CHAPTER THREE
POST-OSLO HAMAS TERRORISM: WYE AND WHY NOT?

Introduction
As this essay is being written, following a recent series of suicide bombings and active shooter attacks, the Israeli government has severed ties with the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), declaring Yasser Arafat to be “irrelevant.” Much has changed since the optimistic days of September 1993 when Arafat and then Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin signed their first Declaration of Principles (DOP), which came to be known as the Oslo Accords. Volumes have been written about the ebbs and flows of the Arab-Israeli peace process since the convening of the Madrid Summit in 1991. The peace process is decidedly not a static creature. Some of what is true today was not true yesterday. Tomorrow, it is certain, we will be able to say the same thing. In this chapter, we will examine a fraction of the history of the peace process, paying particular attention to the assumptions that informed the decision-making of the United States, Israel, the PNA and the Islamic Resistance Movement (better known by its acronym, Hamas) as well as the assumptions behind analyses of these actors’ behavior. Specifically, we will address commonly held understandings of the relationship between Hamas terrorism and the prosecution of the peace process, starting in 1993. The conventional wisdom, we will argue, is marked by significant inaccuracies that are the result of a mix of shallow understanding of the actors involved and, perhaps more importantly, decision-makers’ and analysts’ own preconceptions. We will present an examination of the pattern of violence since 1993 and offer an alternative explanation for it, concluding with a theoretical discussion of the implications the alternative explanation carries with it.

The more than eight years since the signing of the Oslo Accords have witnessed the at-times gradual, at-times sudden dissolution of many long-held beliefs, and the crossing of many proverbial red lines. Yet to this day, policy-makers and the
news media alike have held fast to the almost axiomatic idea that the Palestinian Islamist terror movements, especially Hamas, are “the enemies of peace” and have tried time and again to “torpedo the peace process.”¹ This belief has been stated and reaffirmed by all of the major American and Israeli decision-makers associated with the formulation and implementation of the Oslo Accords. Some representative examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Statement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President Bill Clinton</td>
<td>“Terrorists must know that these acts [of terrorism] will not defeat the process that is bringing peace to Israel and its Arab enemies.”²</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secretary of State Warren Christopher</td>
<td>“I emphasized to the President that, in my view, the sole purpose of this week’s wave of terror by Hamas is to kill the peace process.”³</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secretary of State Madeline Albright</td>
<td>“Over the years the peace process has been undermined by extremists, assaulted by terrorists, and shocked by assassins.”⁴</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin</td>
<td>“…by no means will we allow them [Hamas] to achieve their goal – to interfere with our move towards peace.”⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres</td>
<td>“Now, for the first time, we are trying to bring peace, and, at the same time, we have to stop terror from killing the peace.”⁶</td>
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President Clinton turned these words into action when he issued Executive Order 12947, “Prohibiting Transactions With Terrorists Who Threaten To Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process,” which declared a national emergency and

⁵ “Remarks following meeting [with Secretary of State Christopher] at the Office of the Prime Minister,” Jerusalem, October 10, 1994 in *U.S. Department of State Dispatch* 5.43 (October 24, 1994): 715.
specifically named terrorist groups, including Hamas. He justified the order thus:

Attempts to disrupt the Middle East peace process through terrorism by groups opposed to peace have threatened and continue to threaten vital interests of the United States, thus constituting an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States.

That this assumption remains in full force is reflected in a recent *Time* article, “Hamas Explained”: “Hamas opposed the Oslo peace process from the outset because it involved recognizing Israel’s existence, and set about trying sabotaging [sic] that process by sending waves of suicide bombers into Israeli cities in the mid-1990s.” A close examination of peace process progress as well as of Hamas action, however, indicates that this simple black-and-white classification of Hamas obscures nuances in Hamas’s goals as well as important conclusions that can be drawn from the frequency of the group’s transmission of its “waves.”

