Afghanistan to better analyze the learned tactics of terrorism.

The setting was simple. The U.S. wanted to unite as many Muslims as possible from all over the world to fight in a holy war against the Soviet Union, on the soil of Afghanistan. The shift in U.S. foreign policy from containment to rollback marked a different approach of strategies than those it was accustomed to. The question now being debated is: what strategies and tactics did the U.S. employ to fight the proxy war in Afghanistan? Mamdani states that "There was a sustained cooperation between the CIA and Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI)...Both intelligence agencies came to share a dual objective: militarily, to provide maximum firepower to the mujahideen and, politically, to recruit the most radically anti-Communist Islamists to counter Soviet forces" (126). These two agencies were devoted to helping the mujahideen succeed by any means necessary. Mamdani claims that the CIA would acquire weapons and specialist from guerrillas, along with intelligence and surveillance on Afghanistan and transfer that information to the ISI. The ISI was then responsible for the transportation of weapons to the mujahideen, along with the training and coordination of Afghan fighters (126). Apart from funneling weapons and intelligence, the U.S. government would covertly funnel monetary aid to these militant regimes to coordinate their efforts even more. Mamdani claims that the real damage of the CIA was not the arms and money provided, but "the privatization of information about how to produce and spread violence—the formation of private militias—capable of creating terror" (138). The

extensive training in U.S. camps gave Afghan fighters the capabilities of infiltrating and extracting their enemies, as well as an assortment of deadly skills. They were also provided with the knowledge to use sophisticated weapons.

Aside from military and monetary aid that the U.S. government provided nothing could have been done without the recruitment of radical anti-Communist Islamists. The CIA was crucial in the organization of this recruitment. Mamdani asserts, "The CIA looked for volunteers from Muslim populations all over the globe...A network of recruitment centers was set-up, linking key points in the Arab world—Egypt and Saudi Arabia—with Pakistan" (131). The CIA used key leaders of the Muslims worlds to try and appeal to Muslims to join the jihad. They enlisted the help of Sheikh Azzam, a Palestinian theologian who was critical to the recruitment process. He toured all over the United States and Middle East in efforts to try and recruit as many radical Islamists as possible. His central message was simple; "participation in the jihad is not just a political obligation but a religious duty" (127). Azzam used the power of religion and faith to let Muslims know that it was their religious duty to fight against a superpower that was trying to oppress them. His formula for success was to get Muslims to understand that it was a fight of "good" versus "evil" and that invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviets was a threat to not only Afghanistan, but to Muslims all over. The recruitment of radical anti-communist Islamists, as well as the monetary and military aid provided by the United States proved to be a successful combination in defeating the Soviets.

One can see that the tactics and knowledge of terrorism were learned as a result of the United States' ambition to fight the Cold War by proxy. Everything from recruiting to the funneling of weapons and money were learned. Mamdani writes, "The hope was that a combination of terrorism and political organization would deliver a political victory" (90). U.S. hopes of keeping a country from crossing over their ideological political lines were crucial at the time as the Cold War was in full force. The Reagan administration showed America's embrace of the ideological politics of "good" and "evil" as it backed terrorist movements to get the desired end result. According to Mamdani "The point of harnessing terror as a part of an electoral campaign was to turn it into a form of blackmail that could be switched off and on at will" (117). With sponsoring terrorist movements it allowed the United States to win the political objective that they had been seeking all along. Mamdani claims that the roots of terror can be traced to the political agenda of the United States at the time of the Cold War.

John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, authors of The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy discuss that Israel was a strategic asset during the Cold War in that it served as America's proxy. U.S. backing of Israel was not only an asset against Soviet penetration, but also a cornerstone of regional order in the Middle East (Mearsheimer and Walt, 50). Israel was used as a partner with the United States in a key movement that practiced a blending of terrorism and politics. America's identification with Israel has aroused widespread Arab hostility toward the United States and Israel. With the backing of the sole superpower in the world, Israel is in complete dominance over a region that has suffered from instability. According to Mearsheimer and Walt "Israel receives about $3 billion in direct assistance each year, roughly one-fifth of the foreign aid budget, and worth about $500 a year for every Israeli" (2). In addition, Israel is the only recipient that does not have to account for how the aid is spent, which makes it hard to prevent the money from being used for purposes the United States opposes. The policies being produced by the Israeli government, especially over the Occupied Territories, has inspired terrorism. From the continued aid to the know-how of terrorism already learned from the United States, Israel has been creating policies that have aroused major hostility in the Arab world. Mearsheimer and Walt state that, "U.S. support of Israeli policy has fueled terrorism" (3). They claim that the attacks of 9/11 were related to U.S. support of Israel. Both authors argue that one of the factors that led bin

