



Re-Analyzing the Links Between Terrorism and Poverty: The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict

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Re-Analyzing the Links Between Terrorism and Poverty: The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the exclusion and persecution of Palestinians, as well as poverty among the Palestinian people, to determine if those factors have become secondary to politics, revenge, and an often-violent supreme ideology among those who engage in terrorism in Palestine. I examined previous scholarly research on this topic and investigated themes of persecution against Palestinians. I conducted a grounded theory analysis on themes that motivate actions taken by low-ranking versus high-ranking members of terrorist groups and organizations. I also conducted a statistical analysis of possible relationships between poverty and terrorism using GDP, HDI, unemployment measurements, and persecution as measured by standards of political freedom and civil liberty.

The thesis hypothesizes that there is a connection between persecution and exclusion, and terrorist attacks. The results of the analyses showed: (1) poverty, persecution, and exclusion are not primary factors inducing terrorism, and (2) there is no direct connection between terrorist attacks and persecution and exclusion, nor is there a direct connection between poverty and terrorist attacks.

The findings also indicated that a significant quest for power among high-ranking terrorists is a primary motivation. Lower-ranking members become mostly foot soldiers for terrorist groups; hopeless young people, driven by anger and desperation, become easy to recruit and eager to join such terrorist groups. An obsession with death and promises of Paradise made to them, as well as the terrorists' skewed version of Islam, motivate young people to commit suicide attacks and die as "martyrs." The ease with which suicide becomes an accepted means for committing violent attacks invites further research to better understand the motivations of terrorists of all ranks.

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Definition of Terms

Cultural Factors: Values, beliefs, traditions, language, and laws (or rules of behavior) that a group has in common that influences their daily life.¹

Fatah (formerly the Palestinian National Liberation Movement): A Palestinian social democratic party, and the largest faction of the multi-party Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which promotes direct, non-violent mass action.²

Freedom Fighter: One who resorts to violence in order to achieve victory against oppression (e.g., overthrowing a tyrannical government), but is never indiscriminate.³

Hamas: A Palestinian Sunni-Islamic fundamentalist militant organization which has been the de facto governing authority of the Gaza Strip since 2007. Recognized as a terror organization by the US and EU as well as several other countries and international organizations.⁴

Poverty: A socioeconomic state in which one lacks the means to meet basic personal needs, such as food, clothing and shelter. Also includes lack of access, lack of opportunities to learn and obtain better employment. Also defined as the state of living below an established poverty line, with income too low to support basic needs.⁵

¹ Encyclopedia of Public Health, definition of “Cultural Factors,” <https://www.encyclopedia.com/education/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/cultural-factors>.

² Encyclopedia Britannica, definition of “Fatah.” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Fatah>.

³ Voice of America, “Terrorist or Freedom Fighter: What Difference?” *VOA News*, 29 Oct 2009. <https://www.voanews.com/archive/terrorist-or-freedom-fighter-what-difference-2001-11-12>.

⁴ Encyclopedia Britannica, definition of “Hamas.” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hamas>.

⁵ Encyclopedia Britannica, definition of “Poverty,” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/poverty>.

Religious Persecution: The systematic mistreatment of an individual or group based on their religious affiliation, ranging from discrimination to outright violence.⁶

Supreme Values: Values that are absolutely true to believers, who prefer them to all else. Upholding such values may require acts of terror in which terrorists are willing to take the lives of others and/or give up their own lives to further the sought objectives. It is difficult to prevent terrorism that is based on supreme values.⁷

Terrorist: One who uses indiscriminate violence in pursuit of political, religious, ideological, or social objectives.⁸

⁶ Nazila Ghanea-Hercock, *The Challenge of Religious Discrimination at the Dawn of the New Millennium* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 2004), 92-93.

⁷ Peter Bernholz, "Supreme values as basis for terror," *European Journal of Political Economy*, (2004): 10. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/222789302_Supreme_values_as_the_basis_for_terror.

⁸ Gregor Bruce, "Definition of Terrorism – Social and Political Effects," Definition of Terrorism Social and Political Effects Comments," May 2013. <https://jmvh.org/article/definitionof-terrorism-social-and-political-effects/>.

Chapter I

Introduction

There is considerable scholarly debate on the origins of terrorism. While poverty is often described as a cause, the problem of poverty has little hope of being solved without first identifying other factors that contribute significantly. This thesis explores the problem of poverty and identifies possible and persistent causal factors. Further, a lack of understanding of these factors also contributes to terrorism in Palestine. There is a need to test potential factors in qualitative and quantitative ways in order to identify new connections.

Three potential factors are analyzed:

1. the exclusion and subsequent persecution of Palestinians, measured quantitatively by indices of political freedom and civil liberties;
2. politics, specifically of the far right in both Palestine and Israel; and
3. supreme ideology, with an analysis that is presented as a collection of data from interviews of terrorist leaders and fighters in Palestine.

I began with a literature review that identified scholarly research on causes of terrorism. I found that most scholars declare either poverty or supreme ideology to be root causes. In terms of poverty, economic hardships due to sanctions or lack of opportunities are cited as contributing to terrorism. Scholars who argued for supreme ideology paint a different picture, describing terrorists as being on a quest for power, with poverty as merely a symptom of political instability. Scholars such as Okafor and

Piessé⁹ bring both together by arguing that poverty alone leads to apathy over the long term; if structural problems are added, it leads to terrorism. This supports my hypothesis that there are multiple factors at play.

Based on my review of the literature on the causes of terrorism, as well as specific causes of terrorism in Palestine, I hypothesize that both exclusion and subsequent persecution of Palestinians, as well as poverty, have become secondary to politics, revenge, and supreme ideology among those who engage in terrorism in Palestine. I further hypothesize that there has been an increase in exclusion and persecution due to Israeli government policies, populist political style, and a media that promotes them both.

In Chapter Four, I explore extremist ideologies on both the Palestinian and Israeli sides as a means of understanding motivations, goals, and how these ideologies grow and sustain themselves. Through my investigation, I found similarities on both sides, such as government support, an appeal to youth, an “all or nothing” approach, and a group structure similar to liberation movements that delineate end goals and a common enemy. I explore how propaganda comes into play not just from the terror groups themselves but from each side’s respective governments which, through their divisive rhetoric and religious supremacy contribute to promoting and sustaining extremist ideologies.

Chapters Five and Six discuss conditions that may be potential motivators of terrorist attacks. Chronically high unemployment, especially among Palestinian youth, and the correlation between higher education and terrorism, paint a different picture than is shown in the media, which often depict a life of poverty and desperation as being motivations for terrorism. Persecution of Palestinians, including restriction of movement

⁹ Godwin Okafor, and Jenifer Piessé, “Empirical Investigation into the Determinants of Terrorism: Evidence From Fragile States,” *Defense and Peace Economics* 29, no. 6 (2018): 697-711.

and confiscation of land, are discussed, as well as how the Israeli media acts as a propaganda tool, promoting as fact that Palestinians are dangerous or otherwise undesirable by framing them as such in the media. Creating and promoting this sense of “other” and exclusion manifests itself as discrimination, hatred, and outright physical violence against Palestinians.

To determine what motivates terrorists to carry out attacks, I conducted interviews with Palestinians terrorists, both low and high ranking, followed by a grounded theory analysis of the interviews. The resulting patterns are presented in Chapter Seven. I found that the motivations cited by terrorists are a desire for justice and the liberation of Palestine, fighting against the West, a pessimistic outlook on life, revenge, persecution, martyrdom, an inability to leave, and the destruction of Israel.

When analyzed by member rank, both low-ranking and high-ranking members of terrorist organizations cite justice and the liberation of Palestine as their main motives. The least popular motive is persecution, which refutes my original hypothesis. In fact, persecution is not mentioned at all by high-ranking members in any of the interviews.

Instead, it is apparent that high-ranking members of terrorist groups are motivated by a desire to acquire and retain power rather than by any sense of persecution or mistreatment. Lower-ranking members, mainly teenagers and young adults (largely male) constitute the means for carrying out attacks. The situation of these young men—often educated but with no opportunities—leads to hopelessness which in turn makes them a prime target for recruitment by terror groups.

After undertaking a correlational analysis between GDP, unemployment, and HDI¹⁰ in Palestine, I found that GDP is more strongly associated with HDI than it is with unemployment rate. When the quantitative variables measuring persecution are analyzed with GDP, there are no significant changes in GDP and political freedom, which have a strong positive relationship with each other, especially as it relates to civil liberties. There is a moderately positive correlation between unemployment and civil liberties, and a strong positive correlation between HDI and civil liberties.

I also analyzed the dependency ratio against the above variables. The factors that have a strong correlation are HDI, population, and GDP, which should be managed to ensure that the ratio is reduced and there is less strain on the working population to the extent that they engage in terrorist activities. When GDP per capita is compared to unemployment and HDI, it has a moderately positive relationship with unemployment and a weak positive relationship with HDI. The opposite relationship occurs when HDI and unemployment are correlated with GDP.

Another analysis compared linear models of GDP and GDP per capita in Palestine to major events such as both intifadas. Prior to the First Intifada, there was no significant change in GDP. In 1993, the signing of the Oslo Accords helped establish a Palestinian state with administrative institutions, which contributed to a steady increase in GDP throughout the rest of the 1990s. Prior to the Second Intifada, however, a baffling trend of increasing GDP occurred, which became even clearer with the lack of increase in GDP per capita which represents wages adjusted for inflation.

¹⁰ Human Development Index: a statistical tool used to measure a country's social and economic dimensions.

My research findings as presented in this thesis indicate that statistically there is no clear association between measures of persecution and terrorism. Indicators of poverty (i.e., GDP, GDP per capita, unemployment, and HDI) did show an upward trend as terrorist attacks increased, with a subsequent decrease in these values when attacks declined. Political freedom and civil liberties did not show a noticeable association with instances of terrorist attacks. My analyses of the interviews and terror groups, and their motives (the latter covering both Palestinian and Israeli terror groups), indicate that attaining power is a motivating factor.

Chapter II

Literature Review: What Causes Terrorism?

The face of terrorism has been changing for many years, as has the research into its causes. Specifically, scholars continue to debate what causes increases in radicalization and terrorism, especially in the Middle East. Many have examined poverty as a cause. Although they generally understand that poverty plays a role in fueling terrorism, they disagree on its exact nature. In the sections below, I discuss my review findings.

Poverty

The belief that poverty is a main cause of terrorism is a surface-level conclusion that sees terrorism as a last-resort option for those who have nothing to lose. It considers economic factors as the main motivator of individuals who commit acts of terrorism. For example, Freytag¹¹ said that “socio-economic conditions – in contrast to what the empirical mainstream suggests – may indeed matter to the emergence of terrorism by influencing individual incentive structures.” He saw terrorists as rational actors whose behavior is determined by costs, benefits, and opportunity costs. Within this framework, he argued that poverty influences the cost-benefit considerations. For example, there are low-material rewards for nonviolence.

¹¹ Andreas Freytag, et al., “The Origins of Terrorism: Cross-country Estimates of Socio-economic Determinants of Terrorism,” *European Journal of Political Economy* 27, no. 1 (December 2011): S5-S16.

Choi and Luo¹² also supported the idea that poverty is a main cause of terrorism, arguing that poverty in countries affected by economic sanctions increases support for terrorism. These scholars found that sanctions in turn intensify economic hardships of the population and increase their grievances, making it more likely that they will engage in terrorism.

According to Sirgy, et al.,¹³ the jihadists' increased acceptance of terrorism occurs when they see their actions as a solution to problems like political instability, poverty recurring from one generation to another, and underemployment. The authors hypothesize that willingness to join terrorist groups results from economic ill-being. This aligns with the beliefs of numerous academics who argue that the global economic system alienates peripheral countries from improving economically, giving them little opportunity to develop, and leading to a rise in internal violence.

Political Motivations and Supreme Ideology

Scholars who assert that political motivations and supreme ideology are key contributors to terrorism put less emphasis on poverty, if at all. These scholars see those who commit terrorist acts as being on a quest for power, with poverty acting as only one factor justifying the larger picture which can include supreme values and the dehumanization of the "other" as well as political goals.

¹² Seung-Whan Choi and Shali Luo, "Economic Sanctions, Poverty, and International Terrorism: An Empirical Analysis," *International Interactions* 39, no. 2 (2013): 217-45.

¹³ M. Joseph Sirgy, Mohsen Joshanloo, and Richard J. Estes, "The Global Challenge of Jihadist Terrorism: A Quality-of-Life Model," *Social Indicators Research* 141, no. 1, (2019): 191-215.