**Peace ≠ Peacemaking**

It is not difficult to understand why so many believe in Hamas’s purported desire to destroy the agreements that have taken so long and so much effort to craft. Most of the movement’s public statements feature language unmistakable

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for its rejection of reconciliation with the Jews and its endorsement of continued bloodshed in the name of Islam and the ultimate “liberation” of Palestine. For example:

Putting an end to the plotting against the Prophet Muhammad’s point of departure to heaven and against the Muslims’ first holy place is a definite duty of all Muslims in the world. All the Arab and Islamic peoples and movements must proceed immediately to perform their desired and expected role in the decisive fateful battle against Jews, the enemies of God and humanity. Our battle is the battle of the Islamic nation with all its capabilities, resources, and civilization against the Jews with their ambitions and schemes. Our Palestinian people are nothing but the spearhead, backed with inexhaustible support by the Islamic nation and by a tremendous and endless army [to liberate] al-Aqsa.

Hamas’s opposition to settlement with the Jews is easily understandable in the context of Islamic faith and history. It is essential to keep in mind that it is contrary to some of the most fundamental beliefs of Islam for Jews to be ruling over Islamic lands, people and holy places. For some believers, the message of Islam as the final word – revealed to supersede Judaism and Christianity – is irreconcilable with the reality on the ground. To make peace with the Jews of Israel would be to second-guess Islam itself. The immovable position implied by this understanding of Islam, and reflected in statements such as the one above, as well as in interviews with and interrogations of members of those Hamas cells responsible for the spate of suicide bombings in recent years, has led many to conclude – correctly – that Hamas does not want peace with Israel.

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There is a crucial difference between peace and peacemaking, though, and this is part of what has sent decision-makers astray. Peace is a goal, an end state. Peacemaking is a drawn-out process, with dynamics and side effects that have a life and appeal of their own, often with little, no or a contrary relationship to the desired end. Hamas opposes peace. From 1993 to the spring of 1996, we will show, Hamas loved the peace process, probably more so than any other interest group. The assumed interchangeability of the terms “peace” and “peace process” is itself the result of a number of problematic assumptions.

To begin with, there is something of a chicken-and-egg question concerning Hamas and the peace process. The Oslo process was designed and pursued by Shimon Peres and others with the specific and explicit goal of combating Islamist extremism. Peres discusses this in the book that presents his vision of the peace process and its hoped-for results, The New Middle East:

Thus, economic and social development are the criteria for successful democratization of the Middle East…. The Middle East has tremendous market potential; its buildup constitutes a great challenge, and its success will open up limitless opportunities in the region. Democratization will put an end to the danger to regional and world peace. But for the democratic process to take hold, we must first overcome poverty and ignorance – the cradle of fundamentalism.11

Peres’s own Western biases are clearly at work in this excerpt. Explicit in this text is the mistaken assumption that educating Middle Easterners and making them economically prosperous will eliminate religious extremism. While Peres acknowledges the post-Enlightenment heritage informing his thought,12 he does

12 Ibid., 161.
not consider that the data do not support his bold assertion about the inverse relationship between material and educational wellbeing and intensity of religious fervor. This is not particularly surprising. A brief look into Peres’s personal history suggests that his vision for the New Middle East is a reflection of his own life story. Peres was raised very religious in Vishneva, Poland, but became secular through his increasing involvement with a number of Zionist socialist movements, which eventually brought him to mandatory Palestine in 1933 at the age of ten. The idea that development will undermine the appeal of religion has been a defining characteristic of Peres’s thinking for around 70 years, and is in many ways the ideological foundation underlying The New Middle East.

