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The Palestine Effect: The Role of Palestinians in the Transnational Jihad Movement

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What is the relationship between the Palestinian issue and the al-Qāʿida phenomenon?[1] To what extent did the Israeli-Palestinian conflict fuel the rise of transnational jihadism and do events in the West Bank and Gaza motivate non-Palestinian jihādīs today? Are there any relevant connections between Ḥamās and al-Qāʿida? In short, what are the linkages between nationalist and transnational varieties of militant Islamism? These connections are important to study because they can shed light on the causes of transnational jihadism as well as the conditions under which ethno-religious conflicts produce violent spillover effects.

This special issue explores the Palestine-al-Qāʿida connection through a particular lens, namely, biographies of prominent jihādī ideologues who chose transnationalism despite being Palestinian. It assesses the specific proposition that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has fuelled jihadism by producing diaspora activists predisposed to transnational militancy. The purpose of this introductory article is to situate our inquiry

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1) In this article, the term "al-Qāʿida", unless otherwise specified, is used to denote both the Pakistan-based core organization ("al-Qāʿida Central") and its various affiliates such as al-Qāʿida on the Arabian Peninsula and al-Qāʿida in the Islamic Maghreb. The term "transnational jihad movement" refers to a broader cluster of perpetrators or advocates of Islamist violence unconstrained by modern state borders. Included in the category are ideologues who advocate transnational violence without perpetrating it. "Jihadism" refers to the even broader phenomenon of militant Sunni Islamism. In principle, Ḥamās can be considered a jihādī group (of the nationalist variety), but in current academic writing practice the adjective "jihādī" is used primarily of transnational militants.

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in the broader literature on Islamism and political violence and to provide relevant historical background information for the articles that follow.

Motivation: A Connection Unexplored

The idea for this project grew out of the observation that the relationship between Palestinian Islamism and transnational jihadism remains understudied despite figuring prominently in informal discussions about the causes of Islamist terrorism. In the years after 9/11 we both found that the issue of "al-Qāʿida and Palestine" regularly came up at dinner conversations or in question-and-answer sessions after public talks about jihadism. The past decade has also seen a substantial number of opinion pieces staking out various claims about the Palestine-al-Qāʿida connection.[2] The issue clearly has important policy implications, both for counterterrorism and for third countries' approaches to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[3]

Yet, academics have largely shied away from exploring the Palestine-al-Qāʿida relationship systematically. A review of the literature reveals no books and only a few peer-reviewed articles that tackle the issue in depth. Of these, almost all pertain to a limited subset of descriptive topics, especially the recent bickering between Ḥamās and al-Qāʿida and the fighting between Ḥamās and Salafī grouplets in Gaza (see below). The larger causal question of whether and how the Palestinian-Israeli conflict may have fuelled transnational jihadism has yet to be addressed head-on. Moreover, an invisible fence has long separated the academic subfields of "Palestine studies" and "jihādī studies". With a few exceptions, Middle East specialists who study al-Qāʿida and its affiliates have tended not to study Ḥamās or Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and vice versa. Each of the two subfields has made important advances in recent decades, but they have mostly not overlapped.

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2) See, for example, Dore Gold, "Ties Between Al Qaeda and Hamas in Mideast Are Long and Frequent", *San Francisco Chronicle (online)*, 5 March 2006, and Glenn Greenwald, "The Price of Our Middle East Policy", *Salon.com*, 24 January 2010.

3) For two different takes on the policy implications, see Ashley Charron, "The Israel Palestine Problem: How Minimizing the Conflict Would Lower the Threat of Terrorism Against the United States", *Perspectives* (2011): pp. 52-60 and Michael Scott Doran, "Palestine, Iraq and American Strategy", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 82, no. 1 (2003): pp. 19-33.

One reason why the intersection remains understudied seems to be its politicization. Issues such as the Ḥamās-al-Qāʿida connection or the Palestine factor in jihādī recruitment are sensitive because they can potentially affect the moral standing of the main parties to the conflict. Naturally, Palestinian activists do not want to be associated with the perpetrators of 9/11 any more than Israelis want to be blamed for the rise of global jihadism. As a result, pro-Palestinian observers—who happen to be strongly represented in the academic Middle East Studies community in the West—have tended to view inquiries into al-Qāʿida-Ḥamās connections with scepticism because they might be used by Israel to smear the entire Palestinian resistance.[4] Conversely, pro-Israeli commentators have been quick to counter suggestions that al-Qāʿida might be genuinely motivated by Palestine, presumably because it could lead Western governments to pressure Israel for political concessions or tactical restraint in the latter's conflict with the Palestinians.[5] In other words, this is a thorny topic and a risky specialization, especially for untenured academics.

Another reason why the subject has not been widely studied is that it is really quite complex. The "relationship between the Palestinian issue and the al-Qāʿida phenomenon" is a conceptually vague formulation that encapsulates a broad range of different research questions, each of which requires separate treatment. One way to start disaggregating the notion of "relationship" is to think of ideal-type mechanisms by which events in the Palestinian theatre might affect the occurrence of transnational Islamist violence. We see at least three such ideal types of mechanisms: "organizational", "motivational", and "historical". In the first, the Palestinian conflict affects transnational jihadism through organizational links between local and international organizations. In the second,

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4) See, for example, Derek Gregory, "Palestine and the 'War on Terror'", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, vol. 24, no. 1 (2004): pp. 183-195.

5) See, for example, Dennis Ross, "Bin Laden's Terrorism Isn't About the Palestinians", *The New York Times*, 12 October 2001. Former CIA official Ray McGovern documented a systematic down-playing of the Palestine-al-Qāʿida connection in US media reporting and argued that "presidential candidates and the U.S. Establishment in general are hyper-allergic to discussing how U.S. support for Israeli policies toward the Palestinians encourages the recruitment of anti-American terrorists"; Ray McGovern, "Cheney Goofs on Israel", *Consortiumnews.com*, 22 May 2009.

events in Palestine create solidarity-based grievances in non-Palestinians that inspire them to take up arms. In the third, the conflict or its by-products, affected the early development of transnational jihadism at critical junctures in its history. This leads to three somewhat more specific questions: 1) What is the organizational relationship between Palestine-focused and transnational militant Islamists? 2) To what extent does the Palestinian conflict motivate transnational jihadists? And 3) what has been the effect of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the historical evolution of transnational jihad networks? This is but one of several possible ways to parse the problem, but the general point is that we are dealing with a messy set of distinct questions, not a single one.

Moreover, each of these inquiries requires good data, most of which have been inaccessible in open sources until recently. To study group connections, for example, we need information about the inner workings of clandestine organizations, which is by definition hard to acquire. To analyse motivations of al-Qāʿida recruits we need detailed biographical data on a decent sample of non-leaders as well as a relevant control group, which is also very difficult to collect. Tracing the historical impact of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on transnational jihadism may require primary sources from decades past that may not be available on the Internet, only through interviews and archival work. Given these obstacles it is no wonder that some of these questions have been left unanswered.

It is worth recalling that these challenges are not specific to the study of militant Islamism, and that transnational dimensions of sub-state armed conflict remain under-researched in the social sciences more generally. It is arguably only in the past decade that scholars of civil war and insurgency have begun exploring the issue in depth.[6] Social movement scholars and some international relations specialists began studying transnationalism earlier, in the 1990s, but their empirical focus was largely on non-violent protest movements in the West.[7] In fact, the re-

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6) See, for example, Idean Salehyan, *Rebels Without Borders: Transnational Insurgencies in World Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009) and Jeffrey Checkel (ed.), *Transnational Dynamics of Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

7) See, for example, Thomas Risse-Kappen, *Bringing Transnational Relations Back In: Non-State Actors, Domestic Structures, and International Institutions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Jackie Smith, Charles Chatfield, and Ron Pagnucco (eds.), *Transnational Social Movements and Global Politics: Solidarity Beyond the State* (Syracuse,

cent upsurge in transnationalism studies has also yielded new insights into the global connections of the leftist Palestinian resistance of the 1960s and 1970s.[8] In light of this, we should perhaps not expect to have all the answers to the questions about Palestine and transnational jihadism already, but it is time to start working on them.

What We Know

So far, the literature that does exist on the Palestine-al-Qāʿida connection has mostly focused on the first two problem sets (connections and motivational effects). Some preliminary answers have emerged. Studies of the Ḥamās-al-Qāʿida relationship suggest that organizational links have been very limited, and that the ideological relationship is one of competition and hostility.[9] A rare contact point was the ideologue ʿAbdallāh ʿAzzām (see below), who was in touch with Ḥamās from Pakistan and remains popular in Palestine, but the interaction occurred back in the 1980s, and ʿAzzām (d. 1989) never advocated international terrorism the way al-Qāʿida does today.[10] Throughout the 1990s and

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NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997). More recent contributions include Donatella Della Porta & Sidney Tarrow (eds.), *Transnational Protest & Global Activism: People, Passions, and Power* (Oxford, etc.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005); and Sidney Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

8) See, for example, Ely Karmon, *Coalitions Between Terrorist Organizations: Revolutionaries, Nationalists and Islamists* (Leiden: Brill, 2005) and Paul Chamberlin, "The Struggle Against Oppression Everywhere: The Global Politics of Palestinian Liberation", *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 47, no. 1 (January 2011): pp. 25-41.