Several scholars argued that poverty is a symptom that supports acts of terrorism which may be a result of political instability. Groves explained how extremist groups use poverty as a means of making poor individuals act on behalf of the masses.¹⁴ Bernholz describes how this method uses supreme values to motivate those whom they consider part of their accepted group, “us” versus those who are seen as unacceptable and thus the enemy, “them”.¹⁵ Therefore, although most of the terrorist leaders are not poor, poverty is constantly used as a factor that fuels and enhances their activities. Fortna also claims that poverty is used to support terrorist tactics. She also examines how most of the support terrorists receive is from marginalized groups that are made to believe they are alienated from government services. In this case, she found that terror attacks undertaken by rebel groups are not done to intimidate a population but rather to force the government to give in to their demands.¹⁶

The increase of globalization is seen as a factor in modern day that contributes to poverty and fuels extremism, according to Sirgy et al.¹⁷ It has been difficult for nations to sustain this pace, hence structural poverty occurs. The results are that predatory and praetorian political systems emerge, which focus on endemic social unrest and civil violence as Okafor and Piesse found.¹⁸ When poverty is sustained for a long period of

¹⁴ Adam Groves, “Discuss and Evaluate the Relationship between Poverty and Terrorism,” *E-International Relations* (2008).

¹⁵ Bernholz, “Supreme Values,” p. 10.

¹⁶ Virginia Page Fortna, “Do Terrorists Win? Rebels’ Use of Terrorism and Civil War Outcomes,” *International Organization* 69, no. 3, (2015): 519-556.

¹⁷ Sirgy, et al., “Global Challenge.”

¹⁸ Okafor and Piesse, “Empirical Investigation.”

time, it leads to apathy; add structural problems and to it leads to terrorism. According to Groves, a quarter of the terrorists in Kashmir said their reasons for joining the group were joblessness and poverty. Consequently, poverty and inequalities in economic status have become the grounds upon which political movements and terrorism emerge.¹⁹ Previous research did not consider the downsides of globalization as affecting the emergence of terrorism, mainly because globalization was not yet a worldwide phenomenon in the 1980s and 1990s; instead supreme ideology was the main focus, followed by poverty.

Geographic Factors and Country-Specific Differences

According to Abadie, geographic features also indicate countries that are prone to terrorism. Areas with difficult access, such as mountains, offer safe haven to terrorist groups, facilitating training, and the production and trafficking of drugs. The author also examined landlocked countries that are prone to conflict spillover from their neighbors as well its negative effect on trade, leading to low economic standing for countries that are not resource-rich.²⁰

Further, Abadie found that while lack of political rights is associated with high levels of terrorism, countries that are most authoritarian (political rights index of seven) had lower risk than those in the intermediate range of 4-6 on the index.²¹ Palestine is jointly ruled by Fatah and Hamas, a moderately authoritarian government structure, although it highly prone to terrorism—not because of the authoritarian nature of either

¹⁹ Groves, “Discuss and Evaluate,” 1.

²⁰ Alberto Abadie, “Poverty, Political Freedom, and the Roots of Terrorism,” *American Economic Review* 96, no. 2 (2006): 50-56.

²¹ Abadie, “Poverty,” 50-56.

group but because of pro-violence propaganda and the glorification of terrorist attacks at the state level.²²

Rapid population growth and low socioeconomic growth are also seen as contributors. Coccio argued that terrorism thrives in cultural zones that have high population growth rates, where individuals find it difficult to access the necessary services due to an increase in the number of people who are in need. This is coupled with low socio-economic development.²³ Therefore, even though poverty may not be the main reason why there is a rise in terrorism, it is a secondary factor that results from a number of other factors, all of which fuel terrorism.

The areas prone to terrorism in the Middle East register economic problems, especially because they rely on oil. The growing civil wars in the regions beginning in 2010 have thrown countries into poverty, with many ISIS fighters and those in other groups are sourced from these nations. A similar case applied to Africa in the 2010s and onward. Fighters are being recruited from this continent because it is associated with poor economic development.²⁴

²² Zena Tahhan, " Hamas and Fatah: How Are the Two Groups Different?," *Al Jazeera*, October 12, 2017, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/10/hamas-fatah-goal-approaches-171012064342008.html>.

²³ Mario Coccia, "The Relation Between Terrorism and High Population Growth," *Journal of Economics and Political Economy* 5, no. 1, (2018): 84-104.

²⁴ Simplice Asongu, Vanessa S. Tchamyou, Ndemaze Asongu, and Nina Tchamyou, "The Comparative African Economies of Inclusive Development and Military Expenditure in Fighting Terrorism," *Journal of African Development* 17 (2017): 77-91.

Chapter III

Defining Terrorism

In this thesis, I define a terrorist as one who uses indiscriminate violence in pursuit of political, religious, ideological, or social objectives.²⁵ Specifically in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, terrorism has been used to direct political violence against Israel from the Palestinian side (i.e., via Hamas), and state-sponsored and fringe-group violence to induce fear in a target population on the Israeli side (i.e., far right Israeli politicians and Hilltop Youth).

Terrorism is designed to create power where there is none, or consolidate power where there is little, according to Bernholz.²⁶ Extremists use issues like poverty to legitimize their actions.²⁷ Their justification comes from the belief that an entire country or group is responsible for the current state of living in a population, including a poor economic state, a state of persecution, or a state of discrimination. It is through these beliefs that terrorist groups recruit fighters and generate support from the public—even though in many instances these leaders are well off economically.²⁸

²⁵ Bruce, "Definition of Terrorism."

²⁶ Bernholz, "Supreme Values," 10.

²⁷ Choi and Luo, "Economic Sanctions," 217-45.

²⁸ Bernholz, "Supreme Values," 10.

Scholars continue to debate the difference(s) between a terrorist and a freedom fighter.²⁹ This is especially difficult in the case of a population's struggle against the state, as in Palestine against Israel, where there are many groups with different motives, all claiming to be "for the people."³⁰ Some define a terrorist as an individual who indiscriminately kills a target group or population that is labeled as the enemy, whether or not a particular individual in that group has openly fought against them. An example of this is a suicide bomber who detonates bombs attached to his body while on a bus full of civilians. On the other hand, a freedom fighter (classified as fighting against oppression from a group or state), does not kill indiscriminately but rather directs his/her violent uprising to a specific target, whether it is a government or the leader of a group.³¹

The issue today is using the term "terrorist" as a blanket definition for anyone who physically struggles against oppression, thus turning the word into a pejorative term used by oppressive states to label their opposition, which in turn dehumanizes them. This is used done by the Israeli government and media against Palestinians, which I will explore in a later section.

In Israel, the legal definition of a terrorist action is this:

An action driven by a political, religious, or ideological motive; carried out with the goal of instilling in the public fear and anxiety, or of forcing the Israeli government or another government from taking certain actions; or an actual act or real threat to inflict severe harm. Harm is defined as an impact on a person's body or liberty; public security or health; property, including religious sites, burial places, and religious paraphernalia; or

²⁹ Alan Greene, "Defining Terrorism: One Size Fits All?" *International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (2017): 411–440.

³⁰ Bruce, "Definition of Terrorism," 1.

³¹ Voice of America, "Terrorist or Freedom Fighter: What Difference?" *VOA News*, October 29, 2009. <https://www.voanews.com/archive/terrorist-or-freedom-fighter-what-difference-2001-11-12>.

infrastructure, public systems, or essential services, or the state economy or environment.³²

The problem with such a broad definition is that it allows any kind of anti-government act to be classified as terrorism, even acts of protest, which may in turn affect property, infrastructure, or the state economy. Additionally, those who defend themselves and their property from seizure, specifically in Israeli-occupied areas, would all be classified as terrorists under the part of the definition that covers actions that force the Israeli government to take certain actions. Such a definition not only paves the way for Israeli government persecution of Palestinian civilian protests, but also dilutes the real definition of terrorism, which is the real problem on both sides.

For its part, the Palestinian Authority (PA) has a weak definition of terrorism, as well as a lack of legal actions to enforce against terrorism. The U.S. State Department notes that laws specifically related to counterterrorism have never been passed. Instead, a combination of existing laws and government decrees against actions that “harm public security” have been issued over time. In 2007, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas issued a decree outlawing armed militias and military formations, but no legislation has been passed to fight terrorism.³³ This issue, combined with the political gridlock between the two ruling regimes—the PA in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza—has made any clear definition almost impossible, given that Hamas was founded on and continues to use terrorist tactics.

³² Jonathan Schanzer, “Terrorism,” *Israel Studies* 24, no. 2 (2019): 52-61.

³³ Schanzer, “Terrorism.”

Chapter IV

Hamas and Far Right Zionists: Extremism on Both Sides

Extremist ideologies have emerged on both the Palestinian and Israeli sides, manifesting as terrorist groups who engage in and encourage violence to achieve their goals. These groups often take an “all or nothing” approach, which makes it difficult for governments to control or try to work with them to achieve peace. This fact, and the continual and escalating tensions between Palestine and Israel, add to the challenge of peacefully resolving the half-century long conflict between these two nations. However, it also must be said that both states provide fuel to terror local and national propaganda, which only exacerbates the problem.

The territory of Palestine is governed by two rival parties, Fatah and Hamas. Both parties claimed to control each other’s territory; they were continually at odds until the conflict was resolved in 2017. While both agree on the need to build a Palestinian state in territories Israel has occupied since 1967, they have one major disagreement: how to deal with Israel.³⁴ Fatah, the main PLO party, has since the 1990s committed to non-violence and a willingness to negotiate with Israel; Hamas continues to use armed resistance and openly promotes violent activities against Israeli civilians. Hamas is the *de facto* governing authority of the Gaza Strip. Its objective is to liberate Palestine using tactics such as suicide bombings and rocket attacks, with the latter starting in 2001. Hamas attacks

³⁴ Tahhan, “Hamas and Fatah.”

on civilians are widely condemned by the international community as crimes against humanity.³⁵

On the Israeli side, violence and terrorism against Palestinians is carried out by state-sponsored groups and Israeli Jewish extremist groups. In 2018, terror attacks by these groups tripled compared to the previous year, with 482 incidents reported in mid-December 2018 compared to 140 in 2017.³⁶ There continues to be violence by Jewish settlers against Palestinians living there, including vandalism, assaults, and stonings which go unpunished or are even encouraged by Israeli soldiers placed there as security,³⁷ In 2015, an Israeli terrorist was convicted of firebombing the house of the Dawabsheh family in the West Bank village of Duma, killing both parents and burning alive their 18-month old baby.³⁸ In the aftermath, the Israeli government cracked down on Israeli settlement terrorist groups leading to a decrease in violence in 2016 and 2017.

However, newer and younger terror groups are emerging, such as Hilltop Youth, which has led to an increase in settlement violence once again.³⁹ The group has its origins at the state level, its name inspired by a 1998 speech given by then-Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, who urged youth settlers to “grab the hilltops.” He continued: “Everyone

³⁵ Amnesty International, “Gaza: Palestinians Tortured, Summarily Killed by Hamas Forces during 2014 Conflict,” May 27, 2015. Available from: [https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/05/gaza-palestinians-tortured-summarily-killed-by-hamas-forces-durin g-2014-conflict/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/05/gaza-palestinians-tortured-summarily-killed-by-hamas-forces-durin-g-2014-conflict/).

³⁶ *Asia News Monitor*, “Israel/Palestine: Israeli Media: Jewish Terrorism Against Palestinians Tripled in 2018.” 09 Jan 2019. Available from: <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/docview/2164662988?accountid=11311>.

³⁷ *Asia News Monitor*.

³⁸ Dan Williams, “Israeli Settler Found Guilty of Murder in Arson Attack on Palestinian Family,” Reuters, 18 May 2020. Available from: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-palestinians-duma-verdict/israeli-settler-found-guilty-of-murder-in-arson-a-ttack-on-palestinian-family-idUSKBN22U0L5>.

³⁹ *Asia News Monitor*.

that's there should move, should run, should grab more hills, expand the territory. Everything that's grabbed will be in our hands. Everything that we don't grab will be in their hands."⁴⁰ The group's goal is "deportation, revenge, and annihilation of Gentiles that pose a threat to the people of Israel"; their tactics include the illegally established outposts as well as harassment, assault, and murder of those who stand in their way.⁴¹ They seek to establish their own "Land of Israel," which includes the entirety of Israel and Palestine combined. They disestablish themselves from the settlements and create homes in trucks, caves—anything that can be made into a shelter. They are nicknamed the "Jewish ISIS,"⁴² and some believe they do in fact have parallel ideals to ISIS.

Despite its origins, Hilltop Youth rejects the State of Israel and its institutions. This is an issue with extremist groups, such as them and Hamas, which do not get enough attention because of the state overlap in which the Palestinian and Israeli governments support the extremists either directly or indirectly. Propaganda and financing of candidates and the media contribute to terror ideologies by encouraging "us versus them" behavior which feeds directly into the terror groups' propaganda. A recent example of this was Donald Trump telling the US far-right extremist group The Proud Boys, to "stand back and stand by" in response to a question of whether he would condemn white

⁴⁰ Adam T. Smith, *The Political Landscape: Constellations of Authority in Early Complex Polities* (University of California Press, 2003), 6.