Making Hamas the peace process’ enemy is not the same as making the peace process Hamas’s enemy. Peres can control only one side of that equation. Hamas’s actions indicate that, in fact, there is an inequality here. The continual striving of Clinton, Christopher, Albright, Rabin and Peres to advance the peace process was driven largely by their belief that Hamas wanted to disrupt it, by their promises not to give in to terror, and by the reality that the Israeli leadership had bet their political futures (in Rabin’s case, much more) on the success of negotiation. Ironically, with every terrorist “setback,” Rabin and Peres – often prodded by Clinton – increased their resolve to press on. Thus, Clinton, following the series of Hamas suicide bombings in late February and early March 1996: “Now is the time to redouble our efforts. Now is the time to be strong. Bullets and bombs must not prevail against the will for peace, and they will

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not.” Stedman refers to the advancing of a peace process despite spoiler opposition as the “departing train” strategy. As we shall see below, Hamas hijacked the departing train. Because of the reflexive push forward after terrorist actions, the bottom line was that bus bombings did not undermine the peace process; they catalyzed its advancement.

At that stage in the peace process, progress meant – for the Palestinians – more Israeli military withdrawals from the West Bank and Gaza. In this fashion, Hamas became for a time one of the primary beneficiaries of the peace process, reaping the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) from most of the Gaza Strip and the major cities of the West Bank without deigning to negotiate with the Zionist enemy, to make any concessions, or to fore swear commitment to Islam or violent opposition to Israel. Hamas after 1993 began to enjoy greater freedom of movement and action than ever before, since the once watchful eye of Israel’s security services became more constrained than at any time since 1967.

Under these circumstances – signed commitments notwithstanding – what incentive did the PNA have to restrain Hamas? Both the PNA and Hamas enjoyed the benefits of Israeli withdrawal. The PNA could claim that the violence was not its fault. Hamas uncompromisingly could continue its campaign against the Israeli populace. All the Palestinian parties were apparent winners. That this approach was calculated is affirmed not just by an examination of Hamas’s deeds, but by the words of its spokesmen:

We do not object to adopting a positive attitude if the Zionists withdraw from the Gaza Strip, as they declare from time to time, on

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the condition that a phased national Palestinian entity be
established. We will also demand that the substance of this entity
be Islamic, in accordance with democratic norms. The important
thing is that we should not recognize [Israel] or give up our rights
to all of Palestine from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.  

The event that broke this tag-team program of negotiations and violence came in
March 1996, when then-Prime Minister Peres was negotiating the terms of Israeli
withdrawal from the West Bank city of Hebron. After Hamas launched its most
concentrated wave of bombings to date – four attacks, leaving more than 60 dead
and hundreds wounded in just nine days – Peres responded to the Israeli
electorate’s angry calls for an end to the mayhem by suspending talks and
halting redeployments until there was a cessation of violence and a PNA

crackdown on Hamas.  

This constituted a major policy shift, for it marked the
first time that the Israeli leadership imposed such a condition. Prime Minister
Benjamin Netanyahu continued this new policy after taking office in mid-1996.
Since Hamas wanted nothing more than an IDF egress from Hebron, a city
synonymous with religious fervor – it is the burial site of the Islamic and Jewish
patriarch, Abraham – and a well-known Hamas base of support, Hamas pulled
back. The lining up of incentives prodded the PNA into greater security
cooperation with Israel, which also frustrated some ongoing Hamas efforts.

Hamas made no further major attacks until the Hebron redeployment protocol
was a done deal.

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(FBIS-NES-93-015, 26 January 1993, 5). Noted in Barry Rubin, Revolution Until Victory?: The
18 Arieh O’Sullivan, “IDF Likely to Leave Hebron Later than Sooner,” Jerusalem Post 29 March
MERIA Journal 4.1 (March 2000), Internet:
Successive Israeli governments – in varying degree – have continued to condition advancement of the peace process on the absence of violence. The result, until November 2000, was a significant drop in the number of bombings and other attacks on major Israeli population centers since the 1996 policy change. Some have explained that while Netanyahu was prime minister, hard-line Israeli foot-dragging gave Hamas no real process to disrupt. But, if Hamas were truly committed to attacking Israel at all times, it could always find a reason to attack. The list of dates to be commemorated, martyrs to be avenged and religious imperatives to be fulfilled makes every day a potential occasion for violence. Moreover, Hamas’s disjointed, cellular structure means that small groups, or even individuals, can act on their own initiative without the sanction of Hamas’s more vocal and easily identified “political” leadership. Anyone can place a post-attack telephone call to a news agency and claim responsibility.