9) Jake Lipton, "The War of Words Between Hamas and al-Qaeda", *Policy Watch*, no. 1254 (Washington, D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 28 June 2007); Barak Mendelsohn, "Al-Qaeda's Palestinian Problem", *Survival*, vol. 51, no. 4 (September 2009): pp. 71-86; Mary Habeck, "Al-Qa'ida and Hamas: The Limits of Salafi-Jihadi Pragmatism", *CTC Sentinel*, vol. 3, no. 2 (February 2010): pp. 5ff.; Marc Lynch, "Islam Divided Between Salafi-jihad and the Ikhwan", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, vol. 33, no. 6 (May 17, 2010): pp. 467-487; Reuven Paz, "Jihadists and Nationalist Islamists: Al-Qa'ida and Hamas", in Assaf Moghadam and Brian Fishman (eds.), *Fault Lines in Global Jihad: Organizational, Strategic, and Ideological Fissures* (London: Routledge, 2011): pp. 203-219; a small subset of the literature emphasises—and in our view exaggerates—the organizational connections and ideological affinities between Ḥamās and al-Qāʿida; see, for example, Jonathan Dahoah-Halevi, "The Growing Hamas-Al Qaeda Connection", *Jerusalem Issue Brief*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2007).

10) Asaf Maliach, "Abdullah Azzam, al-Qaeda, and Hamas: Concepts of Jihad and Istishhad", *Military and Strategic Affairs*, vol. 2, no. 2 (2010): pp. 79-93; *The Influence of the*

2000s Ḥamās-al-Qāʿida interactions were negligible, and in recent years, the rise of Salafī groups in Gaza has brought the tension between Ḥamās's pragmatic Muslim Brotherhood ideology and the intransigent Salafism of the transnationalists into very sharp relief.[11]

However, Palestinian militants and transnational jihādīs are not in two different worlds. They have kept a close eye on, and learned from, one another over the years. Al-Qāʿida, for instance, adopted some of Ḥamās's tactics—notably suicide bombings and the practice of recording martyrdom videos—after observing them from afar in the 1990s.[12] Mutual sympathies and respect also exist; for example, many Ḥamās supporters are fiercely anti-American and have expressed respect for Usāma bin Lādin, although this has not translated into military operations against Western targets.[13] It is worth noting here that reliable polls long showed levels of Palestinian popular support for Usāma bin Lādin to be among the highest in the Muslim world. In 2003 no less than 72 percent of Palestinians expressed "some" or "a lot of" confidence in the al-Qāʿida leader.[14] So far it is only among the relatively small—but grow-

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Legacy of Global Jihad on Hamas (Center for Special Studies–Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, November 2004), *http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/19256* (accessed 5 July 2013).

11) Khaled Hroub, "Salafi Formations in Palestine and the Limits of a De-Palestinised Milieu", *Holy Land Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2 (2008): pp. 157-181; Rafid Fadhil Ali, "Al-Qaeda's Palestinian Inroads", *Jamestown Terrorism Monitor*, vol. 6, no. 8 (17 April 2008); Are Hovdenak, *Al-Qaida—a Challenge for Hamas?* (Kjeller: Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, January 2009); Jean-Pierre Filiu, "The Brotherhood Vs. Al-Qaeda: A Moment of Truth?", *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, vol. 9 (2009): pp. 52-59; Kim Cragin, "Al Qaeda Confronts Hamas: Divisions in the Sunni *Jihadist* Movement and its Implications for U.S. Policy", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, vol. 32, no. 7 (29 July 2009): pp. 576-590; Matthew Levitt, Yoram Cohen, and Becca Wasser, *Deterred but Determined: Salafi-Jihadi Groups in the Palestinian Arena* (Washington, D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, January 2010); Benedetta Berti, "Salafi-Jihadi Activism in Gaza: Mapping the Threat", *CTC Sentinel*, vol. 3, no. 5 (2010): pp. 5-9; Leila Stockmarr, *Gaza's New Islamists: The Atomization of Palestinian Islamism Since 2006* (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, 2011); *Radical Islam in Gaza* (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 29 March 2011).

12) Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and pan-Islamism Since 1979* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 111.

13) Matthew Levitt, "Could Hamas Target the West?", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, vol. 30, no. 11 (2007): pp. 925-945.

14) Between 2003 and 2011 the percentage of people who expressed "some" or "a lot of"

ing—jihādī-Salafī community in Gaza that we see explicit attempts to associate organizationally with al-Qāʿida and a willingness to attack Western targets in the territories.[15] However, these groups have yet to be declared formally a part of the al-Qāʿida franchise by the latter's leaders.[16]

Regarding Palestine as a motivation for al-Qāʿida, we know that the cause features prominently in the group's ideological statements. Top leaders Usāma bin Lādin and Ayman al-Ẓawāhirī have both spoken regularly and extensively about Palestine since at least the late 1980s.[17] The claim that bin Lādin only invoked Palestine after 9/11 when it was opportune to do so is patently false.[18] As one of us (Hegghammer) noted in 2007:

> A search for the word Palestine in a compilation of al-Qaida texts between 1990 and 2002 that I made for the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI), produces no less than 158 hits. Most al-Qaida recruitment videos, including the first such production from early 2001, include images from Palestine. In short, Palestine is all over al-Qaida's propaganda and has been so for over a decade.[19]

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confidence in Usāma bin Lādin remained substantially and consistently higher in Palestine than in the six other Muslim countries polled (Egypt, Jordan Lebanon, Turkey, Pakistan and Indonesia). However, as in the other countries, the percentage of Palestinians expressing confidence in bin Lādin decreased over time, from 72% in 2003 to 34% in 2011; see *On Anniversary of Bin Laden's Death, Little Backing of Al Qaeda*, Global Attitudes Project (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 30 April 2012).

15) For examples of such attacks, see "Gunmen Attack UN Summer Camp for Children", *France24* (online), 24 May 2010 and Dan Ephron, "The Westerner Killed in Gaza", *The Daily Beast*, 16 April 2011.

16) Matthew Levitt, "Israel as an Al-Qa'ida Target: Sorting Rhetoric from Reality", *CTC Sentinel*, vol. 2, no. 10 (2009): pp. 12-15.

17) See Bruce Lawrence (ed.), *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden* (London & New York: Verso, 2005) and Laura Mansfield, *His Own Words: A Translation of the Writings of Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri* (TLG Publications, 2006).

18) This claim became popular in certain American policy circles almost immediately after 9/11. For example, Peter Beinart wrote: "as longtime Bin Laden watchers know, he has never been especially concerned with Palestine"; Peter Beinart, "Front Lines", *New Republic*, 1 October 2001. Shortly afterwards, Victor David Hanson stated: "bin Laden embraced the Palestinian cause only when his own future turned bleak"; Victor Davis Hanson, "The Longest War", *American Heritage*, vol. 53, no. 1 (2002).

19) Thomas Hegghammer, "Osama Bin Laden's True Priorities", *The Guardian* (online),

Similarly, Matthew Levitt of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy noted:

> Palestine has featured prominently in al-Qa'ida's statements and propaganda from the early outset of the group's founding. In fact, nearly every public statement made by Usama bin Ladin since 1990 has mentioned the Palestinian cause, often represented through references to the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem that strike both religious and political chords among Muslims and Arabs worldwide.[20]

The list of quotes by al-Qā'ida leaders and jihādī ideologues on Palestine is too long to include here, so we shall content ourselves with a few key observations.[21] One is that al-Qā'ida's arguably most important ideological statement, the "Declaration of the World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and the Crusaders" (February 1998), lists Palestine as number three on a list of reasons why jihad against America is justified (after the US military presence in Saudi Arabia and the sanctions regime against Iraq).[22] Another is that al-Qā'ida's favoured term for its enemy—"*the Jews* [our emphasis] and the Crusaders" (and variants thereof)—implicates Israel. Yet another observation is that the mastermind of 9/11, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, cited American support for Israel as his principal motivation for undertaking the attack.[23] Furthermore, his nephew Ramzi Yousef, who masterminded the first World Trade Center bombing in February 1993, also appears to have been motivated by the

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3 December 2007. The report in question is Thomas Hegghammer, *Dokumentasjon om al-Qaida: Intervjuer, kommunikéer og andre primærkilder, 1990–2002 [Documentation on al-Qaida: Interviews, Communiqués and Other Primary Sources, 1990–2002]* (Kjeller: Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI/Rapport), 2002). The 2001 video is *al-Sahab*, "State of the Ummah" (2001), available at *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f_qosX7EaHM* (accessed 3 July 2013).

20) Levitt, "Israel as an Al-Qa'ida Target".

21) For examples of quotations, see Thomas Hegghammer, "Palestina og Global Jihad [Palestine and Global Jihad]", *Babylon*, no. 2 (October 2004): pp. 60-69.

22) Bruce Lawrence, *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden* (London: Verso, 2005), p. 60.

23) "By his own account, KSM's animus toward the United States stemmed not from his experience there as a student, but rather from his violent disagreement with U.S. foreign policy favoring Israel"; *The 9/11 Commission Report* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2004), p. 147.

Israeli-Palestinian issue. Yousef later said he chose New York City because of its large Jewish population, and in letters sent to newspapers before the attack he stated three demands, the first two of which were an end to all US aid to Israel and an end to US diplomatic relations with Israel.[24] Yousef was not an al-Qāʿida member, but he had fought in Afghanistan in the 1980s and was the nephew of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. Of course we cannot know the true motivation of all these individuals, but there is good reason to believe that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has loomed relatively large in their worldview.