⁴¹ Ami Pedahzur, *The Triumph of Israel's Radical Right* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 135-137.

⁴² Hillel Gershuni, "A Jewish ISIS Rises in the West Bank," *Tablet Magazine*, 11 January 2016. Available from: <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/israel-middle-east/articles/jewish-isis-in-the-west-bank>.

supremacists who support him.⁴³ In response, this same statement was then emblazoned on t-shirts sold online with the groups' insignia.⁴⁴

Both the Hilltop Youth and Hamas justify attacks against nonbelievers, as well as those of their own religion whom they do not consider to be “true” Jews or Muslims because they do not follow the groups' narrow extremist ideology. Both groups require members to reject modern norms and lifestyles, and abandon their families and homes in order to further the groups' objectives. Both groups believe that states such as Israel (in the case of Hilltop Youth) and Syria and Iraq (in the case of ISIS) have no authority. The groups fight against them because their mutual goals are essentially the takeover of the targeted land as their own, to be governed solely by and for their people. They have great success in drawing in youth to follow the teachings of a particular leader who acts as the group figurehead and the mastermind of their particular ideology. Al Baghdadi of ISIS is well known, but lesser known is Yitzchak Ginsburgh, whose teachings are the foundation of Hilltop Youth's ideology.

Many Hilltop Youth attended the yeshiva of Od Yosef Chai, where Ginsburgh serves as president. Located in the settlement of Yitzhar, it is rife with settlement extremists. In one of his well-known quotes, Ginsburgh compares the State of Israel to a nut which must be cracked in order to let people out. His teachings are seen as too extreme for the Chabad movement, a far-right Zionist group with which he is affiliated,

⁴³ Kathleen Belew, “Why ‘Stand Back and Stand By’ Should Set Off Alarm Bells,” *New York Times*, 02 October 2020. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/02/opinion/trump-proud-boys.html>.

⁴⁴ Kate Gibson, “Amazon, E-bay Blocks Sale of Merchandise with ‘Stand Back and Stand By,’” CBS News, 02 October 2020. Available from: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/stand-back-and-stand-by-proud-boys-merchandise-amazon/>.

but the group rejects him completely.⁴⁵ This is similar to the leaders of Al Qaeda, who reject ISIS as too extreme after it emerged in the mid 2010s. While Hilltop Youth only has a few hundred followers among a few thousand who engage in violence, it is growing and could soon pose a sufficient threat to not only the Palestinians who are their main enemy but the Israeli government itself, thereby adding another arm to the already complicated conflict that continues to this day.

Hamas, the militant party ruling the Gaza Strip, also began as a small but violent group, but it quickly grew in its influence to become a governing authority. Much like Hilltop Youth, Hamas promotes a liberation movement of its people through violent means, although Hamas aims to free all Palestinians compared to Hilltop which is exclusive to only “true” Jews.

The issue of state overlap, which contributes to terror groups’ goals and propaganda, is quite problematic. For example, despite its commitment to nonviolence, the PA oversees the Palestinian Authority Martyr’s Fund, which pays the families of Palestinians who are imprisoned or killed in battle. However, the Fund has come under criticism for making payments to relatives of those who were killed while carrying out terrorist attacks, such as suicide bombers. Many other families who received payment did so because a family member was killed during a non-violent protest, or walking to work or school, or even in their own homes. Nevertheless, they are lumped together with those who commit violent acts against innocent civilians, then given the title of “martyr.”⁴⁶ In

⁴⁵ Gershuni, “A Jewish ISIS.”

⁴⁶ If Americans Knew, blog, “The Legitimacy of Family Compensation for Palestinians Killed, Injured, and Imprisoned,” 19 June 2017. Available from: <https://israelpalestineneews.org/legitimacy-family-compensation-palestinians-killed-injured-imprisoned/>.

Israel, terror suspects in settlements were quickly released from custody without any legal action taken against them, clearly demonstrating Israeli government impunity. More disturbing is the expression of support from Israeli government officials like Justice Minister Aylet Shaked who called the mother of an Israeli terror suspect and told her to “stay strong” after she called to discuss her son’s case with the state prosecutor.⁴⁷

Such examples show that both governments need to take appropriate action to strengthen their respective stance against terrorism if there is to be any progress made. Terror ideology often comes from government officials themselves. Divisive speech as well as “othering” are key contributors to the formation of extremist ideologies, as these groups would not have emerged or been sustained without a common enemy. Governments should not promote these actions. It is one part of a larger puzzle about what contributes to terrorism.

⁴⁷ *Asia News Monitor*.

Chapter V

Higher Education, Low Hopes: A Connection With Unemployment

Among the scholarly works investigated on the subject of terrorism in Palestine, there is no doubt that poverty plays a role. But there is also a pattern between high levels of education and the decision to engage in terrorism: a high unemployment rate. Krueger and Malečková⁴⁸ and Berrebi⁴⁹ agree on the connection with higher education, but they disagree as to whether that connection occurs for economic or political reasons. The low hope among those enter the workforce creates an opportunity for terror groups to recruit such young people.

Krueger and Malečková found that high levels of education were directly connected to engagement in terrorist activities by Hezbollah militants who served as a model for Hamas in Palestine. Berrebi agreed with the correlation between higher levels of education and terrorism, specifically among suicide bombers from Palestine. However, Berrebi disagreed as to why education make such a contribution. He makes an economic argument, while Krueger and Malečková assert that the higher instance of terrorism among the highly educated is a response to “political conditions and longstanding feelings of indignity and frustration that have little to do with economics.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Ian B. Krueger, and Jitka Malečková, “Education, Poverty and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 17, no.4 (2013): 239-264.

⁴⁹ Claude Berrebi, “Evidence about the Link Between Education, Poverty, and Terrorism Among Palestinians,” *Peace Economics, Peace Science, and Public Policy* 13, no. 1 (2007): 1-33.

⁵⁰ Berrebi, “Evidence,” 1-33.

Caruso and Gavrilova presented findings that support Berrebi's economic conclusions regarding the highly educated. The authors also specifically tested youth unemployment levels in parallel with increases in terrorist attacks and found there is indeed a connection.⁵¹ Further, they discussed "youth bulges" that occur when an abnormally high percentage of young people make up a population, thus facing competition among themselves for scarce resources and jobs.⁵² With no other job options available in such difficult economic conditions or any way out of the country, these young people often turn to the supreme ideology of terrorists, agreeing to commit attacks as what they see as their only way out. Palestinian terrorist groups often frame their motives as an opportunity for the young person to die as a martyr while their family will be financially cared for after his/her death.⁵³ Skewed interpretations of religious texts make such actions seem desirable, and appeal to those who may have achieved a higher education only to fail to succeed in their lives. By committing violent attacks against the perceived oppressor state and its population, they essentially get some measure of revenge and inspire others to follow in their footsteps through terror propaganda.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Raul Caruso and Evelina Gavrilova, "Youth Unemployment, Terrorism and Political Violence: Evidence from the Israeli/Palestinian Conflict," *Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy* 18, no. 2 (2012).

⁵² Caruso and Gavrilova, "Youth Unemployment."

⁵³ Joel Greenberg, "Palestinian 'Martyrs': Defiant and So Willing," *New York Times*, 25 January 1995. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/01/25/world/palestinian-martyrs-defiant-and-so-willing.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

⁵⁴ Greenberg, "Palestinian 'Martyrs'."

Unlike transnational terrorist groups such as ISIS, Palestinian terrorist groups are comprised of only Palestinians whose motives are mainly political.⁵⁵ A key motivation the members have in common is the liberation of Palestine from Israel and the return of Palestinian land in full. The poor economic situation for those who are highly educated plays into the hands of these groups, which differ little from the ruling Hamas party that governs the Gaza Strip.⁵⁶ To have terror groups supported by a governing entity is very different from larger transnational terror groups that act against the governments they seek to take over. And with retaliatory actions by Israel in retribution for Palestinian attacks, as well as the blockade of Gaza, economic conditions in the Gaza Strip continually grow worse, playing into the hands of terror groups yet again.

In sum, the work of scholars on terrorism in general and terrorism specifically among Palestinians demonstrates that higher education and low job prospects, combined with poor economic conditions, do contribute to terrorism. Terrorists groups then use this as a political motivation which, in Palestine, creates a unique situation, as will be explored throughout this thesis.

In the post-Intifada years, the rate of terrorist attacks which directly correlated to an increase in GDP and decrease in unemployment. However, an increase in the number of attacks in 2014,⁵⁷ as well as a rise in the number of lone-wolf knife attacks over the past four years, have shown that terror ideology is still very active despite economic growth and lower unemployment.

⁵⁵ Meir Litvak, “‘Martyrdom Is Life’: Jihad and Martyrdom in the Ideology of Hamas,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 33, no. 8 (2010): 716-734.

⁵⁶ Litvak, “Martyrdom Is Life.”

⁵⁷ Jewish Virtual Library, “Terrorism Against Israel: Number of Fatalities.” Available from: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/number-of-terrorism-fatalities-in-israel>.

Chapter VI

Exclusion and Persecution of Palestinians

At the beginning of this thesis, I hypothesized that the exclusion and subsequent persecution of Palestinians has increased over time, therefore contributing to an increase in terrorism among Palestinians since it has been used by militant groups such as Hamas to further violent attacks since 1987. The poverty that has occurred among occupied Palestinian territories, as engineered by the Israeli government, can be seen in the following examples, which paint a picture of a group of people deliberately pushed into a corner through restriction of movement, demolition of homes, and lack of access to education and essentials, among others.

Control of the West Bank

Through conflicting issues of right to ownership and control of Palestinian territory, Israel imposed discriminatory policies that control normal operations of Palestinians who live under their exclusive control.⁵⁸ Israel exercises complete control over planning and construction in the West Bank (Area C on Figure 1). Initially, Palestinians were responsible for planning and construction in Areas A and B, which only covered areas and towns in existence following the 1995 signing of the Oslo Accords.

⁵⁸ Daniel Bar-Tal, "The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: A Cognitive Analysis," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 14, no. 1 (1990): 7-29.



Figure 1. West Bank Areas of Control.

Source: <https://kiaoragaza.wordpress.com/2018/11/23/whos-next/west-bank-area-a-b-c-israel-map-graphic/>

Israel's total control over Area C has a significant impact on the Palestinian residents, as seen in permissions for construction zoning and demolitions. In cases when Palestinians want to renovate or make any type of construction, the Israeli Civil Administration distributes warning leaflets to stop such activities, or later authorizes the demolition of the building or infrastructure. Between 2000 and 2007, Israeli authorities rejected over 90% of Palestinian building permits requested within Area C. Some 18 buildings were demolished at that time, and 55 other buildings were awaiting demolition.⁵⁹ In a 2009 UN report,⁶⁰ Israeli authorities rejected numerous Palestinian requests for permits and issued demolition orders for over 25 schools in Area C which held up to 6,000 students. Due to these restrictive measures, many Palestinian families were displaced.

Israel settlements and outposts, on the other hand, have expanded broadly near communities and residences belonging to Palestinians. The effect is to later force the Palestinians to leave their areas of residence because Israeli planning restricted them from residing in their homes and prevented their need to accommodate a growing family. Furthermore, the repeated demolitions authorized by the Israeli government left most Palestinians displaced and homeless, since Israel argues that such communities or residential homes are inside a closed military zone.

An example of Israeli government persecution against Palestinians is the village of Jubbet al-Dhib, where some 160 Palestinians live. The residents can access the village only on foot via a 1.5 kilometer (~1 mile) road that eventually connects to a paved road.

⁵⁹ Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor, and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914*. Vol. 20 (University of California Press, 1996).

⁶⁰ United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Human Rights Situation In Palestine And Other Occupied Arab Territories," August 10, 2009. Available from: <https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/71266F7CD47BBDEA85257615004D8635>.

The village has no school, so children have to walk a long distance to another village in order to go to school.⁶¹ The village also lacks electricity and other social amenities. The village elders applied for electricity from the Israel electric grid, but Israeli authorities rejected their request. Then an international donor project came forward, aiming to provide the village with solar energy to power street lights. However, the Israeli authorities rejected the donation. Lack of social amenities and electricity has paralyzed virtually all commercial activities in the village. Meat or milk must be consumed on the same day because village shops do not have refrigerators. In reality, residents consume preserved foods only. They depend on candles, kerosene, and (if they can afford one) small generators.⁶²

In contrast to the Jubbet al-Dhabi village, the Sde Bar community, an Israeli settlement about 250 meters (0.12mi) across the border in the West Bank, possesses most basic amenities. It is shocking how the Sde Bar community developed in terms of social amenities and infrastructure compared to Jubbet al-Dhib village—which has a higher population and was categorized as part of Area C, designated in the 1995 Oslo peace agreement. The Israeli government was clearly biased and discriminative since it granted accessible roads, electricity, and schools to the Sde Bar community and denied the same to Jubbet al-Dhib village. When Sde Bar was founded in 1997, Israel invested millions of dollars in nearby settlements such as Tekoa and Nokdim by building homes, schools, clinics, and recreational facilities. In contrast, Jubbet al-Dhib, founded in 1929, still has

⁶¹ Shafir, *Land and Labor*.