Laden and al-Qaeda to attack the United States was Israel's actions against the Palestinian people in the occupied territories and Washington's full support of Israel (3). The U.S. backing of Israel's policies instills terrorism in part because of Israel's abusive policies toward Palestinians.

The situation in the occupied territories is getting worse as time goes on. A whole generation of people has now been brought up under Israeli occupation. According to authors Cohn-Sherbok and El-Alami they have been brought up by a "life governed by barbed wire and an armed occupying force, military orders, restrictions of movement, house demolitions, land confiscations, detention, deportation, and other methods of systematic degradation and demoralization aimed at wiping out Palestinian identity and rights." (161). Can this humiliation inspire terrorism? Jessica Stern, author of Terror in the Name of God, Why Religious Militants Kill, discusses how the issue of humiliation can inspire terrorism. In her book, she explores how humiliation of the Palestinian people by Israeli forces has given rise to desperation and uncontrollable rage. People from Palestine are forced to live in situations that are unacceptable. Their lack of public services as well as other essential needs is due to Israeli forces oppressing them. Palestinians feel that they are being humiliated by Israelis to live in such a state of desperation. Furthermore, Mearsheimer and Walt state that, "Palestinian terrorism is not random violence directed against Israel or "the West"; it is largely a response to Israel's prolonged campaign to colonize the West Bank and Gaza Strip" (3). This illustrates how organizations like Hamas justify their actions and their continued struggle to eliminate the presence of Israel.

Determined to establish Islamic rule in Palestine, the major reasons for the creation of Hamas were territorial issues and humiliation by Israeli forces. Hamas wants to expel Israeli forces out of the occupied territories because of Israel's abusive policies toward Palestinians and because of their campaigns to control the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Being so closely allied with the United States also makes it a bigger problem for Israel to control violence and conflict. Palestinians and Arabs abroad believe that the impurities and immoralities of the West are being transmitted towards Muslims. Drugs, sex, dancing, and alcohol, to name a few, are some of the impurities that Muslims believe Israelis are trying to impose on them. With close association to the U.S., the Arab world claims that immoral ways of living will be eventually transmitted to them. Palestinians and other strict Muslims feel that the only way of living is by the strict mainstream Islamic way of life (Stern, 45-47). Hamas justifies their actions as fighting a religious war. They believe that they are fighting a *jihad.* Muslim leaders are quick to harness this by justifying the actions being taken by them as sanctioned by Allah. One suicide bomber says, "Life is precious, which is why we have no choice but to fight. Freedom is not handed as a gift" (221). They claim they cannot negotiate against a force that is attacking them, their values, and traditions. Mamdani claims that Hamas believes they are fighting a battle against "evil" in which they have an obligation to win. Hamas feels that the values of Muslims, especially Palestinians are being undermined and are under attack by Israelis. The power of religion and faith is being used to let Muslims know that it is their religious duty to fight against a power that is trying to oppress them and undermine their way of life.

One of the reasons that I chose Hamas was that it is one of the few groups that has shifted from a violent terrorist group to a more political organization.This recently has been made evident recently as Hamas won a majority of seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council (Barsky, 2). What spurred this change? The public image of Hamas throughout the world may be that of a terrorist organization, but to the people of Palestine they are seen as good grace. Hamas is the people's choice. Hamas is responsible for providing its citizens with essential public services, schools, hospitals, basic infrastructure, and mosques that others have not provided. The standard of living of Palestinians has not improved drastically; however, the benefits provided by Hamas have raised the standard of living from before. Even though Hamas has not been able to establish

a Palestinian state within Israel as yet, they have accomplished a great deal of humanitarian help to its people. What the future of Hamas has in store as a result of this is unknown, but one thing that is certain is that it has more influential power in the occupied territories to make drastic changes.

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