However, the emphasis placed on Palestine has varied over time and between individuals. Global jihādī ideologues have tended to invoke the plight of the Palestinians more often in times of tension in the territories, for example during the second Palestinian intifada (2000–ca. 2005) or operation Cast Lead in Gaza (2008–2009).[25] Moreover, quantitative content analysis has shown that bin Lādin's statements cite political grievances such as Palestine more often than religious arguments, but also that he invoked political grievances relatively more often in speeches addressed to Westerners than in speeches addressed to Muslims.[26] In addition, when jihādī ideologues speak about Palestine, it is not always to lament the Israeli oppression of Palestinians; it can also be to comment on internal Palestinian politics. For instance, in the largest online library of jihādī texts, *Minbar al-Tawḥīd wa-l-Jihād*, there are more texts devoted to criticizing Ḥamās than to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as such.[27] Finally, we face a major analytical problem in that Palestine is only one of several political challenges invoked in al-Qāʿida's statements to persuade Muslims to take up arms. Measuring the motivating effect of Palestine *relative to that of other issues*—such as the Russian repression

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24) Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin, 2004), p. 251.

25) Reuven Paz, "Qa'idat al-Jihad: A New Name on the Road to Palestine", International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (*http://www.ict.org.il*), 7 May 2002. Thomas Hegghammer, "Gaza Galore in New Issue of Sada al-Jihad", *Jihadica*, 28 January 2009.

26) Alejandro J. Beutel and Imad-ad-Dean Ahmad, "Religious or Policy Justification for Violence?: A Quantitative Content Analysis of Bin Ladin's Statements", 2009, *https://www.csidonline.org/documents/pdf/Alejandro_Beutel_Religious_Policy_CSID_Paper.pdf* (accessed 2 July 2013).

27) See *www.tawhed.ws/c?i=187* (accessed 7 May 2013).

in Chechnya, the US-led invasion of Iraq, or any other of the many grievances invoked—is a difficult exercise indeed.

Some argue that targeting preferences might be a better proxy for leader motivations and point to the relatively few al-Qāʿida attacks on Israeli or Jewish targets as evidence that al-Qāʿida's brass are not particularly concerned with Palestine.[28] It appears to be true that Jews and Israelis have not been *preferred* targets of al-Qāʿida, but there have been too many attacks on such targets to infer that al-Qāʿida and its affiliates avoid them.[29] Even before 9/11 there were several attacks on Jewish/Israeli targets by non-Palestinian jihādīs of various affiliations—albeit not by core al-Qāʿida—such as:

- The killing of Rabbi Meir Kahane by Egyptian Islamist El Sayyid Nosair in New York in November 1990
- The car-bombing of a Jewish school in Lyon, France, in September 1995, by the Algerian GIA
- The killing of 17 Greek tourists—mistaken for Israelis—in Cairo in April 1996 by the Egyptian Islamic Group
- The "Millennium Plot" by al-Qāʿida linked operatives to attack Israeli and American tourists in Jordan in December 1999

Another important anecdote is that Richard Reid, known as the "shoe bomber" for his attempt to down a transatlantic plane in December 2001 with explosives concealed in his shoe, travelled to Israel in mid-2001, reportedly to scout targets for al-Qāʿida.[30] The post-9/11 period saw even more al-Qāʿida-linked plots and attacks against Jewish/Israeli targets, the most prominent of which include:

- The plot by al-Qāʿida linked militants (the so-called "Tawhid Cell") to attack Jewish targets in Germany in the spring of 2002

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28) Matthew Levitt, "Al Qaeda Targeting Israel: Between Rhetoric and Reality", *Orbis*, vol. 54, no. 3 (2010): pp. 413-425.

29) Asaf Maliach, "Bin Ladin, Palestine and al-Qaʿida's Operational Strategy", *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 44, no. 3 (May 2008): pp. 353-375; Yoram Schweitzer, "The Terrorism Threat Against Israel from al-Qaeda and Global Jihad", *Military and Strategic Affairs*, vol. 2, no. 1 (2010): pp. 21-28.

30) Michael Elliott, "The Shoe Bomber's World", *Time*, 16 February 2002.

- The bombing of the Ghriba synagogue on the Tunisian island of Djerba in April 2002
- The attacks on an Israeli-owned hotel and airliner in Mombasa, Kenya, in November 2002
- The bombing of a Jewish cultural center, a Jewish cemetery and a Jewish-owned restaurant in Casablanca, Morocco, in May 2003
- The bombing of two synagogues in Istanbul, Turkey, in November 2003
- The rocket attack against Eilat in southern Israel in August 2005, claimed by al-Qāʿida in Iraq
- The rocket attacks against Northern Israel in October 2009 and November 2011, claimed by the "Abdallah Azzam Brigades"

Two observations are worth noting here. One is that several of these attacks were against soft Jewish targets outside Israel, i.e., relatively "low-hanging fruit" from a terrorist's perspective. Another is that the connection to al-Qāʿida Central is unclear or absent in several of these operations, so we do not really know the extent to which the top al-Qāʿida leadership prioritized them.

Thus, once again we are faced with evidence that al-Qāʿida leaders appear neither consumed with nor despondent to the Palestinian issue, but care about it to some intermediate extent. In the absence of rigorous quantitative studies of al-Qāʿida's attempted plots, we cannot say exactly how much resources al-Qāʿida has devoted to Jewish/Israeli targets. Even if we did, it is debatable whether targeting preferences would reveal underlying motivations. It is perfectly possible for a militant group to be concerned with a problem in one part of the world and pursue a military strategy in another. Just as al-Qāʿida's attacks against the United States can be interpreted as an instrumental strategy to undermine secular regimes in the Muslim world, so anti-Western targeting could reflect resentment against Western support for Israel.

As far as low-level al-Qāʿida recruits or sympathisers are concerned, the evidence is somewhat more suggestive of a Palestinian motivation effect, but uncertainties remain. For a start, many surveys indicate that Muslims in general feel quite strongly about the Palestinian issue.[31] The

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[31] See, for example, the 2010 Arab Public Opinion Poll (*www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2010/08/05-arab-opinion-poll-telhami* [accessed 2 May 2013]).

9/11 Report remarked: "it is simply a fact that American policy regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and American actions in Iraq are dominant staples of popular commentary across the Arab and Muslim world."[32] More important, several studies of al-Qāʿida recruits have found the Palestinian issue to be a frequently declared motivation for joining.[33] According to the *9/11 Report*, several of the plotters and operatives involved in the 9/11 attacks were preoccupied with the Palestinian issue in the years leading up to the operation.[34] However, the issue is not mentioned by all recruits, and it is not always the sole motivation for those who do mention it. Besides, these studies tend to have many missing values, since declared motivations are not always available for every profile.

There is also some evidence to suggest a correlation between chronological variation in aggregate recruit supply and tensions in the territories. For example, the flow of recruits to al-Qāʿida's training camps in Afghanistan in the 1996–2001 period seems to have reached its highest level in early to mid-2001, after the outbreak of the second Palestinian intifada.[35] Similarly, British government officials reported increased recruitment to radical Islamist networks during and after operation "Cast Lead" in Gaza.[36] However, this evidence is sparse and not controlled against other factors.

Thus, aside from ruling out the most extreme positions—i.e., that Palestine does not matter at all, or, conversely, that it is al-Qāʿida's overriding motivation—the evidence is inconclusive. The picture is probably even less clear-cut today because the transnational jihad movement is more fragmented and decentralised than it was in the 1990s and early 2000s, which makes it harder to generalise about what the typical trans-

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32) *The 9/11 Commission Report*, p. 347.

33) See, for example, Petter Nesser, *Jihad In Europe: A Survey of the Motivations for Sunni Islamist Terrorism in Post-Millennium Europe* (Kjeller: Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI/Report), 2004) pp. 32, 36f., 48, 54, 57, 60, and 65; Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia*, pp. 133-138.

34) We have already mentioned Khalid Sheikh Mohammed's anger at US support for Israel. Marwan al-Shehhi would tell his friends, "how can you laugh when people are dying in Palestine?" In October 1999, Ramzi Binalshibh gave a speech denouncing Jews and read a Palestinian war poem at a friend's wedding. See *The 9/11 Commission Report*, pp. 162, 495.

35) Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia*, p. 118.

36) "Gaza Fuelled Extremism–Minister", *BBC News Online*, 28 January 2009.

national jihādī thinks about Palestine. There is every reason to believe that the various affiliates—such as al-Qāʿida in the Islamic Maghreb, al-Qāʿida on the Arabian Peninsula, and Jabhat al-Nuṣra—differ with respect to the prevalent motivations of their recruits.

Another point worth noting is that some of the most prominent American advocates of the view that Palestine helps al-Qāʿida recruitment are former senior CIA officials and military commanders. These include Michael Scheuer (former head of the bin Ladin unit in the CIA), Bruce Riedel (veteran CIA analyst and former Deputy Secretary of Defense), Paul Pillar (former head of the CIA's Counterterrorism Center), and General David Petraeus (former Commander of US Central Command and former Director of the CIA).[37] It must count for something when those who have been at the forefront of the war against al-Qāʿida —and who have had access to better primary sources than most of us will ever see—reach this conclusion.