⁶² Anne-Marie O'Connor, "20 Minutes From Modern Jerusalem, a Palestinian Village is Stranded in the Past," *Washington Post*, 22 October 2016. Available from: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/20-minutes-from-modern-jerusalem-a-palestinian-village-is-stranded-in-the-past/2016/10/19/9ec8ef38-8cdd-11e6-8cdc-4fbb1973b506_story.html.

most of its development projects at a standstill because of prohibitions from Israeli authorities.⁶³

Freedom of Movement

The Israeli government controls the movement of the Palestinians under their control and their access to population centers.⁶⁴ Israeli authorities have imposed restrictive measures in the form of checkpoints, roadblocks, and separation barriers that favor settlers, not Palestinian residents. Palestinians must pass through checkpoints before traveling into Area C. They also need permits to establish infrastructure to connect them to other cities, towns, or villages. Such permits are often declined, making it impossible to expand Palestinian cities and villages because the Israeli government controls their activities. Palestinians remain barred unless an individual possesses a special permit or is a resident in Area C.

Such segregation limits Palestinians and isolates them from entering and exiting various places in search of basics needed for daily living. These measures have imposed considerable hardship on the Palestinians since they are forced to send their children long distances in search of learning institutions; worst of all, the residents have only limited access to medical care because they are required to cross multiple checkpoints before reaching hospitals in other areas or villages.⁶⁵

⁶³ Daniel Bar-Tal and Gavriel Solomon, "Narratives of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: Evolvement, contents, functions, and consequences," 2006. Available from: https://edu.haifa.ac.il/personal/gsalomon/Bar-Tal_Salomon_last%5B1%5D.pdf.

⁶⁴ United Nations, "Human Rights Situation In Palestine."

⁶⁵ Bar Tal and Solomon, "Narratives of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."

The Israeli authorities argue that they have not violated any human rights' obligations. According to Israel, the human rights law and the law of occupation are not mutually exclusive; in fact, they are complementary obligations, making them applicable as long as the government has effective control over a given territory. That implies Israel can differentiate in its treatment of laws, administration, and regulations, which affects a vast number of Palestinians due to Israeli control of the West Bank.

Water Accessibility and Use

Palestine and Israel are semi-arid lands that have dealt for centuries with the problem of water scarcity. Today, some water bodies in Israel face the threat of over-extraction. For instance, the level of the Dead Sea has dropped significantly due to the pressures of regional consumption.⁶⁶

For years, Israeli authorities have controlled most of the water sources in the West Bank ever since the Jordan seizure in 1967. Israel has continuously controlled Palestinian water sources and access to Areas A, B, and C in the West Bank. Israel has always allowed Israeli settlers to access water for consumption and agricultural activities, but denied the same access to Palestinians. Such a policy has demoralized and diminished the Palestinian economy while advancing the economy of Jewish settlers. Water consumption by Israelis is at least four times that of Palestinians living in the OPT. Palestinians

⁶⁶ Joshua Hammer, "The Dying of the Dead Sea," *Smithsonian Magazine*, 01 October 2005. Available from: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/the-dying-of-the-dead-sea-70079351/>.

consume on average 73 liters of water a day per person, which is well below the World Health Organization's (WHO) recommended daily minimum of 100 liters per capita.⁶⁷

Water over-extraction by Israel led to a drop in the West Bank water table and a 4% decrease in the total amount of water consumed by Palestinians from 1995 to 2007. The UN stated that more than 60,000 Palestinians lacked access to running water, and if they were lucky enough to have some water, they would pay higher prices for the purchase of the water compared to settlers. This was a hardship and persecution to the Palestinians since they earned very low salaries. They requested tanks, which required special permits from the Israeli authorities and were often denied. The 1995 Oslo Accords ordered Israel to grant Palestinians equal rights in developing water sources and regulating water use in the West Bank. In this case, Israel created a joint commission with equal representation by Israelis and Palestinians. However, the history of the commission indicates that Israel and Palestine do not have equality and partnership. That was seen in the approval process where most Israeli-proposed projects were approved, while Palestinian-proposed projects were rejected by the Israeli Civil Administration.⁶⁸

Land Confiscation

Palestinian lands have been confiscated without compensation, and ownership of that confiscated was reassigned to Israeli settlers. According to the law of occupation, confiscation of private properties is only available during circumstances of military

⁶⁷ Amnesty International. "The Occupation of Water." November 29, 2017. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2017/11/the-occupation-of-water/>.

⁶⁸ "Israel Under Review at the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights." Ref.:359/2011, 16 November 2011. <https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/6967.html>.

necessity. Human rights law allows confiscation only if it is non-discriminatory, proportionate, and justifiable. In this case, there must be fair compensation for the owners. The Israeli authorities protected and supported the settlers who took Palestinian lands without official authorization.

In addition, the government itself confiscated West Bank land through various means.⁶⁹ For instance, Israel designated 26.7% of West Bank land as “states’ land,” which made it difficult for Palestinians to prove their land ownership even though they had resided there for generations. Moreover, some of the laws and policies enacted by the Israeli government make it virtually impossible for Palestinians to register land that they own since settlers are entrusted with control of such lands.

The Israeli Media as a Propaganda Arm

Propaganda wars in Israel are waged via television shows and media services like Netflix and HBO.⁷⁰ Racist depictions of Arabs on one hand, and the glorification of Israel on the other, are not new concepts in the Israeli film industry and media. However, there are programs that encourage veneration of Israel’s secret services and portray Palestinians as a threat to security with an accompanying need to erase their history in order to preserve Israeli security. In the popular Israeli Netflix series called *Fauda* (Chaos), Israel has a special undercover force known as the “Musta’ribeen” comprised of soldiers who disguise themselves as Palestinians to carry out missions. The soldiers blend into the

⁶⁹ Bar Tal & Solomon, “Narratives of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.”

⁷⁰ Yara Hawari, “Israel’s Propaganda War Waged Through TV Shows,” *Al Jazeera*, 12 February 2020. Available from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/israel-propaganda-war-waged-tv-shows-200211150859809.html>.

population dressed as young Palestinians, and later on they kidnap their targets. The *Fauda* series faced criticism since it dehumanizes Palestinians and avoids mention of the military occupation while not showing any of the massive infrastructure built in the West Bank and Gaza in an attempt to contain the Palestinians.⁷¹

A show on HBO called *Our Boys* received praise for being critical of Israel, but it still reinforces the Israeli narrative and glorifies Shin Bet as defenders of good against evil. The latest addition to the collection of shows that depict Israel in a positive light while portraying Palestinians as bad, is the Netflix series *The Messiah*. In it, a messiah-like figure emerges to lead Palestinian and Syrian refugees to Syria's border with the Golan Heights (presumably). Factual inaccuracies abound, such as a fictional CNN reporter who says the refugees claim they are entitled passage into the West Bank as rightful citizens.⁷² Yet, Palestinian refugees in Syria come from historic Palestine which is now recognized as Israel but do not become citizens of the West Bank, instead returning to their villages and towns of origin from where they were displaced in 1948.⁷³ The return of displaced peoples to their homeland is a right enshrined in international law. Also, in *The Messiah*, Palestinian protests are described as riots by the media. The term *riot* has been used by the media and governments to delegitimize protests against the status quo by characterizing it as senseless violence. Doing so leads to heavy racial injustice.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Hawari, "Israel's Propaganda."

⁷² Hawari, "Israel's Propaganda."

⁷³ Palestinians in Europe Conference, "Palestinian Refugees," November 30, 2001. Available from :<http://www.alawda.eu/index.php/en/palestine/refugees/601>.

⁷⁴ Danielle Kilgo, "Riot or Resistance? The Way the Media Frames the Unrest in Minneapolis Will Shape the Public's View of Protest," Neiman Lab, May 30, 2020. <https://www.niemanlab.org/2020/05/riot-or-resistance-the-way-the-media-frames-the-unrest-in-minneapolis-will-shape-the-publics-view-of-protest/>.

The policies enacted by the Israeli government and then propagated by the media lead to widespread mistreatment of Palestinians in their everyday lives. It also results in Israelis becoming apathetic toward any actions taken by their government toward the Palestinian people. Thus the media, by being used in this way as a propaganda arm, becomes yet another tool of persecution.

Chapter VII

Grounded Theory Analysis: Motives for Terror

Motives differ among terrorist group leaders, those who carry out attacks, and their followers. To understand those motives, it is important to conduct both quantitative and qualitative research; the latter is explored in this section.

To find common themes regarding their motives, I examined 36 interviews of terrorists, both in prison and out of prison, as follows:

- 27 interviews were taken from the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism's incident database⁷⁵;
- 6 interviews from the documentary *Inside The Mind of Suicide Bombers*⁷⁶;
- 2 interviews from the documentary *Palestinians Locked Inside Israel's Maximum Security Prison*⁷⁷; and
- 1(one) interview in a transcript from the International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), Incidents database. Available from: <http://www.ict.org.il/Articles.aspx?WordID=25#gsc.tab=0>.

⁷⁶ "Inside the Mind of Suicide Bombers," YouTube video, June 26, 2017. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UpY0zJtu8Ts&has_verified=1.

⁷⁷ "Palestinians Locked Inside Israel's Maximum Security Prison," YouTube video, August 6, 2019. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qw4hTN-bQNI>.

⁷⁸ Anne Speckhard, "Abu Qatada: The 'Spiritual Father' of Al Qaeda in Europe Reflecting on Terrorism and the Future of the Middle East as Trump Takes the U.S. Presidency," ICSVE, 23 November 2016. Available from: <https://www.icsve.org/abu-qatada-the-spiritual-father-of-al-qaeda-in-europe-reflecting-on-terrorism-and-the-future-of-the-middle-east-as-trump-takes-the-u-s-presidency/>.

The individuals interviewed in the documentaries varied from low-ranking to upper leadership and ranged in age from teens through mid-fifties. All were males. Most were bombers who did not go through with their suicide missions; others were recruiters, bomb builders, and leaders. My analysis utilized the grounded theory method in which cases are grouped together to find patterns, then grouped into concepts and categories.

The most common theme cited by those who were interviewed was a desire for justice and liberation for Palestine. Throughout all the age groups, this theme was cited first in almost every case. Other themes included defense against the West, a pessimistic outlook on life, a desire for revenge, a strong sense of persecution, willingness to become a martyr, their own inability to leave a restricted region, and over all, the destruction of Israel.

In most cases, the theme of justice and liberation was framed as justice and liberation for all Muslims, not just those in Palestine. Despite the fact that terror groups in Palestine have specific aims, the concept of supreme ideology alluded to during these interviews also occurs in transnational terror groups.

When grouped by rank, low-ranking members are considered suicide bombers, while high-ranking members are considered bomb makers, recruiters, and leaders. Among the low-ranking and the high-ranking, a desire for justice and the liberation of Palestine was the most common motivations for both groups: 50% of low-ranking members and 100% of high-ranking members responded with this motivation. One high-ranking member described his quest for the liberation of Palestine using violent means, which he argued are his last resort:

Our world is not a world of philosophy and a round table. We cannot lie. The rest is all lies. The rule of the world is of the strong. The more you

put your head down and beg for peace the more you end up like Abu Masen [Palestinian president who tried to make peace with Israel but failed]. Blood and killing continue.⁷⁹

Justice and the liberation of Palestine are clearly the end goals for all violent groups in Palestine, which is discussed in greater detail in a later section.

The second most popular motivation across both low- and high-ranking members is revenge, with 50% of low-ranking members and 66% of high-ranking members citing this as their motive. Phrases like “an eye for an eye” or “avenging for the deaths of Palestinians” were spoken by both groups. A 23-year-old recruiter, a high-ranking member, said he wants peace only if Israelis stop killing Palestinians, and stop occupying their lands. Since neither has stopped, he justifies his attacks against them as retribution.⁸⁰

Among low-ranking members, the motivation that ranks second is martyrdom, with 50% citing this as a motive. High-ranking members did not cite martyrdom as a motivation. Martyrdom was also strongly connected to age as younger members, often low-ranking, have this motivation. Other motives among low-ranking members were their inability to leave the region (50% low-ranking vs. 0% high-ranking), and persecution (25% among low-ranking). High-ranking members did not mention persecution as a specific motivation for terrorism, but the language used when discussing justice and liberation implied this.