Even after Ehud Barak was elected prime minister in May 1999 and resumed what were considered at the time final status negotiations with the PNA, suicide attacks continued their negative trend, reaching zero in 1999. In fact, the period of greatest quiet since the signing of the DOP (there were no such attacks between October 29, 1998 and November 2, 2000) overlaps the period of the most intense negotiations between Israel and the PNA. Since the collapse of the peace process at Camp David in July 2000, suicide attacks have resumed and their numbers have reached all-time highs. As is clear in the chart below, the

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21 This is not to say that there were no terrorist attacks in this period. Of significance is that the successful attacks in this timeframe were much smaller in scale than the suicide and car bombings of the 1994-1996 period.
idea that Hamas uses suicide bombing to disrupt the peace process simply is not supported by the data.  

The fact that a number of smaller attacks in 1998 (i.e., during the period leading up to the Wye River talks in October) of varying degrees of success (namely, the July 20 “burning van” incident and the September 24 Mount Scopus bombing in Jerusalem, and the October 19 grenade attack at the Be’er Sheva central bus station) actually were followed by Hamas denial of (or mixed messages about) responsibility constitutes the most compelling evidence yet that the organization has more in mind than just killing in the name of faith and revenge. If the murderous disruption of the peace process were Hamas’s raison d’être, as many would have us believe, why would the organization deliberately forego the opportunity to take credit for these violent episodes? Hamas’s leadership is politically savvy enough to know what is feasible and what is not in its quest to rid Palestine (no matter how defined) of Israel. The organization’s leadership recognized that, at the time, the peace process, to which it is not an official party, in reality provided a cheaper and easier means to achieve its own goals than the

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22 See the appendix to this chapter for a detailed peace process/terrorism timeline.
violence it so publicly espouses. In this case, inaction has spoken louder than words.

Another example of Hamas’s politically expedient use and disuse of violence can be seen in the following statement, issued in late December 2001:

To our Palestinian fighters and to our Arab Islamic nations.

For the sake of the unity of our Palestinian people and in order to protect the path of Jihad (holy war) to achieve freedom and independence, and despite our full knowledge of the Zionist enemy’s intentions to liquidate the will of our people and humiliate us through aggression, and in response to many wise people who want to avoid giving our occupiers a chance to split our unity, and because our historic responsibility at this sensitive stage in the history of our people, we announce the halting of martyrdom operations [i.e., suicide attacks] inside the occupied lands of 1948 [i.e., Israel proper] and the halting of firing mortar shells until further notice.

We reiterate that all our supporters in the movement, mainly the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades (the Hamas military wing), must comply with such an order until God deems otherwise.

It’s either a victorious Jihad or martyrdom. 23

Here too, in word and in deed, we see that Hamas responds to day-to-day political exigencies. The unprecedented Israeli, American and European responses to the Hamas attacks of December 2001, and the resultant pressure on Yasser Arafat and, in turn, on Hamas itself, exerted a cost that Hamas deemed unacceptable. The result is the above declaration. Note that the decision not to act, just like the decision to act, is justified in the name of God Himself. Hamas

remains religious and political and is able to use violence selectively to advance both agendas accordingly.

Further compounding the confusion for decision-makers is the fact that Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) fits the common stereotypes of Islamist terror groups quite well. It is undoubtedly a more radical organization than Hamas. Its actions have been fewer, but more consistent in coming than those of Hamas. It is also a much smaller group than Hamas with less public support and is not as overtly political. PIJ’s differences from Hamas and its living up to expectations make the need for understanding the differences between Islamist groups all the more important. One size does not fit all. That said, even PIJ joined Hamas in its decision to temporarily halt suicide attacks.  