The bottom line is that the Palestinian cause does appear to motivate al-Qāʿida recruits to at least some extent. The best evidence for this is found in the now substantial number of internal documents that have been captured in raids on al-Qāʿida safe houses and compounds over the years. These documents tell us that leaders talked about Palestine when they thought nobody was listening. In several documents, al-Qāʿida leaders instruct their propagandists to highlight the Palestinian issue more often, on the grounds that it will increase popular support for al-Qāʿida. For example, the documents captured by US Special Forces from bin Lādin's compound in Abbottabad in the lethal raid on 1 May 2011 show that in the years before his assassination, bin Lādin wanted his lieutenants to focus more on Israel/Palestine in their statements and operations.[38] There are two equally valid ways to interpret

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37) Anonymous, *Through Our Enemies' Eyes: Osama bin Laden, Radical Islam, and the Future of America* (Washington: Brassey's Inc., 2002); Bruce Riedel, *The Search for Al Qaeda: Its Leadership, Ideology, and Future* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2008); Paul R. Pillar, "Kerry's Peace Diplomacy", *The National Interest (online)*, 2 July 2013; *Statement of General David H. Petraeus* (Washington, D.C., 2010), *http://www.armed-services.senate.gov/statemnt/2010/03%20March/Petraeus%2003-16-10.pdf* (accessed 3 July 2013). Another outspoken former CIA official is Ray McGovern, but he appears not to have worked on jihadism while at the CIA.

38) Paul R. Pillar, "Palestine, the Extremist Cause", *The National Interest (online)*, 18 March 2012.

these instructions: One is that bin Lādin cared so much about the Palestinian cause that he was willing to devote resources to it. The other is that bin Lādin believed potential recruits cared so much about Palestine that they might be persuaded to support or join al-Qāʿida on account of it. Either way, Palestine matters. The argument that al-Qāʿida leaders opportunistically "exploit" the Palestinian cause is an implicit admission that the same cause motivates recruits. There can only be opportunism if there is something to exploit.

Our Focus: Transnational Jihad Ideologues of Palestinian Origin

In this special issue, we focus on the *historical* dimension of the Palestine-al-Qāʿida connection. Specifically, we ask whether the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has fuelled transnational jihadism by producing activists predisposed—due to their exile and/or sense of grievance—to transnational militancy. Several analysts have proposed such an "agent production effect" of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Israeli scholar of jihadism Reuven Paz noted in 2002 that Palestinians appear to be overrepresented among ideologues associated with transnational forms of Islamism.[39] Paz did not elaborate on the causal mechanism behind this overrepresentation, but listed a number of Palestinian ideologues of note, from Taqī al-Dīn al-Nabhānī (the founder of Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr) via ʿAbdallāh ʿAzzām (the leader of the "Arab Afghan" movement) to Abū Qatāda al-Filisṭīnī (the formerly UK-based radical preacher). More recently, the Lebanese journalist Ḥāzim al-Amīn has presented a more elaborate explanation for this phenomenon. In a book entitled "The Orphaned Salafi: The Palestinian Face of Global Jihad and al-Qaida" (2011), he argues that statelessness and exile led many Palestinian Islamists in the diaspora to focus on issues grander than national liberation.[40] The Palestinian-Jordanian author Marwān Shaḥāda has made a similar argument, though in less depth.[41]

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39) Reuven Paz, "The Brotherhood of Global Jihad" (*www.e-prism.org*, October 2001), *http://www.e-prism.org/images/The%20brotherhood%20of%20global%20Jihad%20-%20final.doc* (accessed 3 July 2013).

40) Ḥāzim al-Amīn, *Al-Salafī al-Yatīm: Al-Wajh al-Filisṭīnī li-"l-Jihād al-ʿĀlamī" wa-"l-Qāʿida"* (Beirut: Dār al-Sāqī, 2011).

41) Marwān Shaḥāda, *Al-Ḥarakāt al-Islāmiyya al-Muʿāṣira wa-Dawruhā fī l-Ṣirāʿ ʿalā l-Arḍ*

There is much anecdotal evidence to support this hypothesis. A good example is the diary of the former al-Qāʿida facilitator Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn Muḥammad Ḥusayn (Abū Zubayda), a Palestinian who grew up in Saudi Arabia. In 1990—before radicalizing—he wrote "[I am a Palestinian] with no homeland, no passport and no identity ... while the Jews are running loose in my country." Abū Zubayda was forced to attend university in India because only Saudi nationals were allowed to study computer science (his preferred subject) in the Kingdom. Only after arriving in India did he decide to explore jihadi training camps in Peshawar, Pakistan.[42]

The main purpose of this special issue is to assess al-Amīn's proposition that exile has made Palestinians predisposed to transnational activism. It is perhaps useful to start by surveying some of the available quantitative evidence on the presence of Palestinians in the world of transnational jihadism. In so doing, it is important to bear in mind that, numbering around 10 million, Palestinian Muslims make up no more than 0.6 % of the world's Muslim population.[43] If transnational jihādīs were a cross-section of the Muslim population we should expect 1 in every 170 jihādīs to be of Palestinian descent.

As it happens, the available data suggests that Palestinians are not overrepresented in the movement as a whole. They are present, but not in particularly large numbers. The cross-national sample of 172 al-Qāʿida associates presented in Marc Sageman's book *Understanding Terrorist Networks* contains only two Palestinians.[44] Available data on jihādī

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al-Muqaddasa, *www.archive.org/details/MarwanShatah* (accessed 8 February 2012), pp. 22-26.

42) See *http://projects.aljazeera.com/2013/abu-zubaydah/index.html* (accessed 10 November 2013).

43) There were an estimated 11.3 million Palestinians in 2012, Diaspora included; see "Palestinians at the End of 2012", *Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics*, 31 December 2012, *http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_PalestiniansEOY2012E.pdf* (accessed 8 July 2013). Of these, between 1 and 2 million are Christians, most of whom live outside Palestine (notably in Latin America), hence the lack of a reliable estimate of their number; see, for example, "Christian Presence in Palestine and the Diaspora: Statistics, Challenges and Opportunities", *Globalministries.org* (31 August 2012), *http://globalministries.org/news/mee/christian-presence-in.html* (accessed 8 July 2013). There are some 1.6 billion Muslims worldwide; see *The Future of the Global Muslim Population: Projections for 2010–2030* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 27 January 2011).

44) Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylva-

foreign fighters suggest the same. One of us (Hegghammer) collected a preliminary list of names of Arab fighters who appear in the main sources on the Afghan jihad in the 1980s. Only 8 of around 250 named individuals in the sample are Palestinians (although the list is non-representative and potentially biased).[45] In the so-called "Sinjar Records", which provide the self-reported national origin of 595 foreign fighters with al-Qāʿida in Iraq around the year 2006, there are no Palestinians.[46] Even in the current war in Syria, which is right next door to Israel, Palestinians appear to be only slightly overrepresented among the pro-rebel foreign fighters: A recent study found that only 7 of 280 individuals hailed as fallen martyrs on jihādī websites were Palestinian.[47] There are all kinds of problems with the above-mentioned data, but what exists suggests that Palestinians are not strongly overrepresented in transnational jihādī networks.

To be sure, al-Amīn and Paz were not talking about foot soldiers. Indeed, if we look at lists of jihādī ideologues, Palestinians appear to be slightly better represented, although the numbers are less striking than al-Amīn's argument seems to suggest. For example, the *Militant Ideology Atlas* produced by the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point in 2006 included 132 ideologues, only 3 of whom we could identify as Palestinian.[48] Another list circulated on jihādī websites in 2009 under the title "Mujahid's bookbag", includes some 53 names, four of which

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nia Press, 2004), pp. 185-190. In fact, none of the 172 are coded as Palestinian by Sageman himself, but our supplemental research revealed that at least two (Abū Qatāda al-Filisṭīni and Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn Ḥusayn, aka "Abū Zubayda") are of Palestinian extraction.

45) These are ʿAbdallāh ʿAzzām, Tamīm al-Adnānī, Jamāl Ismāʿīl, Aḥmad Saʿīd, Hishām Manṣūr, Māhir Shalbak, Khālid al-Anṣārī, Abū Muʿizz al-Khuwstī. The dataset is preliminary and unpublished, but a final version will be made available upon the publication of Hegghammer's forthcoming biography of ʿAzzām.

46) Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman, "Al Qa'ida's Foreign Fighters in Iraq: A First Look at the Sinjar Records" (West Point: Combating Terrorism Center, 2 January 2007), p. 8.

47) Aaron Zelin, Evan F. Kohlmann, and Laith al-Khouri, *Convoy of Martyrs in the Levant* (Flashpoint Partners, June 2013), *http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/convoy-of-martyrs-in-the-levant* [accessed 2 July 2013], p. 9.

48) William McCants (ed.), *Militant Ideology Atlas* (West Point: Combating Terrorism Center, 2006). The source texts analysed in the Atlas came from the *Minbar al-Tawḥīd wa-l-Jihād* website, the largest online repository of jihādī literature. The individuals we recognized as Palestinians were ʿAbdallāh ʿAzzām, Abū Qatāda al-Filisṭīnī, and Abū Muḥammad al-Maqdisī.

appear to be Palestinian.[49] On both these lists, Saudis and Egyptians outnumber the Palestinians.

However, not all jihādī ideologues are equally influential. If we take into consideration the "weight" of the Palestinian presence in the jihādī ideological pantheon, then the picture changes completely. Palestine is represented on the above-mentioned lists with three veritable giants of jihādī ideology: ʿAbdallāh ʿAzzām, Abū Muḥammad al-Maqdisī, and Abū Qatāda al-Filisṭīnī. ʿAzzām (d. 1989) has been called the "Godfather of Jihad" due to his crucial role in bringing foreign fighters to Afghanistan in the 1980s.[50] He also wrote several seminal works of jihādī literature that continue to be widely read today, such as *The Defence of Muslim Lands* and *Join the Caravan*. Al-Maqdisī, who lives in Jordan, is widely recognized as one of the most influential jihādī clerics alive today.[51] Al-Filisṭīnī is also a very prolific and influential author, and was long considered one of the most prominent jihādī clerics residing in the West. (He was based in the UK from 1993 until his deportation to Jordan in 2013.)