For high-ranking members, the most popular motivation was the destruction of Israel, mentioned by 33% of those interviewed, versus 0% for low-ranking members. Just as martyrdom was cited by half of low-ranking members, the destruction of Israel speaks

⁷⁹ Speckhard, “Abu Qatada.”

⁸⁰ “Inside the Mind” YouTube video.

to the motivation of high-ranking individuals. Considering they are not the ones who carry out suicide attacks and are not on the “front lines,” their long-term goals clearly dictate their motivations.

Two other motivations that appeared in the interviews were defending against the West and a pessimistic outlook on life. Both motives were cited nearly equally in both groups: 25% of low-ranking and 33% of high-ranking mentioned defense against the West; 25% of low-ranking and 33% of high-ranking mentioning pessimistic outlook on life. These results show that a pessimistic outlook on life is slightly more common among those in higher positions, and not as common among low-ranking members who are being groomed for suicide missions. This seems surprising given the ultimate expectation for low-ranking members. Figure 2 summarizes the various motivations.

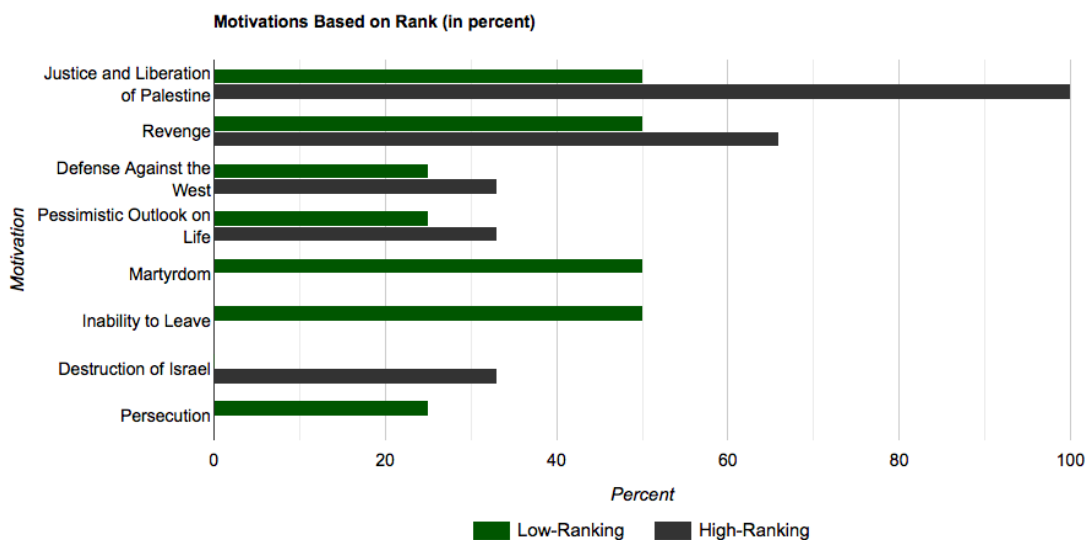


Figure 2. Motivations Based on Ranking.

Source: Data compiled by thesis author from Real Stories, Speckard, and ICT.

The most common age group in the low-ranking category was 16-24 years old, with 67% of those interviewed falling into that category. As expected, the 25-39 year olds and 40-59 years olds made up most of the high-ranking positions, at 11% and 22%, respectively. Since most of the low-ranking members carry out suicide bombings, when grouped by age it is clear young people are most vulnerable for being recruited.

The job of recruiters, who are high-ranking members, is made easy by the anger and frustration already present in the minds of young recruits. Martyrdom was a top motivation among the younger, low-ranking members. One young bomber who did not go through with his attack said of the recruiters: “Terrorist leaders groom young bombers. They already have the hatred and frustrations and they [terrorist leaders] add to it. They speak of Paradise, where they will get what they want. They encourage and excite them.”⁸¹ The older members’ role is to influence the younger members who are considered weak and impressionable, and thus easy to exploit. Table 2 breaks down the members by age.

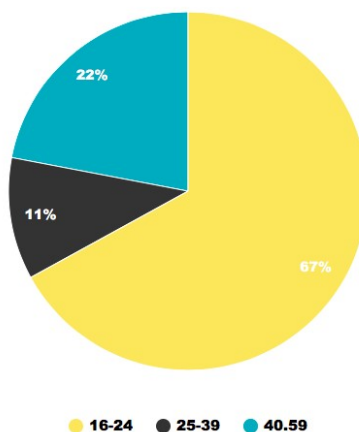


Figure 3. Ranking by Age.

Sources: Data compiled by thesis author from Real Stories, Speckard, and ICT.

⁸¹ Real Stories, “Inside the Mind.”

Analysis of these interviews indicated that persecution is not a main motivator for high-ranking terrorists, although it is mentioned by a few lower-ranking members. However, compared to the other motives, it ranked last. This refutes my original thesis hypothesis: that exclusion and subsequent persecution of Palestinians was a key motivation for those engaging in terrorism. Rather, the motivations of those in high-ranking positions in terror groups were mainly driven by power, not motivated by poverty or exclusion. In fact, the word “exclusion” did not come up as a motivating factor for any of those interviewed. Despite the refutation of my hypothesis, interesting findings have appeared that will contribute to understanding the motivations of those that lead terror groups in Palestine, as well as the very different motivations of those in the lower ranks.

As discussed earlier, terror groups easily manipulate and brainwash discontented teenage and young adult males who make up the bulk of low-ranking members, as most struggle to find jobs and security, and thus become susceptible terrorists’ promises. These same people may have had access to education or even pursued education at the university level, but were unable to achieve financial stability or fulfilling jobs. The state of their life, combined with the propaganda that abounds, the blockade in Gaza, and resulting restrictions on the pursuit of a career, all draw them toward terror as an easy way out of the situation. Psychologists know well that the mental state of being displeased and pessimistic about one’s life can lead to suicide. However, in Palestine, such discontented young men are bombarded with abundant propaganda that easily turns that ideation into a violent act motivated by an ideology that uses their life as a means to an end. Recruiters actively seek these young people to carry out the missions of the terrorist groups.

I discovered two unexpected findings of interest. The first is that an obsession with death is present in many of these young bombers, which also may have some weight in a discussion of whether or not they are motivated by ideology alone or also by suicidal tendencies. This point welcomes further research that could contribute to a greater understanding of terrorist motivations through a psychological analysis of terrorist members of all ranks.

The second finding is that some of the interviewees were open to peace, and although they sought to carry out violent attacks, they believed that peace would be the inevitable end result—an interesting paradox. One young bomber did not go through with his assigned attack by his own choice. He explained that he began to have doubts when he saw older people and children in the area where he was supposed to carry out his attack, and he came to the conclusion that he could not harm innocents.⁸² In other cases the potential bomber did not go through with his planned attack because he was caught by the authorities

⁸² Real Stories, “Inside the Mind.”

Chapter VIII

The Statistical Relationship Between Poverty and Terror

Many of the authors cited in the literature review argue that poverty is associated with terrorism. The level of poverty of any country is measured in terms of the level of GDP of the country.⁸³ When the GDP is low, then poverty is high, making it difficult for the population to survive, making it easier to lure some people into criminal activities as the only way to sustain their lives.⁸⁴

The aim of my quantitative research was to determine the correlation between terrorism and poverty in Palestine using GDP, GDP per capita, unemployment, and HDI numbers. I also measured religious persecution in Palestine with variables for political freedom and civil liberties. The relationships between these variables was hypothesized to be greatly associated with terrorist attacks in Palestine.

A correlation coefficient shows the strength of the relationship that exists between the variables and normally lies between -1 and +1, in which case a correlation coefficient close to -1 implies a strong negative relationship, while a value close to +1 shows a strong positive relationship.

The data used for this analysis consisted of a sample of observations collected between 1969 and 2019 with the exception of GDP per capita which was only available

⁸³ Caruso and Gavrilova, "Youth Unemployment."

⁸⁴ Walter Enders and Gary Hoover, "The Nonlinear Relationship between Terrorism and Poverty," *American Economic Review* 102, no 3 (2012): 267-272.

from 1994 onward, and political freedom and civil liberties which was only available from 1977 onward.

In this analysis, the lowest GDP level indicated US\$1,800 million in 1969; the highest was US\$80,000 million in 2019. The unemployment level is a sample and is represented as a minimum of 10% in 2000; the highest is 38.1% in 1960. The HDI (Humanitarian Development Index), which is a range of 0-1, also is presented in the minimum and the maximum values in years: the highest was in 1999 and 2000 at 0.71, the minimum was in 1966 through 1969 at 0.3. Table 1 summarizes the variables.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Variables That Influence the Level of Terrorism

Descriptive Statistics					
		Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
GDP (US\$ millions)	51	1,800	80,000	4,151	.18274
Unemployment (%)	51	10.00	38.10	23.0	8.089
HDI (Score)	51	.30	.71	.55	.14

Source: "Palestine—GINI Index."

The table shows that the distribution of the GDP over time averaged 0.4151. The lowest rate of unemployment over the same period was 10%, the highest level was 38.10%, leading to a mean value of 22.96%. For the HDI, the minimum level was 0.30, while the highest value was 0.71, leading to an average value of 0.55. The data analyzed included 51 years starting from 1969 to 2019 based on economic growth in Palestine.

Stevens and Sessions⁸⁵ affirmed that the potential effect of economic growth on poverty rates is equalized either entirely or in part by an increase in income imbalance. Unemployment is a cause of poverty as people cannot meet their basic needs due to a lack of money. The HDI is also affected by poverty in that a country has to first feed its people before engaging in human development, which must be centered on the whole population. According to Syofya,⁸⁶ human development is essential in that it focuses on the expansion of choices for a society, with the crucial goal of achieving better welfare for each member of society. All these factors are affected by poverty, and need to be addressed and executed smoothly to focus on economic growth.

A country's GDP level can increase when there is significant growth in the country's economy. Reduction of poverty in families can also decline with an increase in economic growth. High unemployment, coupled with low GDP growth, determines the human development index (HDI) of a country. The most recent GINI index score for Palestine was 33.37% in 2016. This index ranges from 0% (the least unequal) to 100% (completely unequal) based on distribution of income. This rate represents the lowest value since 2004 which was the first year of analysis. The highest GINI score was 35.60 in 2007.⁸⁷ As of 2019, Palestine ranks higher than the Arab States but lower than Jordan

⁸⁵ Lonnie K. Stevens and David N. Sessions, "The Relationship Between Poverty and Economic Growth Revisited," *Journal of Income Distribution*, 17(1), 5-20, 2008.

⁸⁶ Heppi Syofya, "Effect of Poverty and Economic Growth on Indonesia Human Development Index," *Jurnal Ilmiah Universitas Batanghari Jambi*, 18(2), 416-423, 2018.

⁸⁷ "Palestine - GINI Index," Knoema.org. <https://knoema.com/atlas/Palestine/topics/Poverty/Income-Inequality/GINI-index>. January 14, 2021.

and Oman.⁸⁸ Compared to the rest of the world, Palestine ranked 115 in the most recent HDI reporting year, 2019. Palestine is in the “high development” category which includes countries such as Vietnam, Egypt, Venezuela, and Uzbekistan, which rank at about the same percentile.⁸⁹ Empirical data was used to find a correlation between the variables of HDI, unemployment and GDP in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Correlation Between GDP, Unemployment, and HDI.

	<i>GDP</i>	<i>Unemployment</i>	<i>HDI</i>
GDP	1.0000		
Unemployment	0.0472	1.0000	
HDI	0.6976	0.3877	1.0000

Source: “Palestine—GINI Index.”

From the table, it is evident that unemployment and GDP have a weak positive relationship ($corr. = .0472$). On the other hand, there exists a relatively strong positive relationship between GDP and HDI ($corr. = .6976$) while there is a moderate association between HDI and unemployment ($corr. = .3877$). Therefore, based on the results, it is evident that GDP is associated with HDI more strongly compared to the unemployment rate.

⁸⁸ United Nations Human Development Programme (UNHDP), “Human Development Report 2020 State of Palestine.” http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/PSE.pdf. 11 January 2021.

⁸⁹ United Nations Human Development Programme (UNHDP), “Human Development Reports Download Data.”: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi>. 11 January 2021.

It is worth determining the impact of the interaction between GDP and unemployment on HDI as shown in Table 3 below. From the table, it can be observed that there is a moderate association between HDI and the interaction between GDP and unemployment (*corr.* = .4136) which implies that the interaction has a fairly moderate association with HDI. Therefore, when unemployment and GDP are combined together, they have a moderate association with the HDI which in turn influences terrorism in the country. If therefore, unemployment rate is minimized and GDP is improved in the country, then terrorism might be minimized.

Table 3. Correlation of Interactions Between GDP, Unemployment, and HDI.