**Reasons for Misdiagnosis**

Stedman offers a number of organizational factors that can account for decision-maker mischaracterization of the motives and strategies of peace process spoilers. In psychological terms, the phenomenon behind the common misunderstanding shared by Clinton, Christopher, Albright, Rabin and Peres is known as attitude polarization, and is similar in its effects to the tyranny of the best estimate, introduced in Chapter Two. Jervis on the phenomenon:

> Not being aware of the inevitable influence of beliefs upon perceptions has unfortunate consequences. If a decision-maker thinks that an event yields self-evident and unambiguous inferences when in fact these inferences are drawn because of his

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25 These include prior commitments and doctrine as well as organizational “holy grails,” interests and roles. See Stedman, “Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes,” 48-51.
pre-existing views, he will grow too confident of his views and will prematurely exclude alternatives because he will conclude that the event provides independent support for his beliefs. People frequently fail to realize that evidence that is consistent with their hypothesis may also be consistent with other views.  

In this case, the understandable belief that Hamas sought to frustrate the peace process through violence led all of the major actors to ignore the fact that the group had a vested interest in the advancement of the process – to a certain point. As is often the case, nuance was sacrificed for black-and-white parsimony, leading to the “self-evident and unambiguous inferences” that the decision-makers were predisposed to make. Occam’s razor, it would appear, is complicit in a considerable amount of Middle Eastern bloodletting.

In some respects, Hamas’s attitude to the peace process is immaterial. Hamas can and should be dealt with on the basis of its actions. President Clinton’s Executive Order 12947 does the right thing for the wrong reasons. The executive order allows federal agencies to act against Hamas and other organizations identified as threatening to the Middle East peace process and operating in the United States, much as has been done against al-Qa’idah and other groups since September 11. Regardless of Hamas’s, PIJ’s, Hizballah’s or any other group’s position vis-à-vis the peace process, all remain terrorist organizations responsible for the deaths of innocent people, including American citizens. That alone makes them “an unusual threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States” and should be reason enough to seize their assets and arrest or deport their members. The groups’ support or contempt for the peace process or any other local issue is secondary.

Whom Does Hamas Serve?
The dichotomous understanding of Hamas is not limited to decision-makers. The identification of Hamas’s very mundane interest in reducing the IDF presence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip calls into question the validity of a relatively new conception of religious terrorism that has gained currency among analysts as well. Seeking to explain the increased lethality of religious terrorism in recent decades, Bruce Hoffman posits a number of “core characteristics” of the phenomenon, which we quote here at length:

For the religious terrorist, violence is first and foremost a sacramental act or divine duty executed in direct response to some theological demand or imperative. Terrorism thus assumes a transcendental dimension, and its perpetrators are consequently unconstrained by the political, moral or practical constraints that may affect other terrorists. Whereas secular terrorists, even if they have the capacity to do so, rarely attempt indiscriminate killing on a massive scale because such tactics are not consonant with their political aims and therefore are regarded as counterproductive, if not immoral, religious terrorists often seek the elimination of broadly defined categories of enemies and accordingly regard such large-scale violence not only as morally justified but as a necessary expedient for the attainment of their goals.  

It undoubtedly is the case that Hamas terrorists see their actions as holy. The problem with this dichotomous notion of religious terrorism, however, is that it misunderstands Hamas much in the way it once mistook post-revolutionary Iran. We now know that even “Islamic” states have interests and have learned

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how to look out for them.  

Hamas, as we have already seen, is fanatical like a fox. Contrary to Hoffman’s assertion, the movement’s controlled use of terror suggests that, like its secular counterparts, it is in fact constrained by political and practical, if not moral constraints. Hoffman continues:

Religious and secular terrorists also differ in their constituencies. Whereas secular terrorists attempt to appeal to a constituency variously composed of actual and potential sympathizers, members of the communities they purport to ‘defend’ or the aggrieved people for whom they claim to speak, religious terrorists are at once activists and constituents engaged in what they regard as a total war. They seek to appeal to no other constituency than themselves. Thus the restraints on violence that are imposed on secular terrorists by the desire to appeal to a tacitly supportive or uncommitted constituency are not relevant to the religious terrorist. Moreover, this absence of a constituency in the secular terrorist sense leads to a sanctioning of almost limitless violence against a virtually open-ended category of targets: that is, anyone who is not a member of the terrorists’ religion or religious sect.