It is difficult to reliably quantify the influence of these figures, but one indicator is download counts from jihādī literature repositories. According to data from 2006, the 20 most accessed texts on any topic on the website *Minbar al-Tawḥid wa-l-Jihād* included ten by al-Maqdisī (including the top one) and two by al-Filisṭīnī. Of the 20 most downloaded texts on any topic, 11 were by al-Maqdisī and one was by ʿAzzām. Another indicator is recommendations and reading lists. We have already mentioned that these three men are among the 53 names in the "Mujahid's Bookbag". We also find them on a more exclusive list of the top five authors any budding jihādī should read. The list appears in a popular manual titled "39 Ways to Serve Jihad and Take Part in It", written in 2003 by a Saudi militant named Muḥammad al-Sālim (aka

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49) Vahid Brown, "A Mujahid's Bookbag", *Jihadica*, 21 December 2009. The Palestinian authors are: Abū l-Nūr al-Maqdisī, Abū Qatāda al-Filisṭīnī, Abū Muḥammad al-Maqdisī, and ʿAbdallāh ʿAzzām.

50) For more on ʿAzzām's role, see Thomas Hegghammer, "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and the Globalization of Jihad", *International Security*, vol. 35, no. 3 (2011): pp. 53-94.

51) For details on al-Maqdisī's status in the jihādī movement, see Joas Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihadi: The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 1f.

ʿĪsā Āl ʿAwshan). The five are: 1) ʿAbdallāh ʿAzzām [Palestinian-Jordanian], 2) Yūsuf al-ʿUyayrī [Saudi], 3) Abū Muḥammad al-Maqdisī [Palestinian-Jordanian], 4) Abū Qatāda al-Filisṭīnī [Palestinian-Jordanian], and 5) ʿAbd al-Qādir b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz [Egyptian].[52] All of this is anecdotal evidence, of course, but our basic claim—that ʿAzzām, al-Maqdisī, and al-Filisṭīnī are prominent voices in the transnational jihādī movement—should not be particularly controversial.

Given that Palestinian ideologues have been few, but very influential, it is not possible to assess the historical effect of the Palestinian issue on the evolution of jihadism by looking merely at the overall proportion of Palestinian ideologues. Instead we need a research design that digs deep into these few individuals' biographies and traces the Palestinian factor, if any, in their trajectory toward transnationalism. That is why the four articles in this special issue are all in-depth biographical studies based on new primary sources.

Each of the four main articles that make up this special issue examines a prominent Palestinian Islamist who engaged in or advocated some form of transnational militancy. Mark Sanagan first examines the early 20th century figure ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Qassām (1882–1935), who is included here partly because he is a very prominent and understudied figure in the history of Palestinian Islamism, and partly because he engaged in what today we would call "foreign fighter activism" against the Italians in Libya and the French in Syria. In the next articles, Thomas Hegghammer, Joas Wagemakers, and Petter Nesser examine ʿAbdallāh ʿAzzām (1941–1989), Abū Muḥammad al-Maqdisī (1959–) and Abū Qatāda al-Filisṭīnī (1960–), respectively.

The biographies vary slightly in their focus and approach, reflecting author preferences and subject specificities, but all articles set out to explore the relationship between nationalism and transnationalism in the lives of these figures. Key questions include: What are the objective details of their biography relating to Palestine? How Palestinian did (or do) they consider themselves? What was (or is) their view of the Palestinian issue and its significance relative to other problems in the world? Why did they choose transnational activism instead of a career focused

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52) Muḥammad al-Sālim, *39 Wasīla li-Khidmat al-Jihād wa-l-Mushāraka fihi [39 Ways to Serve Jihad and Take Part in It]* (ca. 2003), *http://www.e-prism.org/images/39_wasilah_likhidmat_al-Jihad.doc* (accessed 5 July 2013), p. 36.

narrowly on Palestine? Did they "go global" despite or because of their Palestinian heritage?

Before we let the contributors answer these questions, it may be useful to review, briefly, the history of the Palestinian resistance. Biographies constitute rather narrow windows into history, and our case studies cover partially distinct periods. Al-Qassām's prime time (1910s to 30s) was very different from that of ʿAzzām (1960s to 80s), and even more so from that of al-Maqdisī and al-Filisṭīnī (1990s and 2000s). The following section therefore draws out the historical lines that allow us to connect and contextualise the biographies we are about to read.

A Brief History of the Palestinian Struggle

The Holy Land, whose importance to several ideologues is analysed in this issue, has been a contentious place since Biblical times, whether named Canaan, *Eretz Yisrael* (the Land of Israel) or, as the Romans later called it, Palestine. The current conflict between Israelis and Palestinians can be traced back to the First World War (1914–1918) and the fall of the Ottoman Empire, which had at least nominally ruled the Middle East—including Palestine—for centuries, in the years that proceeded. The British and French colonial powers had long had a presence in the Middle East and had actually decided even before the collapse of the Ottoman Empire to carve up the region into spheres of influence in the famous Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916), drawn up by Sir Mark Sykes and Georges Picot, diplomats representing Britain and France respectively. In this agreement, Palestine fell under the British sphere of influence.

The different local actors—most importantly Zionists and Arab nationalists of various kinds—had started their quest for independence in Palestine even earlier. The Zionists, egged on by the rise of nationalist feelings across parts of Europe, persecution and anti-Semitism, and sometimes also a Biblically inspired longing for Jerusalem, had been active in Europe and the United States since the late 19th century. The Arab World, meanwhile, witnessed a similar sense of nationalist awakening and a renewed appreciation for the Arab literary and cultural heritage, although this did not always translate into direct opposition to the Ottoman Empire. The Zionists lobbied for (especially) British support

for their goal of setting up a Jewish state in Palestine, which was eventually rewarded by the so-called Balfour Declaration (1917), an official British statement of support for "a Jewish national home" in Palestine, whose intent was later confirmed at the San Remo Conference (1920).[53] In the meantime, the Arabs were also actively involved in efforts to achieve their independence. Most importantly, the Hashemite emir of Mecca, Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī (c. 1853–1931), engaged in lobbying efforts of his own with the British official Sir Henry McMahon, promising to aid the allied war efforts against the Ottomans in return for Arab independence. This led to the infamous correspondence over the division of the Middle East between McMahon and Ḥusayn in 1915, in which vague British promises were made[54] and which caused the latter to launch the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire in 1916.[55]

The conflicting British promises to Zionists and Arabs not only contributed to the increased frustration and strife between the two rival parties in Palestine itself during the period of British rule (1917–1948), with both feeling betrayed by London,[56] but it also pointed to a phenomenon that was to last for several decades after 1948: the relative lack of attention for what the Arabs of Palestine themselves wanted. Although the British presence and especially the huge waves of Jewish immigration were actively and repeatedly resisted by the country's Arab population,[57] the latter seemed to play a very limited role at best in the international negotiations over their land. Instead, until the 1960s the major powers and the surrounding states were in control of what happened to Palestine.

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53) Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881–2001* (New York: Vintage, 2001), pp. 73-76, 97. For a very interesting insider perspective into how the Balfour Declaration and its precise wording came about, see Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1949), pp. 252-262.

54) George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1965 [1946]), pp. 164-183, 413-427.

55) Ibid., pp. 184-200.

56) Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs under the British Mandate* (transl. Haim Watzman) (New York: Owl Books, 1999).

57) Morris, *Righteous*, pp. 121-160.

Arab States

From the late 1940s to the late 1960s, the most important actors appropriating the question of Palestine on the diplomatic and military levels were not so much the Palestinians themselves but rather the leaders of Arab regimes. They were far from successful, however. The fact that the United Nations General Assembly voted in favour of Resolution 181, which divided British-controlled Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state, showed that Arab diplomatic efforts ultimately came to naught. The same could be said about their military attempts to nip the newly founded state of Israel in the bud by entering the 1948 war for Palestine, which led to an increase in the territory controlled by Israel on the one hand and the Egyptian and Jordanian occupation of, respectively, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (as they are now known) on the other.[58]

Although the early Arab efforts to fight Israel in the 1940s clearly failed, the next decade saw several new Arab leaders rise to power whose ambitions did not stop at the borders of their own countries but who clearly also saw themselves as acting on behalf of the Palestinian cause. Foremost among them was the Egyptian President Gamāl ʿAbd al-Nāṣir (Nasser) (r. 1954–1970), who strove to unite the Arab world around his particular blend of Arab socialism and portrayed himself as the champion of the Palestinians as well. Through his powerful rhetoric, his staunch anti-colonialism and his pan-Arab discourse, Nasser was able to gain huge popularity in his own country and in the rest of the Arab world during his reign, and his defiance of France, Great Britain and Israel during the Suez Crisis of 1956 did nothing to diminish this. So much so, even, that historian William L. Cleveland refers to this period as "the age of Nasser".[59] His popularity notwithstanding, the war between Israel and its Arab neighbours in 1967 led to a catastrophic defeat of the latter and caused a huge blow to Nasser's credibility and to his pan-Arab approach of the question of Palestine.

Perhaps less dramatic, but no less unsuccessful than Nasser, was the pursuit of the Hashemites, whose descendants still rule Jordan today, to

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58) An excellent publication dealing with the various Arab countries' responses to the founding of the state of Israel is Eugene L. Rogan & Avi Shlaim (eds.), *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948* (Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

59) William L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (second edition) (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), p. 293.

represent the Palestinian cause. The precise nature of Hashemite ties with both the British and the Zionists has long been a subject of discussion.[60] The controversies surrounding their ambivalent position towards Palestine in the first half of the 20th century include not only the correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon and Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī mentioned above, but also the negotiations between the latter's son Fayṣal b. Ḥusayn and the (later) first Israeli President Chaim Weizmann,[61] as well as the deals that the first king of Jordan, ʿAbdallāh b. Ḥusayn, tried to make with both Britain and the Zionists.[62] Although King ʿAbdallāh (r. 1946–1951), like Nasser, managed to occupy part of Palestine in 1948, his grandson, King Ḥusayn (r. 1953–1999), eventually lost this territory again in the same 1967 war that had so humiliated his Egyptian counterpart.

An essential difference between the Egyptian and Jordanian approach to the Palestinian cause was the latter's all-encompassing appropriation of the question of Palestine. Like Nasser, Jordan's rulers championed Palestinian rights for pan-Arab reasons of their own, but unlike the Egyptian president, they also viewed themselves as the true and sole representatives of the Palestinians for quite some time. Several reasons accounted for this difference, such as the fact that many Palestinians had fled to Jordan during the 1948 war and that the country controlled the major part of what was left of Palestine—the West Bank, which included the historically and religiously significant old city of Jerusalem.[63] As such, the Jordanian regime identified (or at least claimed to identify) with the Palestinian question in a way that no other non-Palestinian actor did.[64]

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60) Eugene L. Rogan, "Jordan and 1948: The Persistence of an Official History", in: Eugene L. Rogan & Avi Shlaim (eds.), *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948* (Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 104-124.

61) Antonius, *Arab*, pp. 282-286, 437ff.

62) Avi Shlaim, *The Politics of Partition: King Abdullah, the Zionists, and Palestine 1921–1951* (Oxford, etc.: Oxford University Press, 1998); Mary C. Wilson, *King Abdullah, Britain and the Making of Jordan* (Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 103-128.

63) For the importance of Jerusalem in Jordanian national and religious discourse, see Kimberly Katz, *Jordanian Jerusalem: Holy Places and National Spaces* (Gainesville, FL, etc.: University Press of Florida, 2005).

64) Ibid., p. 54; Adnan Abu-Odeh, *Jordanians, Palestinians & the Hashemite Kingdom in the Middle East Peace Process* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1999), pp. 27-32; Sami Al-Khazendar, *Jordan and the Palestine Question: The Role of Islamic and*

Palestinian Nationalists

While the question of Palestine was a pan-Arab cause to Nasser and a national and religious issue to the Hashemite rulers of Jordan, to Palestinians themselves it was one of independence and self-determination. Although several small Palestinian guerrilla groups had been set up in the 1950s, of which Yāsir ʿArafāt's nominally socialist Fataḥ movement was the most important,[65] the main diplomatic vehicle used to further the Palestinian cause was the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), founded in 1964. Born out of an idea to organise Palestinian resistance to Israel more formally, it enjoyed only reluctant support from some Arab leaders—notably King Ḥusayn of Jordan, who feared the organisation would challenge his country's sovereignty over the West Bank and its inhabitants. As such, the PLO started as an Arab organisation dedicated to the Palestinian cause, rather than an organisation led by Palestinians themselves.[66]

However, the mostly Arab character of the PLO did not last very long since the defeat of the Arab armies in the 1967 war not only dealt a blow to the rulers' credibility as champions of the Palestinian cause, but also caused them to lose the West Bank and the Gaza Strip—the only parts of Palestine still in Arab hands—to Israel. This, combined with the growing stature of Palestinian guerrilla fighters (*fidāʾiyyūn*, "fedayeen"), eventually led to a "take-over" of the PLO by Palestinian groups in 1969. As such, the Arab loss in 1967 paved the way for a "Palestinisation" of the question of Palestine, which is something that the future Palestinian leader Yāsir ʿArafāt seems to have realised quite well.[67] However, the position of "true" representative of the Palestinian people remained contested for years, particularly between the PLO on the one hand and the Jordanian King Ḥusayn on the other. It was not until the Palestinian intifada (1987–1992) began that the latter fully realised the important political standing of the PLO versus his own increasingly weak claims

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Left Forces in Foreign Policy-Making (n.p.: Ithaca Press, 1997), pp. 51f.

65) Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993* (Oxford, etc.: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 80-87.

66) Ibid., pp. 95-100.

67) Alan Hart, *Arafat: A Political Biography* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 235, cited in Baruch Kimmerling & Joel S. Migdal, *The Palestinian People: A History* (Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 274.

to Palestinian leadership, causing him to sever all administrative and financial ties between Jordan and the West Bank in 1988.[68] From that year onwards, the Palestinian cause was represented by Palestinians.[69]

Palestinian Islamists

Our brief overview of Arab and Palestinian appropriations of the question of Palestine seems to suggest that, at least until 1988, Islam did not play much of a role in efforts to fight Israel. Although it is correct to state that large-scale organised Islamist action against Israel did not begin until the founding of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in 1981, Islam has played a role in the Palestinian struggle for much longer. This is not surprising given the significance of Jerusalem in particular in Islam. The Prophet Muḥammad is said to have used Jerusalem as the first direction of prayer (*qibla*), before using Mecca for this purpose. Moreover, Q. 17: 1 states (in Arberry's translation): "Glory be to Him, who carried His servant by night from the Holy Mosque (*al-masjid al-ḥarām*) to the Further Mosque (*al-masjid al-aqṣā*)." The so-called "night journey" (*al-isrā'*) by the Prophet from Mecca to Jerusalem and his related journey to heaven (*al-mi'rāj*) are both connected with this verse and have come to signify the importance of Jerusalem in Islamic tradition, as embodied by the Al-Aqṣā Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, which were built in the early 8th and late 7th century AD, respectively.[70] Considering the religious significance of Jerusalem, it is not surprising that this Islamic symbolism is regularly invoked by Palestinian Islamists.[71]

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68) Sayigh, *Armed*, pp. 621f.

69) During the peace conference in Madrid in 1991, the Palestinians were represented by a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation, but this was more because of Israeli demands than because of Jordanian ambitions to speak on behalf of the Palestinians. Moreover, during the conference, the Palestinian delegation was quite independent and in frequent consultation with the PLO in Tunis. See Morris, *Righteous*, p. 614.

70) For a good overview of the exegetical debate about verses and *ḥadīth*s related to the *isrā'* and the *mi'rāj*, see B. Schrieke & J. Horovitz, "Mi'rāḏj", in: *EI*^{2}, vol. VII, pp. 99-102.

71) See, for example, articles 14 and 15 in Ḥamās's charter in Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2000), pp. 275ff. Although this charter no longer represents Ḥamās's current policies, there is no doubt about the continuing importance of Jerusalem as a religious symbol to the organisation's members, as even a cursory glance at their publications shows. See, for instance, Joas

It should be emphasised from the outset that pious Palestinian Muslims engaged in political or military action on behalf of the Palestinian cause need not necessarily do so out of religious conviction. It is not at all clear, for instance, whether early Palestinian Muslim scholars involved in the conflict with Israel should be seen as Islamists (i.e., as Muslims who believe their religion is also an ideology calling for political and social action), instead of simply as Palestinian nationalists who happen to be religious. In any case, the earliest well-known example of a Palestinian "Islamist" was ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Qassām, a preacher from the coastal town of Haifa who is said to have started a revolt against the British in northern Palestine in the early 1930s. His death at the hands of the British in Jenin in 1935 caused huge crowds to attend his funeral, followed by a nation-wide strike several months later that, in turn, led to the Palestinian revolt of 1936–1939, suggesting that his ideals struck a chord among many Palestinians.[72]

Another important Palestinian Muslim leader involved in the conflict was the erstwhile critic of al-Qassām, Muḥammad Amīn al-Ḥusaynī (1895–1974), better known as al-Ḥājj Amīn.[73] A member of the prominent Jerusalemite al-Ḥusaynī family, of which Yāsir ʿArafāt was also part, al-Ḥājj Amīn was closely involved in both dealing with the British and prominent Palestinian representatives of the day, including the rival Jerusalemite al-Nashāshibī family. This wavering between two parties characterised the early part of his career as Mufti of Jerusalem, during which he became the most powerful leader of the Palestinian national movement. Although initially sceptical and reluctant to rise up against the British, the latter's ambivalent plans about Palestine and the revolt of 1936–1939 that swept through the country did not leave al-Ḥusaynī untouched. He quickly became the (increasingly radical) leader of the revolt and was subsequently stripped of his duties and forced to go into

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Wagemakers, "Legitimizing Pragmatism: Hamas' Framing Efforts from Militancy to Moderation and Back?", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 22, no. 3 (2010): 357-377.

72) Rashid Khalidi, "The Palestinians and 1948: The Underlying Causes of Failure", in: Eugene L. Rogan & Avi Shlaim (eds.), *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948* (Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 25f. See also S. Abdullah Schleifer, "The Life and Thought of ʿIzz-id-Din al-Qassam", *IQ*, vol. 22 (1979): 61-81.

73) Philip Mattar, "The Mufti of Jerusalem and the Politics of Palestine", *MEJ*, vol. 42, no. 2 (1988): pp. 234f.

exile, where he continued his efforts on behalf of Palestinian independence but ultimately had to leave it to the PLO to represent the Palestinian cause.[74]

While al-Qassām and al-Ḥusaynī can be said to have been individuals giving a more Islamic flavour to the Palestinian nationalist movement, the first half of the 20th century also witnessed a rise in organised Islamism in the form of the Muslim Brotherhood, which reached Palestine too. The organisation, founded in 1928 by the Egyptian Ḥasan al-Bannā (1906–1949) to Islamise both state and society, came to Palestine in the 1930s, where a branch of the group was founded by al-Bannā's son-in-law Saʿīd Ramaḍān in 1945. From that time onwards until 1947/1948, the Muslim Brotherhood became heavily involved in the Palestine question, even militarily.[75] However, after the 1948 war the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood in the West Bank became increasingly close to the Jordanian regime, much to the dismay of one of its members, Taqī al-Dīn al-Nabhānī (1909–1977), who had studied at Al-Azhar University in Cairo. Al-Nabhānī favoured a much more radical approach to Islamising state and society than the gradualism that his fellow Muslim Brothers called for and broke away from the organisation to found the Islamic Liberation Party (Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr al-Islāmī) in Jerusalem in 1953. His preferred solution to the Palestinian question was not so much nationalist but rather pan-Islamist, calling for an international Islamic effort to liberate Palestine and establishing a caliphate across the Muslim world, replacing the existing regimes there.[76] Given this revolutionary position, the Islamic Liberation Party has often been suppressed throughout its history and has only a negligible presence in many Middle Eastern countries now. Little therefore appears to be left of al-Nabhānī's legacy, although the organisation has a somewhat stronger presence in Western countries such as Great Britain.[77]

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74) Ibid., pp. 235-239. See also Mattar's *The Mufti of Jerusalem: Al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni and the Palestinian National Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

75) See Abd al-Fattah Muhammad El-Awaisi, *The Muslim Brothers and the Palestine Question, 1928–1947* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 1998), especially pp. 150-199.

76) Suha Taji-Farouki, "Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr al-Islāmī", in: John L. Esposito (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*, vol. II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 423.

77) For an overview of the British Islamic Liberation Party's ideology and worldview, see Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain, *Radicalisation, Extremism & "Islamism": Realities and Myths in the*

A different Palestinian Islamist movement, though one that bore some striking ideological resemblances to al-Nabhānī's ideas, was the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, founded by Fatḥī al-Shiqāqī (1951–1995) and ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ʿAwda (b. 1950) in 1981. Both men had studied in Egypt, where they came into contact with Islamist ideas. Like al-Nabhānī, they grew increasingly frustrated with the Muslim Brotherhood's gradualist approach and preferred more radical action. This idea was further stimulated after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, which showed that an Islamic movement could not only overthrow a powerful regime but could even set up an Islamic state in its stead. Also like al-Nabhānī, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad saw its fight as part of a greater Islamic struggle for a caliphate across the Middle East, although it placed more emphasis on the liberation of Palestine.[78] The organisation developed a social infrastructure through its control of mosques, its founding of student associations and its publication of several periodicals. This aided the organisation in recruiting new members, which was complemented after a few years with armed struggle against Israel.[79] Although the Islamic Jihad played a role in the intifada as well as in the Al-Aqṣā intifada (2000–2005) and is a force to be reckoned with even today, it could never reach the size, strength and popularity of its main Islamist challenger: Ḥamās.

The Islamic Resistance Movement (Ḥarakat al-Muqāwama al-Islāmiyya), as Ḥamās is officially named, was initially a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood that had had enough of only Islamisation from below, which had been the Brotherhood's policy until then,[80] and also wanted to engage in armed struggle against Israel. This desire became particularly acute when the intifada broke out in 1987, during which elements within the Brotherhood did not want to be seen standing on the sidelines while the rest of the population resisted Israeli occupation. Thus, in December 1987, Ḥamās was founded. The organisation grew in size and popularity, eventually becoming perhaps the biggest Palestin-

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"War on Terror" (n.p., 2007).

78) Meir Hatina, *Islam and Salavation in Palestine: The Islamic Jihad Movement* (Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 2001), pp. 23-26.

79) Ibid., pp. 28-38.

80) Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 23-27.

ian group in the occupied territories in terms of popular support, encompassing the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood in its entirety. It participated not only in the uprising that started in 1987, but also played a major role in the al-Aqṣā intifada and has shown itself to be a staunch opponent of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians through suicide-bombings and rocket attacks against Israeli civilians and soldiers. Incidentally, both the group's armed wing responsible for many of these attacks and Ḥamās's rockets have been named after ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Qassām, further underlining the latter's stature in the historical imagination of Palestinian Islamists.[81] Since 2006, the organisation has also attained political power after winning the parliamentary elections of that year, although subsequent conflicts with Fataḥ have lead to a split in power between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with only the latter being ruled by Ḥamās now.[82]

Palestine and Transnational Islamism

The ideologues and groups mentioned above are Islamist, but also strongly Palestinian in nature. Yet the Palestinian question has always been an international one, as shown above. However, the internationalisation of Palestine as an Islamic cause that Islamists all over the world claim as their own is of a more recent date, although its origins can perhaps be found in the pan-Islamist actions of Ḥājj Amīn al-Ḥusaynī, dating back to 1931.[83] To understand this international Islamisation of the Palestinian question from the 1970s onwards—coinciding with the Middle Eastern rise of Islamism in general—two trends need to be taken into account: the spread of Salafism and the war in Afghanistan (1979–1989).

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81) The most thorough account of the ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Qassām Brigades in English is Beverley Milton-Edwards & Stephen Farrell, *Hamas* (Cambridge, England & Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2010), pp. 110-133.

82) The literature on Ḥamās is vast. Apart from the recent book by Milton-Edwards and Farrell, other recent books on the organisation include Paola Caridi, *Hamas: From Resistance to Government* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2012); Sara Roy, *Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza: Engaging the Islamist Social Sector* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

83) Erik Freas, "Hajj Amin al-Husayni and the Haram al-Sharif: A Pan-Islamic or Palestinian Nationalist Cause?", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 39, no. 1 (2012): 39ff., 49ff.

The rise of Salafism, often seen by both its adherents and uninformed outsiders as a pure and unadulterated form of Islam,[84] coincided with the rise of Islamism as a whole since the Arab loss in 1967. Salafism can be defined as the branch of Sunnī Islam whose adherents try to emulate the "pious predecessors" (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*, hence the name Salafism), especially the first three generations of Muslims, as strictly and in as many spheres of life as possible.[85] It is a much more scriptural and uncompromising trend than the relatively accommodating and doctrinally pragmatic Muslim Brotherhood and has different historical, theological and political roots.[86] Perhaps partly because of its image as pure and devoid of cultural innovations (*bidaʿ*), Salafism spread across the Muslim world, abetted by the writings of important mediaeval Salafī scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328), Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (1292–1350) and Ibn Kathīr (c. 1300–1373). A major factor in the promotion of Salafism was Saudi propaganda from the 1960s onwards, spreading a message of strict, yet regime-friendly Salafism to counter Nasser's socialist rhetoric, and, after 1979, the Shiite discourse of the Islamic Revolution in Iran.[87] This process was stimulated even further by migrant workers in the Gulf region who often adopted Salafī customs there before returning to their home countries more conservative and more (overtly) pious than they had been before.[88] This spread of Salafism had no direct link with the Palestine question, but it did mean that Islamism increasingly became Salafī in nature. This became more relevant in combination with the conflict in Afghanistan.

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84) Bernard Haykel, "On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action", in: Roel Meijer (ed.), *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* (London/New York: Hurst & Co./Columbia University Press, 2009), pp. 33f.; Thomas Hegghammer, "Jihadi-Salafis or Revolutionaries? On Religion and Politics in the Study of Militant Islamism", in: Meijer (ed.), *Global Salafism*, p. 249.

85) Wagemakers, *Quietist*, p. 3.

86) General works on Salafism include Meijer (ed.), *Global Salafism*, and Bernard Rougier (ed.), *Qu'est-ce que le salafisme?* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2008).

87) Gilles Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West* (transl. Pascale Ghazaleh) (Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 170-174, 179f.; Saeed Shehabi, "The Role of Religious Ideology in the Expansionist Policies of Saudi Arabia", in: Madawi al-Rasheed (ed.), *Kingdom without Borders: Saudi Arabia's Political, Religious and Media Frontiers* (London: Hurst & Co., 2008), pp. 183-197.

88) Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (transl. Anthony F. Roberts) (Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 69-73.

After the then Soviet Union had invaded Afghanistan to support the fledgling communist government there in 1979, many newly pious Muslims felt that it was their religious duty to help defend their fellow Afghan believers from the attacks by the Soviets and decided to travel to Afghanistan to fight them. This development was sometimes encouraged by Arab regimes, who often looked upon the greater religiosity of some of their citizens with concern and were therefore glad to get rid of them or were keen to support these "Afghan Arabs" in order to portray themselves as pious rulers. As such, a gathering of radical Islamists and pious Muslims—often of a Salafī persuasion—trained, studied and sometimes even fought together in Afghanistan. Their experiences not only forged ties between many of these men but also gave them military skills and in some cases led to a cross-fertilisation of ideas.[89]

The combination of the increasing "Salafisation" of Islamism and the strengthened ties between its adherents forged on the battlefields of Afghanistan created not only a more or less ideologically coherent discourse on "Crusaders", "imperialism" and Arab "tyrants", but also an internationally supported Islamist message on Palestine. This discourse, represented most prominently by al-Qāʿida, is not only strongly pro-Palestinian, as we saw earlier, but also sometimes describes the question of Palestine as integral to its actions. Ayman al-Ẓawāhirī, for instance, bin Lādin's successor as the leader of al-Qāʿida, recently stated in relation to the political chaos in Egypt and Syria that "Cairo and Damascus are the two gates to Jerusalem" (*bawwābatā bayt al-Maqdis*).[90] This suggests that he sees the fight for overthrowing the rulers in Muslim countries at least partly as a step towards the "liberation" of Jerusalem, a belief he has expressed before.[91]

The Rise of Salafism in Gaza

The spread of this international and much more Salafī form of Islamism championed by al-Qāʿida has not left Palestinians in the occupied territories untouched either. As Hroub has pointed out, Salafism of a peace-

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89) Ibid., pp. 136-144, 147f.