	<i>GDP</i>	<i>Unemployment</i>	<i>GDP*Unemployment</i>	<i>HDI</i>
<i>GDP</i>	1.0000			
<i>Unemployment</i>	0.0472	1.0000		
<i>GDP*Unemployment</i>	0.8742	0.5006	1.0000	
<i>HDI</i>	0.6976	-0.3877	0.4136	1.0000

Source: "Palestine—GINI Index."

The variables used for the following analysis were obtained from different categories: political, economic and social. The aim was to determine the relationship between different variables obtained from these categories to gauge whether or not they, as quantitative indicators of persecution, had any impact on the levels of HDI, unemployment, and GDP, as presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Combined Variables Correlation Coefficients.

	<i>GDP</i>	<i>Unemployment</i>	<i>HDI</i>	<i>Political Freedom</i>	<i>Civil Liberties</i>	<i>Population: All ages both sexes</i>	<i>Annual total dep. ratio [(0-14 & 65+) / 15-64] (%)</i>
<i>GDP</i>	1.000						
<i>Unemployment</i>	0.431	1.000					
<i>HDI</i>	0.621	0.055	1.000				
<i>Political Freedom</i>	0.646	0.054	0.319	1.000			
<i>Civil Liberties</i>	0.059	0.333	0.545	0.134	1.000		
<i>Population</i>	0.916	0.365	0.850	0.530	0.238	1.000	
<i>Annual total dep. ratio [(0-14 & 65+) / 15-64] (%)</i>	0.967	0.384	0.660	0.671	0.049	0.943	1.000

Source: Data adapted by thesis author from: "Palestine—GINI Index."

As shown in Table 4, GDP and political freedom have a weak positive relationship with civil liberties ($corr. = .059$) and ($corr. = .134$), respectively. The implication is that changes in either variable have no significant effect on the other variable. In this case, GDP and political freedom have no significant effect on civil liberties. On the other hand, unemployment depicts a moderately positive correlation with civil liberties ($corr. = .333$), while HDI has a strong correlation with civil liberties ($corr. = .545$). Therefore, civil liberties has a strong association with HDI, which means that

when civil liberties are enhanced in the country, HDI improves, thereby reducing the likelihood of terror attacks in the country.

The association between GDP and political freedom has a strong positive correlation ($corr. = .646$) indicating that political freedom has a strong effect on the GDP of the country and any slight decrease in political freedom may result in a significant drop in the GDP of the country. Similarly, population and dependence ratio factors have a strong positive relationship with the GDP ($corr. = .916$ and $.967$) respectively. The implication for this is the population and unemployment.

Population seems to have a strong positive association with HDI and political freedom together with GDP as discussed above. The correlation between HDI and population is 0.85 indicating that the population of the country has a strong effect on the human development indicator (HDI) of the country. On the other hand, population and political freedom similarly have a strong relationship ($corr. = .530$) hence political freedom is associated with the population of the country significantly.

The dependency ratio variable on the other hand has a strong positive association with the variable HDI ($corr. = .660$), population ($corr. = .943$), political freedom ($corr. = .671$) and GDP ($corr. = .967$). This implies that changes on any of the variables results in a significant change in the dependency ratio or vice versa. Unemployment rate has a moderately positive relationship ($corr. = .384$) while civil liberties has a weak positive relationship ($corr. = .049$) with the dependency ratio variable. Hence, population has a stronger association with the dependency ratio than civil liberties. When population is managed, the dependency ratio is minimized implying that the working population is not overwhelmed and hence acts of terror are minimal in the country. The factors that have a

strong correlation with the dependency ratio are the ones that should be controlled or managed well to ensure that the ratio is reduced and the working population is not overstretched to the extent that they engage in terror activities to support their dependents.

When considering the interaction between the different variables, Table 5 below shows the correlation matrix. It is apparent that some interactions result in a negative correlation, which implies that a change in either variable results in a drop of the other variable. After the interactions, the correlation between political freedom and the interaction between GDP and unemployment results in a strong positive correlation (*corr.* = .559). Therefore, a slight change in political freedom affects GDP and unemployment combined, significantly.

Also, there exists a strong positive correlation between HDI and the interaction between political freedom and civil liberties (*corr.* = .608). Hence, when political freedom is combined with civil liberties, HDI increases or decreases significantly when they are increased or reduced.

Table 5. Variable Interaction Correlation Matrix.

	GDP	Unemployment	GDP*Unemployment	HDI	Political Freedom	Civil Liberties	Political * Civil	Population: All ages both sexes	Annual total dep. ratio [(0-14 & 65+) / 15-64] (%)	Population * Dependency ratio
GDP	1.000									
Unemployment	0.431	1.000								
GDP*Unemployment	0.912	0.741	1.000							
HDI	0.621	0.055	0.457	1.000						
Political Freedom	0.646	0.054	0.559	0.319	1.000					
Civil Liberties	-0.059	-0.333	-0.193	0.545	-0.134	1.000				
Political * Civil	0.436	-0.218	0.270	0.608	0.698	0.613	1.000			
Population: All ages both sexes	0.916	0.365	0.814	0.850	0.530	0.238	0.553	1.000		
Annual total dep. ratio [(0-14 & 65+) / 15-64] (%)	-0.967	-0.384	-0.876	-0.660	-0.671	-0.049	-0.535	-0.943	1.000	
Population * Dependency ratio	0.767	0.259	0.645	0.948	0.346	0.432	0.545	0.954	-0.806	1.000

Source: Data adapted by thesis author from: "Palestine—GINI Index."

Similarly, the interaction between GDP and unemployment and political freedom and civil liberties results in strong positive relationships with population (*corr.* = .814) and (*corr.* = .553) respectively. The annual dependency ratio on the other hand has a strong negative relationship with the interactions between political freedom and civil liberties (*corr.* = -.535) and GDP and unemployment (*corr.* = -.876). This is the only

variable which results in a negative association after the interactions. It thus implies that when political freedom and civil liberties and GDP and unemployment are interacted, the dependency ratio decreases significantly.

When population and dependency ratios are interacted, a strong negative association results between HDI and GDP whereby HDI shows stronger ($corr. = .948$) correlation than GDP ($corr. = .767$). Therefore, combining population and dependency ratio improves the correlation of GDP and HDI.

GDP per capita is a measure of a country's GDP divided by its total population. For this analysis, the data for Palestine for the period between 1994 and 2018 is used. The variables of interest to compare with the GDP per capita is the unemployment rate and HDI. Finding the correlation between the three variables is the first step of the analysis and the results are presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Correlation between GDP per capita, Unemployment, and HDI.

	<i>GDP per Capita</i>	<i>Unemployment</i>	<i>HDI</i>
GDP per Capita	1.0000		
Unemployment	0.4220	1.0000	
HDI	0.1677	-0.0160	1.0000

Source: Data adapted by thesis author from: "Palestine—GINI Index."

It can be concluded that GDP per capita has a moderate relationship with unemployment ($corr. = .422$) while it has a weak association with HDI ($corr. = .1677$). Therefore, unemployment has a stronger effect on the GDP per capita than HDI. A slight

increase in unemployment rate will significantly affect the per capita than the same change in HDI. Checking the correlation after performing variable interaction is important to determine which combination of variables results in a significant effect on the GDP per capita. Table 7 shows the results of the interactions.

Table 7. Interaction between GDP per capita, Unemployment, and HDI.

	<i>GDP per Capita</i>	<i>Unemployment</i>	<i>HDI</i>	<i>HDI * Unemployment</i>	<i>HDI * GDP per Capita</i>	<i>Unemployment * GDP per Capita</i>
GDP per Capita	1.000					
Unemployment	0.422	1.000				
HDI	0.168	-0.016	1.000			
HDI * Unemployment	0.433	0.996	0.065	1.000		
HDI * GDP per Capita	0.999	0.417	0.219	0.433	1.000	
Unemployment * GDP per Capita	0.928	0.709	0.126	0.717	0.926	1.000

Source: Data adapted by thesis author from: "Palestine—GINI Index."

The correlation result after the interaction between HDI and unemployment is .433 which shows a moderate relationship with GDP per capita. Also, the interaction between HDI and GDP per capita results in a moderately positive correlation with unemployment rate (*corr.* = .417). Nevertheless, the interaction between HDI and GDP per capita results in a weak positive relationship with HDI (*corr.* = .126). From the interactions therefore, it is evident that when HDI and unemployment are combined, GDP per capita is affected although moderate. However, the interaction between unemployment and GDP per capita does not significantly affect the human development index factor of the country.

The next aspect to focus on is the regression analysis for variables and determine which of the two variables, HDI and unemployment is significant in the prediction of GDP per capita at 5% significance level as presented in Table 8 below.

Table 8. Regression Results for GDP per capita

<i>Regression Statistics</i>					
Multiple R		0.457			
R Square		0.209			
Adjusted R Square		0.137			
Standard Error		717.572			
Observations		25	< 30		

<i>ANOVA</i>					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	2	2984439.122	1492219.561	2.898	0.076
Residual	22	11328006.637	514909.393		
Total	24	14312445.759			

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>
Intercept	-3932.267	5242.962	-0.750	0.461	-14805.505
Unemployment	49.895	22.282	2.239	0.036	3.685
HDI	7063.134	7678.292	0.920	0.368	-8860.670

Source: Data adapted by thesis author from: "Palestine—GINI Index."

From the regression output above, it is evident that HDI is significant in predicting the GDP per capita ($p = .368 > .05$). Nevertheless, unemployment is a significant factor in measuring GDP per capita ($p = .036 < .05$). The overall model is not significant ($F(2, 24) = 2.898, p = .076 > .05, R^2 = .209$). The sample used in the analysis is also small ($n = 25 < 30$) hence a larger sample is necessary to improve to the accuracy of the results.

Therefore, it can be concluded that unemployment is a significant factor that measures GDP per capita than HDI and thus any changes to the variable would result in significant changes in the GDP per capita. The scatter plot below (Figure 4) shows the graphical presentation of the relationship between unemployment and GDP per capita.

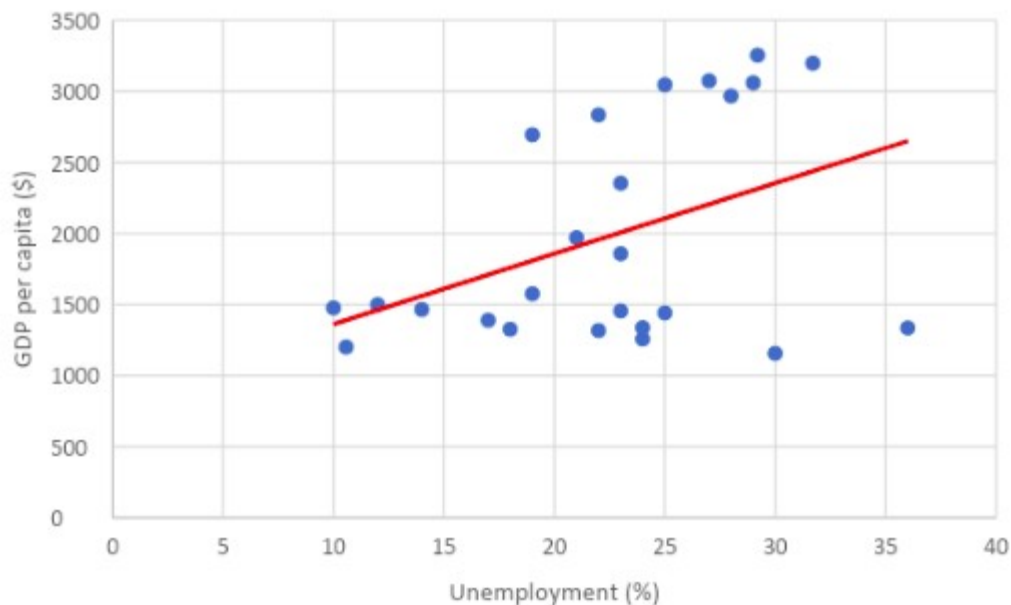


Figure 4. Scatter Plot for GDP per capita and Unemployment.

Source: Data adapted by thesis author from: "Palestine—GINI Index."

Clearly, there is a moderate positive relationship between GDP per capita and unemployment. Unemployment itself as a variable only explains 18% of the variability of GDP per capita. As shown in Figure 5 below, the relationship between HDI and GDP per capita is weaker than the one observed by unemployment rate.

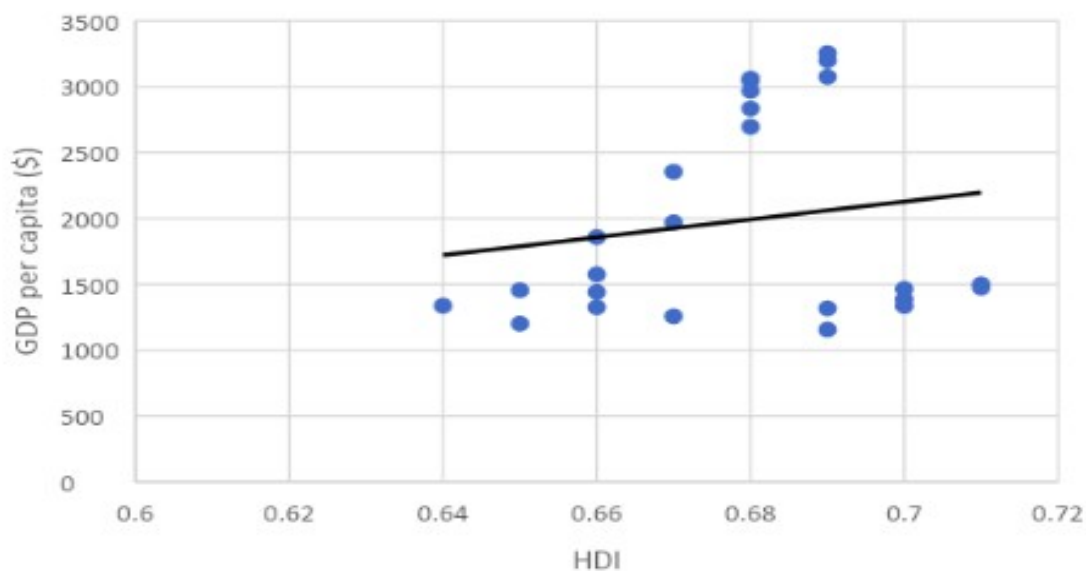


Figure 5. Scatter Plot for GDP per capita and HDI.

Source: Data adapted by thesis author from: "Palestine—GINI Index."

The graph shown below (Figure 6) shows a linear representation of Palestine GDP which will be compared to events represented in the timeline shown in Appendix A. Despite slow GDP growth up until the early 1990s, there is a steep increase in GDP until around 1999 leading up to the Second Intifada beginning in 2000 and ending in 2005, when another steep increase begins, similar to that of the mid 1990s. Interestingly, there is no significant increase or decrease in GDP associated with the First Intifada and the GDP has remained the same from 1980 to 1993, at 0.30, as shown in the numerical data. Only in 1994 did the GDP increase slightly to 0.31.

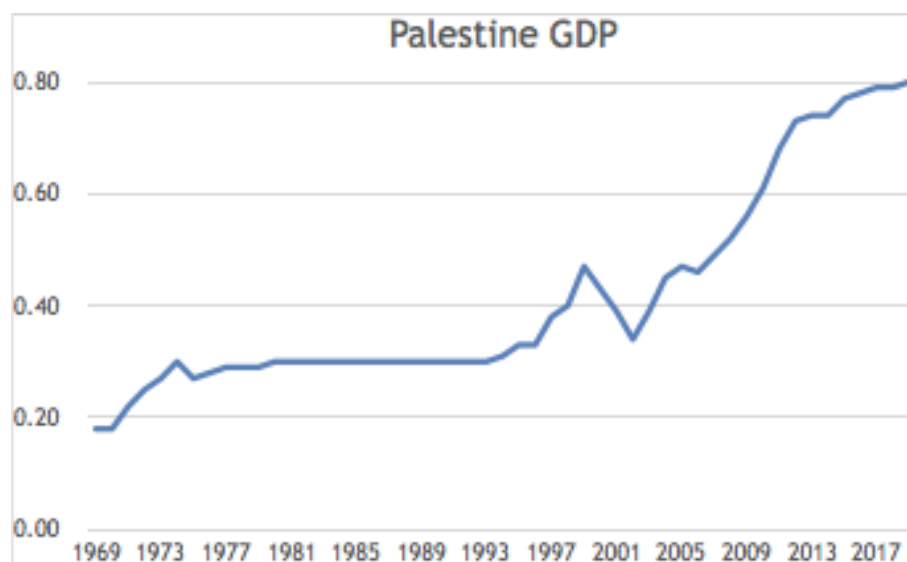


Figure 6. Palestine GDP (1969-2017).

Source: Data adapted by thesis author from: "Palestine—GINI Index."

The Oslo Accords of 1993, which helped establish a Palestinian state with administrative institutions, served to increase GDP slowly from 1993 through the end of the decade. This period of GDP growth is in stark contrast to the GDP decline of the Second Intifada period, which began in 2000 and ended in 2005. At that time, indiscriminate violence and suicide attacks became commonplace, along with a high number of terror attacks. This increase in terror correlates directly to the decrease in GDP for the years of the Second Intifada.

In terms of economic activity, more development took place after the Oslo Accords, which was a time of relatively good relations between Palestine and Israel compared to other points in history. This relative peace fostered economic development

and growth in GDP. However, the Second Intifada beginning in 2000 caused more tension between both states and years of declining GDP. This in turn affected the country's economic development and trade (see Figure 7).



Figure 7. Palestine GDP per capita (1996-2016).

Source: Data adapted by thesis author from: "Palestine—GINI Index."

The GDP per capita also mimics the general trend that GDP follows but does not increase at such a sharp rate as GDP prior to the Second Intifada. By analyzing GDP only, it shows a baffling trend, but observing the economic output of the country increasing prior to this period without a correlating increase in wages, could be a contributor to the unrest that followed. Additionally, there was no steady increase in GDP per capita during the Second Intifada compared to GDP's steady increase. In fact, wages dropped during this time hitting a low of under \$1,000 USD in 2002. Since 2012, GDP per capita and

GDP have been relatively stagnant, the former more so than the latter after a sharp increase in GDP per capita in 2011 which had a similar increase with GDP.

Figure 8 below shows the linear relationship between levels of the HDI and GDP.⁹⁰ There is a margin of linear GDP. However, GDP and HDI relate. This is because, with every economic development shown by the rise of GDP, there is a rise of the HDI.

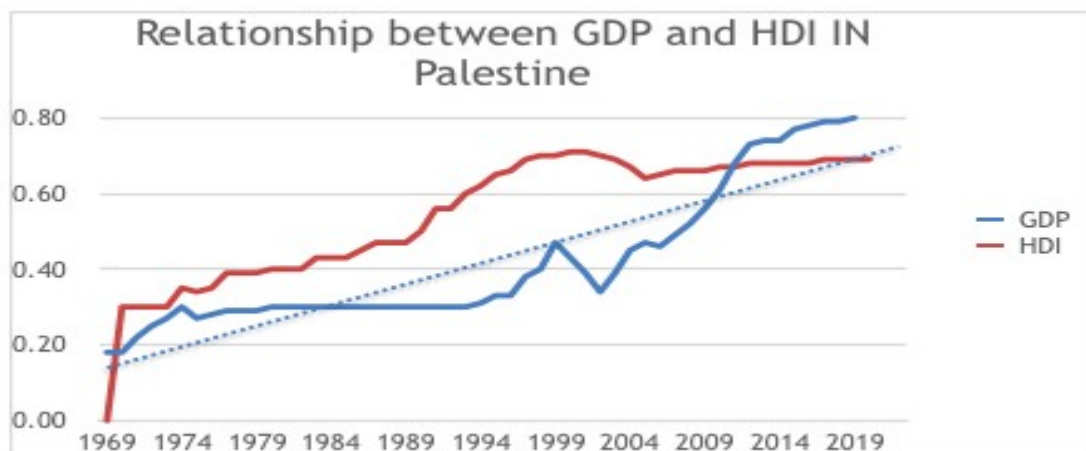


Figure 8. Relationship Between GDP and HDI.

Source: Data adapted by thesis author from: "Palestine—GINI Index."

The unemployment trend moves in opposition to the GDP trend. As seen earlier, there is a high correlation between the GDP level and other factors, such as the increase in GDP causing a decrease in the unemployment level.⁹¹ When economic activity drops, there is less employment, and when young people become idle they tend to engage more

⁹⁰ Berrebi, et al., "On Terrorism and Electoral Outcomes," 899-925.

⁹¹ Andrey Korotayev, "Economic Growth, Education, and Terrorism: A Re-Analysis," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 12, no. 6 (2019): 21.

with terrorist groups (see Figure 9).⁹² Minimal GDP appears to lower the humanitarian development index, which means people are unable to sustain their livelihood, which causes them to engage in unruly activities, and they are easily radicalized.

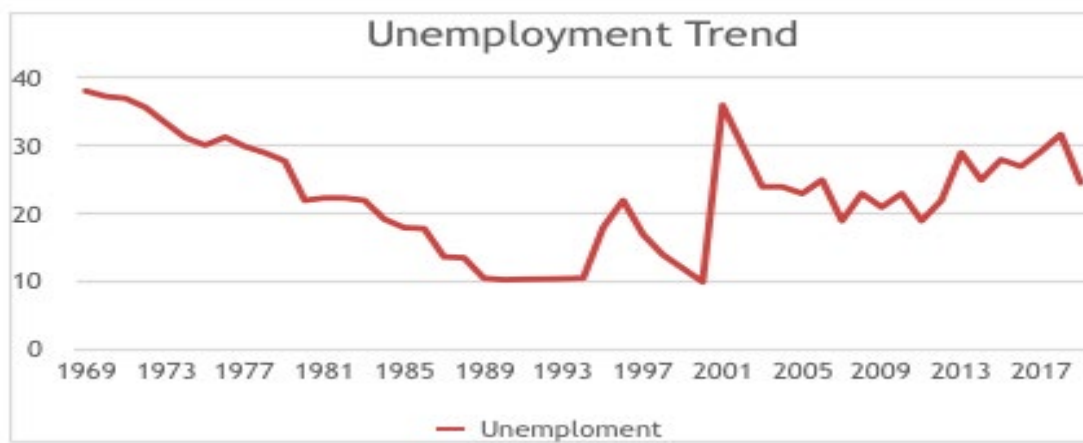


Figure 9. Unemployment Trend.

Source: Data adapted by thesis author from: “Palestine—GINI Index.”

This statistical analysis shows that the correlation between GDP and HDI is strong. However, there is a weak correlation between the measures of persecution (i.e., political freedom and civil liberties) and GDP. On the other hand, the HDI does have a strong correlation with civil liberties. This was apparent when there was more freedom for the population and positive increases occurred throughout the 1990s. The trend of high levels of GDP leading up to the Second Intifada, which consisted of the most violent conflict of the period, was surprising and contrary to the previous event discussed.

⁹² Berrebi, et al., “On Terrorism and Electoral Outcomes.”

Besides the HDI and civil liberties connection, there are not strong enough connections to directly connect high levels of terrorism with low poverty indicators such as GDP, unemployment, and HDI.

Chapter IX

Non-violent versus Violent Groups

Terrorist groups in general seek to achieve certain ideological or political goals and use violence to instill fear in the target population as well as the governments they seek to destroy or take over. As I demonstrated with Palestine, the goals of terrorist groups there, and their operations, occur in a different framework. Despite the use of suicide bomb attacks and religious supremacist rhetoric, the main goal of terrorists in Palestine, both leaders and low-level fighters, is to liberate Palestine from Israeli rule.

The non-violent groups (the PLO and Fatah) have emerged from an earlier history of violence. On the Israeli side, terror groups also exist there, seeking to eliminate Palestinians, overthrow the current Israel government, and establish a “pure” Jewish state. The latter is the motivation behind the Hilltop Youth terror group. Since the 1950s, Israeli terror groups such as Brit HaKanaim, Kingdom of Israel, and Gush Emunim Underground have used bomb attacks and assassinations to further their goal of establishing their view of a Jewish state, opposing the increasing secularization occurring at the time.⁹³

The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Fatah ended their use of violence to achieve political goals: the PLO since 2005 and Fatah since 1988. However,

⁹³ Ami Pedahzur and Ari Perliger, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 33-37.

Fatah continues to run the Palestinian Authority Martyr's Fund, which pays stipends to the families of those killed or arrested while committing acts of terrorism.⁹⁴

The first organization founded with the goal of liberating Palestine was the PLO in 1964. It was initiated by the Arab League after their summit meeting in Cairo in order to craft an organization representing the Palestinian people.⁹⁵ Later that same year after the Palestinian National Council convened, the PLO was founded with the goal of liberating Palestine through armed struggle. For the next two decades, the organization engaged in attacks against Israel and its civilians. It was not until the late 1980s that the group agreed to cease violent actions, and its leader, Yasser Arafat, shifted from armed conflict to negotiation with Israel.⁹⁶

Other groups that use violence are the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP, a/k/a Popular Front), Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and Hamas. The Popular Front was established in 1967 in the aftermath of the Six Day War when the West Bank was occupied.⁹⁷ Like the PLO, they used armed tactics, and were the first to use aircraft hijackings to bring attention to their cause. This organization differs from the PLO in that they combine Arab nationalism with

⁹⁴ William Booth, "Israel Wants Trump to Stop Palestinian Payments to Prisoners and Families of 'Martyrs'," *Washington Post*, 21 May 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/israel-wants-trump-to-stop-palestinian-payments-to-prisoners-and-families-of-martyrs/2017/05/18/72d08c90-39af-11e7-a59b-26e0451a96fd_story.html.