One need go no further than the post-1954 Pledge of Allegiance to realize that it is possible to serve both God and country; in the minds of most, the two are not mutually exclusive. So too for Hamas. In addition to the self-imposed restraints on Hamas violence discussed above, the very clear and explicit declarations of allegiance of its members to other Muslims, to the Arabs (i.e., to include non-Muslims) and to the Palestinian people demonstrate an acute awareness of the existence of very human constituents. This is true of Islamist groups across the Middle East. As we noted above, while many Islamist movements have much in common, (e.g., the stated desire to establish a political entity based on Islamic

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31 Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, 94-5.
law), it has been demonstrated repeatedly and convincingly that Islamist movements with few exceptions have unique, local agendas. Thus, Hamas has two sets of human constituents; aside from the people whose interests the group claims to be defending are those proponents of the peace process that Hamas has been shrewd enough to manipulate through its calculated use of violence. Hamas’s members may believe that they are acting in the service of God alone, but their statements and actions suggest that plenty of people are considered in their decision making.

If Hamas has a human audience, how then can we explain the at-times seemingly unrestrained Islamist violence detailed in Inside Terrorism? First, as noted by Hoffman, the observed restraint of secular terrorists is in part the result of the targets of their actions and the targets of their messages often being the same population. Thus, for example, Marxist groups did not want to kill too many of their potential co-revolutionaries. With few exceptions, religious terrorists target those of other faiths for an audience of their co-religionists. Second, while the belief that Hamas terrorists are acting in the service of God is certainly a factor, there appear to be other ominous factors at work as well. Here too, perceptual biases threaten analysis, for the answer may lie in unfamiliar societal, religious and/or cultural attitudes toward violence and its role in politics.

There are a number of research centers that have conducted periodic public opinion polls in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 1993. A recurring question

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33 Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, 92-3.

34 The massacres in Algeria in recent years provide the most glaring examples of internecine religious terrorism.
has dealt with support for violence against Israelis in general and, since 1995, for suicide bombings in particular. It should be noted that at its peak in April 2001, Palestinian public support for suicide bombings against civilians reached 76 percent, and it has not been measured below 24 percent. This finding may indicate that the expected backlash, which has been assumed to limit the lethality of terrorism employed by secular, ideological terrorist groups in Europe, for example, may not exist to nearly the same degree in Palestinian society. That is, it is possible that the enmity towards Israel and/or some undefined religious, cultural and/or social set of values has led large segments of the Palestinian public to be not as put off by large-scale anti-Israeli violence as might be expected in another, more familiar context. This appears to be borne out further by a recent survey of terrorist groups’ Web sites by Gabi Weiman and Yariv Tzfati, who found that while almost all groups hid or omitted their violent activity, Hamas and Hizbullah even go so far as to forge evidence about the quantity and quality of their own acts of violence.

One of the reasons that we find terrorism so abhorrent is that it violates the line we have come to draw between combatants and noncombatants. This line lies at the heart of the Geneva Conventions. But the Geneva Conventions developed as the result of gruesome wars in Europe. Though part of international law, they unmistakably are part of the Western heritage. It is possible that the notions of what (or who) constitutes a legitimate target of warfare (and Hamas actions are always described as military operations) taken for granted in the United States and Europe differ from those in Palestine or elsewhere in the world. The point is not that Hamas has no constituents and thus is free to kill more indiscriminately.