90) Ayman al-Ẓawāhirī, *Risālat al-Amal wa-l-Bishr li-Ahlinā fī Miṣr 11*, *www.tawhed.ws/dl?i=24041317* (accessed 7 May 2013), September 2012, p. 3.

91) Id., *Al-Ṭarīq ilā l-Quds Yamurru ʿabra l-Qāhira*, *www.tawhed.ws/r?i=4wwr6wa8* (accessed 7 May 2013), n.d.

ful and apolitical kind in the West Bank can be traced back to the 1970s and is related to Saudi efforts to counter the radical Shiite rhetoric coming from Iran after the Islamic Revolution took place there in 1979.[92] The activities of such Palestinian Salafīs have focussed on studying "pure" Islam, education and missionary activities. Similar Salafī groups exist in the Gaza Strip, where their activities started even before the Islamic Revolution, partly as a result of scholars returning from their studies in Saudi Arabia, but whose ideological focus is generally the same as that of their West Bank brethren. Issues such as the fight against Israel and the "liberation of Palestine", on the other hand, are seen by many Salafīs from Gaza as "political", which should be avoided.[93]

While most Palestinian Salafīs do not fight the powers that be and focus on missionary activities instead, the past few years have witnessed the emergence of a radical Salafī minority that espouses a message that is much more akin to what al-Qāʿida stands for and engages in different types of violence. Although some of these groups seem to be rather tribal in nature without a coherent ideology,[94] others are clearly Salafī in nature. In the Gaza Strip, groups such as Jund Anṣār Allāh and the Jamāʿat al-Tawḥīd wa-l-Jihād are the most prominent of a large cluster of small like-minded "organisations" that seem to have come into existence through frustration over Ḥamās's supposedly compromised and watered-down jihad against Israel on the one hand and a susceptibility to the "purity" of the Salafī message—particularly that of al-Qāʿida—on the other. It is therefore not surprising that these groups pair a Salafī outlook with military activities against Israel.[95] While such attacks—mostly rockets fired at Israeli towns like Sderot—are perhaps ideologically supported by Ḥamās, their activities may not always fit the latter's agenda of wanting to keep quiet in the Gaza Strip or maintaining a cease-fire with Israel. For this reason and others, Ḥamās has clashed with

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92) Khaled Hroub, "Salafi Formations in Palestine", in: Meijer (ed.), *Global Salafism*, pp. 223-227.

93) Ibid., pp. 227ff.

94) International Crisis Group, *Inside Gaza: The Challenge of Clans and Families*, Middle East Report no. 71, 20 December 2007. The best known of these is probably the group led by Mumtāz Dughmush, who started a jihādī militia that kidnapped BBC-journalist Alan Johnston in 2007. See ibid., pp. 5, 11.

95) Berti, "Salafi", pp. 5-9; Cohen & Levitt with Wasser, *Deterred*; ICG, *Radical*.

such radical Salafī organisations and has tried to suppress them, even going so far as killing some of their members.[96]

Although the radical Salafī groups in the Gaza Strip are small and relatively insignificant, their conflicts with Ḥamās have garnered the attention of like-minded Salafī ideologues and activists across the world who were quick to condemn Ḥamās for its use of violence and its crackdown.[97] The presence of such groups also shows that the Islamist concern for Palestine has, in a way, come full circle: having transcended the national level and having been adopted by international ideologues of different backgrounds in its new and more Salafī flavour, it has returned to Palestine and has been re-appropriated by some Palestinians themselves, who now use this radical Salafism as an ideology that inspires them to attack Israel and champion the Palestinian cause.

Outline and Main Findings

As should be clear from the historical summary, this special issue is a study of outliers. Palestinian ideologues of transnational jihad are few in number compared to their more nationally focused counterparts in Ḥamās or Palestinian Islamic Jihad. The existence of a few globalists does not detract from the fundamentally local character of the Palestinian resistance movement. This is all the more true of Palestinian Islamists, who until now have operated quite strictly within Israel's borders and shunned the transnational tactics of their leftist predecessors.

Still, these exceptions—especially ʿAzzām, al-Maqdisī, and al-Filisṭīnī—are worth studying because they played such important roles within *another* political phenomenon of high import in post-2001 international politics, namely, the transnational jihad movement. Our intention is not to smear the Palestinian cause by unduly highlighting Palestinians with al-Qāʿida connections, but to figure out whether the Israeli-Palestinian conflict had anything to do with these individuals "going global". If that is the case, as Lebanese journalist Ḥāzim al-Amīn and Jordanian writer Marwān Shahāda have argued, it would point to

96) Mary Habeck, "Al-Qaʿida and Hamas: The Limits of Salafi Jihadi Pragmatism", *CTC Sentinel*, vol. 3, no. 2 (February 2010): pp. 5ff.

97) See *www.tawhed.ws/c?i=218* (accessed 7 May 2013).

an important mechanism linking the Palestinian issue with the rise of al-Qāʿida. Ultimately, then, this is an inquiry into the causes of transnational jihadism and the dynamics of spillover violence from ethnoreligious conflicts.

As we shall see in the next four articles, the answer is not straightforward. In the first article, Mark Sanagan revisits the historiography on ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Qassām and finds, among other things, that al-Qassām may have seen himself as less Palestinian than his contemporary Palestinian admirers would like to think. The Syrian-born al-Qassām fought for the Umma (in Syria and Libya) before he fought for Palestine, and when he did the latter, it was not for the establishment of a Palestinian nation, but for a greater Syria. One gets the impression that his Palestinian jihad in 1935 was but one in a series of fights against colonialism, not entirely unlike modern jihādī foreign fighters who move from one conflict theatre to the next to defend their Muslim brethren from oppression. Although Sanagan rightly warns against anachronistic labelling, al-Qassām's career does suggest that an early precursor to today's transnational jihadism existed in the early 20th century, before the creation of the state of Israel and the vicissitudes specific to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

In the second article, Thomas Hegghammer shows that ʿAbdallāh ʿAzzām appears to have had stronger connections to, and feelings for, Palestine than the literature has suggested thus far. Of the four individuals studied here, ʿAzzām spent the most time in Palestine—from birth to age 25—and he is the only one to have fought militarily against the state of Israel (in 1969–1970). Moreover, ʿAzzam's writings suggest he saw transnational activism—including his involvement in the 1980s Afghan jihad—as a means toward the end of liberating of his homeland. He was also on much friendlier terms with Ḥamās than al-Maqdisī and al-Filisṭīnī have been. Indeed, a case can be made for the counterfactual claim that ʿAzzām would not have ended up in Afghanistan and played the leading role he did there had he not been exiled from the West Bank in 1967. Of our four cases, ʿAzzām provides the strongest evidence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict having had an historical "agent production effect" on transnational jihadism.

However, as Joas Wagemakers shows in the third article, the same is not true of Abū Muḥammad al-Maqdisī. For al-Maqdisī, liberating Pal-

estine is important, but it is less important than ensuring proper Islamic governance in the Muslim world. He supports armed struggle against Israel, but not at any price; in fact, he prefers to leave Palestine occupied by Israel than to have the PLO, Ḥamās, or any other non-Salafīs rule it. He even says he chose his name "al-Maqdisī" (the Jerusalemite) only because Jerusalem was the nearest big city to the place he happened to be born (Barqa), not because he wanted to flaunt his Palestinian background.

Similarly, Abū Qatāda al-Filisṭīnī has not made the Palestinian cause the centrepiece of his career and ideological production either, as we discover in the fourth article. Petter Nesser's rigorous content analysis of al-Filisṭīnī's ideological production shows that al-Filisṭīnī appears to have a slightly stronger personal connection to Palestine than al-Maqdisī, but that he too considers the establishment of "proper" Islamic governments more important. Unlike ʿAzzām, al-Filisṭīnī and al-Maqdisī value doctrinal purity over political pragmatism.

Overall, our findings provide only limited support to the al-Amīn hypothesis that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict produced the jihādī movement's main thinkers. It is only in the case of ʿAzzām that we see a relatively clear Palestinian factor in the transnationalization process. Al-Maqdisī and al-Filisṭīnī, by contrast, appear almost unaffected by their Palestinian heritage and leave the impression that, to some extent at least, they are transnational jihādīs who simply happen to be Palestinian.

The "Palestine effect" thus appears to be a primarily motivational mechanism. As we have seen, the organizational links between Ḥamās and al-Qāʿida are few, and, with the exception of ʿAzzām, the overrepresentation of Palestinians among top ideologues appears to be largely coincidental. Still, it is a fact of political life in the region that many young Muslims feel strongly about Palestine and that this emotion often factors into the decision by non-Palestinian Islamists to engage in militancy. Our narrowing down of the "Palestine effect" to a motivational phenomenon does not limit its significance for current counterterrorism policy. There is already enough evidence to suggest that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict helps new al-Qāʿida recruitment, although we need more research into recruit motivations to specify the effect's precise scale and dynamics.