⁹⁵ Palestinian National Charter, "Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations – Palestine National Charter of 1964," Archived November 30, 2010. <https://web.archive.org/web/20101130144018/http://www.un.int/wcm/content/site/palestine/pid/12363> .

⁹⁶ Yasser Arafat, Speech at UN General Assembly Geneva, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, 13 December 1988.

⁹⁷ BBC, "Profile: Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)," *BBC News*, 18 November 2014. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-30099510>.

Marxism-Leninism, framing their struggle against Israel and the West as one against capitalism in the Middle East. They also look for support from the USSR and China as opposed to other Arab countries which they feel their struggle is stagnating.⁹⁸

The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine was established in 1968.⁹⁹ Despite its name, it resembles the Popular Front in that it is secular and has anti-capitalist goals, specifically Marxism and Maoism. It was formed by former members of the Popular Front who thought that group was too focused on military matters and sought to be more grassroots in nature. Of all the violent groups, the Democratic Front is the least so, as its main goal is to “create a people’s democratic Palestine in which Arabs and Jews would live without discrimination, a state without classes and national oppression.”¹⁰⁰ When the USSR went into decline, so did the Popular Front and the Democratic Front groups, both of which lost ground to Islamist movements.

The most notable of the Islamist movements is Hamas, which was established in 1987 and became the most popular militant group. While the Popular Front’s militant wing, renamed the Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades, continued armed attacks, their ideological movement failed to gain traction.¹⁰¹ As for the Democratic Front, it fell into financial

⁹⁸ BBC, “Profile: Popular Front.”

⁹⁹ European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), “Mapping Palestinian Politics- Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP).” https://www.ecfr.eu/mapping_palestinian_politics/detail/democratic_front_for_the_liberation_of_palestine.

¹⁰⁰ Spencer C. Tucker, *Middle East Conflicts from Ancient Egypt to the 21st Century: An Encyclopedia and Document Collection* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO., 2019), 1006.

¹⁰¹ BBC, “Profile: Popular Front.”

trouble when China stopped supporting them financially in the early 1990s to avoid damaging trade relations with the West.¹⁰²

Around the time the two Front groups began struggling, a religious militant group, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), emerged in 1981. It was founded by Palestinian students in Egypt who were inspired by the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Their main goal is the violent destruction of Israel, then the purification of the Arab countries from Western influences.¹⁰³ They are not as well-funded as Hamas, nor do they have a social services wing, they are fully focused on attacks against Israeli civilians.¹⁰⁴

Hamas, which became the *de facto* governance body of the Gaza Strip, was founded in 1987.¹⁰⁵ It is by far the most well-funded and powerful violent group, carrying out countless suicide attacks, bombings, and rocket launches directed toward Israeli civilians throughout its history. Like the PIJ, it is a militant Islamist organization with the same goals. Due to their similarities and because both groups have funding coming from Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon, they cooperate and support one another, unlike the other groups which have different ideological differences. Although the PIJ was significantly weakened after the Israeli crackdown in 2004, they still operate and are the main perpetrator of rocket launches.¹⁰⁶ In a turning point for the PLO, it agreed to cease

¹⁰² Mohammed Turki Al-Sudairi, "Among Old Friends: A History of the Palestinian Community in China," Middle East Institute, March 27, 2015. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/among-old-friends-history-palestinian-community-china>.

¹⁰³ Anti-Defamation League (ADL), "Palestinian Islamic Jihad." <https://www.adl.org/resources/glossary-terms/palestinian-islamic-jihad>.

¹⁰⁴ ADL, "Palestinian Islamic Jihad."

¹⁰⁵ Berrebi, "Evidence about the Link."

¹⁰⁶ Federation of American Scientists (FAS), "The Terrorist Connection: Iran, the Islamic Jihad and Hamas," FAS.org, May 1995. <https://fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/950500.htm>.

violence and recognize Israel's right to exist in 1993.¹⁰⁷ Only then was it recognized as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

Fatah, another group that became PLO-affiliated, is the political party that retains control of the Palestinian National Authority in the West Bank, through its president.¹⁰⁸ It was founded in 1959 by Yasser Arafat and became a political party in 1965. It is secular in nature. By 1967, it was the dominant political force in Palestinian politics. Fatah is also active in controlling the Palestinian refugee camps. Like the PLO, Fatah also engaged in attacks in its early history until the 1993 peace agreement. Because of their unity, the PLO and Fatah observe similar goals and actions. This puts them at odds with the other more violent groups, especially Hamas, which see the PLO and Fatah as weak because they negotiate with Israel. Only recently did the two groups agree to ceasing their conflicts.¹⁰⁹

While the general public are the main targets of terrorist attacks in the case of transnational groups such as Al Qaeda and ISIS, they are quite different. The target of terror groups operating in Palestine is Israel, and the area of Palestine itself does not suffer random attacks by terror groups there. However, attacks are directed toward Israel and the Israeli people. In Palestine, the general public are seen by terror groups as important stakeholders whose support is helpful to their cause.¹¹⁰ Since the 2010s, among the general population, there is less inclination toward violence, with more Palestinians

¹⁰⁷ Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin, "Israel-PLO recognition—Exchange of letters between PM Rabin and Chairman Arafat/Arafat letter to Norwegian FM (Non-UN documents), 9 September 1993." <https://web.archive.org/web/20131028181816/http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/36917473237100E285257028006C0BC5>.

¹⁰⁸ John Pike, "Al-Fatah Al-'Asifa," *Global Security*. <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/al-fatah.htm>.

¹⁰⁹ Tahhan, "Hamas and Fatah."

¹¹⁰ Berrebi, "Evidence about the Link."

wanting peace and stability as opposed to fighting.¹¹¹ Still, terror groups, including Hamas's military wing, promote attacks and label those who carry them out and are killed as "martyrs," thus glorifying terrorists and inspiring new ones. Similarly, Israeli terrorist groups promote violence against Palestinians but also against Israel for not fitting the ideal Jewish state that they aspire to create.

¹¹¹ Tahhan, "Hamas and Fatah."

Chapter X

Conclusion

Based on previous scholarly research as well as my own quantitative and qualitative analyses, I conclude that poverty is not the main factor motivating terrorist group. That said, my hypothesized connection between persecution and exclusion, as well as using measures of poverty, did not have a direct connection.

Nevertheless, while there is a large quest for power on the part of high-ranking terrorists, lower-ranking members' roles are mostly that of foot soldiers for the terrorist groups. As hopeless young people are driven by anger and desperation, they are easy to recruit and eager to join what they see as a successful organization. An glorified view of death and a promise of Paradise, made to them by terrorist groups, combined with their skewed version of Islam, motivates these groups and their members to commit suicide attacks and die as "martyrs."

The ease with which suicide as a psychological malady then becomes a means for committing violent attacks. I suggest that this invites further research to better understand the motivations of terrorists of all ranks.

The limitations of my research were mostly external. The main limitation was time, considering that this is a thesis with a specified time frame and thus is more narrow in scope than previously planned. During the course of the research, I came across new information, such as a potential psychological study into whether a previous susceptibility

to or suffering from suicidal thoughts contributes to bombers committing terrorist attacks; or if ideology is the greater contributor.

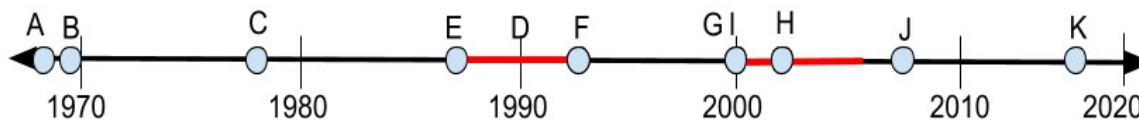
I was also limited in the amount of space as well as time to continue exploring more on this topic. A desire to branch out more throughout the research, which had the potential to lead to ambiguity, prevented me from taking on further topics connected to this thesis.

An additional major external limitation is language. The official language of Palestine is Arabic; the official language of Israel is Hebrew. I can neither read or understand either language. Thus written materials as well as video content in either of these languages that did not have subtitles were not available to use in my research.

Internally, I worked with a few terms such as “terrorist” and “poverty” which have varying and broad definitions depending on the field of study or even the country of study. For that reason, I identified specific key words and provided definitions of those words as I used them in this thesis. Then the challenge was to stick to the intended definition as it applied to my topic of study and not define or interpret them in different ways. My Definition of Terms appears in the front matter of this thesis.

Appendix A

Timeline of Events in Palestine



- A. Six Day War (1967): Israel seized Golan Heights from Syria, West Bank from Jordan, and Gaza & Sinai Peninsula from Egypt. Israel was now occupying the Palestinian territories including all of Jerusalem and its holy sites. (Kurtulus, E. N. (2007). *The Notion of a pre-emptive War: The Six Day War Revisited*. *The Middle East Journal*, 61(2), 220-238.)
- B. PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) founded in 1964 with the objective to liberate Palestine, initially using armed struggle. Was created after the Arab Summit of 1964 as an organization to represent the Palestinian people. ("Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations." Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations - Palestine National Charter of 1964. Accessed June 21, 2020. <https://web.archive.org/web/20101130144018/http://www.un.int/wcm/content/site/palestine/pid/12363>.)
- C. Camp David Accords (1978): US-brokered agreement that led to peace between Egypt and Israel, Sinai Peninsula went back to Egypt. Beginning of the end of the wider Arab-Israeli conflict and other Arab states began to make peace with Israel. (The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. "Camp David Accords." Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., January 31, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Camp-David-Accords>.)
- D. First Intifada 1987-1993: A grassroots uprising against Israel that began in December 1987 after Israeli truck crashed into two vans carrying Palestinian workers at the Jabalya refugee camp, killing four of them (Bader Araj and Robert J. Brym, "Intifadah," Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., last modified May 2, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/intifadah>)
- E. Hamas founded in 1987: Opposed the secular approach of the PLO and favored military conflict as a means to liberate Palestine. Tactics include rocket attacks and suicide bomb attacks on civilian and military targets associated with Israel. Unlike the PLO, they refused to accept Israel or cede any territory belonging to historic Palestine (The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, "Hamas," Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., January 17, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hamas>.)
- F. Oslo Accords 1993: Israeli acknowledged the Palestinian Authority (PA) in exchange for accepting Israel's right to exist, officially establishing a Palestinian state with administrative institutions. (Murphy, Kim. "Israel and PLO, in Historic Bid for Peace, Agree to Mutual Recognition : Mideast: After Decades of Conflict, Accord Underscores Both Sides' Readiness to Coexist. Arafat Reaffirms the Renunciation of Violence in Strong Terms." *Los Angeles Times*. September 10, 1993. Accessed June 22, 2020. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1993-09-10-mn-33546-story.html>.)
- G. Camp David 2000: Summit between Palestinian, Israeli, and US presidents with the objective to end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which ended with no agreement. ("Trilateral Statement on the Middle East Peace Summit at Camp David." U.S. Department of State. July 25, 2000. Accessed June 22, 2020. <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/nea/rls/22698.htm>.)
- H. Operation Defense Shield (2002): Launched by Israel to block armed Palestinians from entering its territory, however, the barrier set up deviates from the pre-1967 ceasefire line into the West Bank ("Palestinian Territories - Timeline." BBC News. April 08, 2019. Accessed June 22, 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29362505>.)
- I. Second Intifada 2000-2005: Due to frustration with peace talks not yielding a sovereign Palestinian state, a second uprising began. Unlike the First Intifada, the Second Intifada was even more violent with suicide bombings becoming a popular attack method against civilians targets and an increase in other violent acts of terrorism. (Bader Araj and Robert J. Brym, "Intifadah," Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., last modified May 2, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/intifadah>)
- J. Gaza is taken over by Hamas (2007)- This takeover splits Palestine with the West Bank being under the authority of the PLO-affiliated party Fatah and the Gaza Strip under Hamas rule. Israeli blockade ensues (Amnesty, "Gaza: Palestinians Tortured, Summarily Killed by Hamas Forces during 2014 Conflict," Amnesty International, last modified May 27, 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/05/gaza-palestinians-tortured-summarily-killed-by-hamas-forces-during-2014-conflict/>.)
- K. Trump's pro-Israel policies enflame conflict beginning in 2017 with his declaration that Jerusalem will be recognized as the capital of Israel. Hamas gave their full support to Fatah with the PA's president Mamoud Abbas warning of dangerous consequences for the peace process. (<https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/12/06/568748383/how-is-the-world-reacting-to-u-s-plan-to-recognize-jerusalem-as-israeli-capital>.)

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