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36 The study’s authors come to an alternative conclusion about the motives behind the graphic violence depicted on the Web sites: the sites are used as a tool for psychological warfare against the relatively Web-savvy Israeli population. Shahar Smooha, “Terror with an Olive Branch,”
Rather, the poll numbers and the group’s Web-based self-promotion\textsuperscript{37} would suggest that Hamas does have constituents, but they do not view the killing of large numbers of civilians as disapprovingly as we might want to believe. For a significant number of Palestinians, Hamas’s ruthless methods are reasonable and acceptable.

Additionally, there might be a different understanding of what is meant by peace at work here. We in the West take for granted that the peace process reflects a fundamental rejection of violence as a means of conflict resolution. It may be the case that many Palestinians do not view peace in this way. The remarkable variation in – not the magnitude of – support for suicide bombings suggests that the rejection of violence in Palestinian society is not a matter of moral principle as much as it is one of political tactics. The fact that the PNA seems to have made a conscious policy choice to resume overt hostilities against Israel in the fall of 2000 lends further weight to this assessment. Hamas and PIJ prisoners were released from PNA jails and the two groups, in addition to the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, have worked hard to prove their destructive prowess to an approving public. As in the case of Syria in 1973, there may be a “counter-Clausewitz effect” at work here. That is, for many Palestinians, politics may be war by other means.

The implications of this discussion are grave, for they challenge some of what we most want to believe about human nature. It is not by chance that we often refer to brutal acts of indiscriminate violence as inhuman. Ironically, Hoffman notes that religious terrorists often use similar language to describe their enemies and justify violence against them.\textsuperscript{38} Similarly, we want to believe that peace means burying the hatchet in the ground, not in someone else’s back. As we have seen

\textsuperscript{37}See, for example, Internet: http://www.haaretzdaily.com/hasen/objects/pages/PrintArticleEn.jhtml?itemNo=178217.

\textsuperscript{38}Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, 95.
in other instances, our assumptions about the nature of religious terrorism in
genral and Hamas in particular reflect not only our own biases and
understandings of the way the world works, but also what we want to protect
ourselves from. By postulating that religious terrorist groups like Hamas are
accountable only to God, Hoffman is sacrificing the few for the benefit of the
many. That is, if Hamas’s terrorism is disconnected from any earthly
constituency, any conclusions about the group are limited in scope to the group
itself and there is still hope for the more reasonable rest of mankind. Plus –
according to the post-Enlightenment myth – religion is supposed to be “curable”
by wealth and education. If, on the other hand, Hamas represents a large
number of people – educated people, no less – this has ominous ramifications for
both the prospects of peace and for our own ability to effect change. Recognizing
Hamas’s audience speaks volumes about the context from which it emerged as
well as about the limits of our own power. Painful though this may be, it is the
essential starting point for more useful future analysis and policy-making.

There is reason for optimism. If we have established that Hamas is a “normal”
terrorist group insofar as it has mundane interests and a constituency besides
God, and tempers its actions accordingly, then it follows that there might be
policy levers that we can use in facing the Hamas threat. The Israelis (perhaps
inadvertently) proved this in 1996 by raising the price of their Hebron
withdrawal. By recognizing that Hamas has earthly interests (i.e., Hamas has a
utility function), and by more accurately identifying them (i.e., via placement),
decision-makers can incorporate those interests and the means for manipulating
them into useful rational actor models. Contrary to popular belief, we can reason
with these people, even if not directly. Identifying the ways to do so will be one
of the great policy challenges of the years to come. It cannot be done successfully
until the prejudices that cloud our vision of what Hamas wants and does not
want are removed.
### Appendix: Peace Process-Suicide/Car Bombing Terrorism Timeline, 1993-2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Peace Process Milestone</th>
<th>Attack</th>
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<th>Injured</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
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<td>DOP signed</td>
<td>Car bomb</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>6-Apr-94</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Hamas</td>
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**Totals** 258 1639


Data for injuries and claims of responsibility are incomplete.

PIJ = Palestinian Islamic Jihad
PFLP = Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine