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'Here we start and in Jerusalem we meet:' The Motivational and Organizational Influences of the Israeli Occupation of Palestine on Transnational Salafi Jihad

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"HERE WE START AND IN JERUSALEM WE MEET:" THE MOTIVATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL INFLUENCES OF THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF PALESTINE ON TRANSNATIONAL SALAFI JIHAD

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for completion
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Abstract

The Israeli occupation of Palestine and its impact on the proliferation and longevity of transnational Salafi jihad is largely underestimated in current literature. In this thesis, I argue that Palestine, defined as both the nation and physical borders before the Balfour Declaration, largely contributed to the twentieth century revival of transnational Salafi jihad and is used by both Al Qaeda and ISIS as liberation and annihilation movements, respectively. In order to assess the motivational and organizational influences of the Israeli occupation of Palestine on transnational Salafi jihad, I examine the works of Abdullah Azzam, a selection of Osama Bin Laden's *fatwas*, and open source recruitment propaganda from Al Qaeda and ISIS. In considering this selection of primary source material, I found that Israel's occupation of Palestine and the conflict in general has made substantial motivational and organizational contributions to both the proliferation and longevity of transnational Salafi jihadi movements and, in this case, Al Qaeda and ISIS and each organization's respective grand strategies.

"Our slogan is: 'Here we start, and in Jerusalem we meet."

-Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
Inspire Magazine, Issue 2 (Fall 2010)

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Chapter I: Introduction

Section 1.1: Research Question

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a relatively localized phenomenon in regard to the concept of physical borders in Israel and Palestine, however the sustained political, social, and regional security implications of the conflict have transformed the modern Middle East. Israel's occupation of Palestine has divided nations, complicated regional security and diplomatic cooperation, contributed to the deepening polarity of American politics, increased anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist sentiments on a global level, and inspired both local and international nationalist liberation movements. Notably, the case of Palestine,[1] after the creation of the Israeli state in 1948 and the Six Day War of 1967, contributed to the revival of militant Islamic jihad in the twentieth century.[2] While current scholarship on Salafi jihadism attributes the rise of militant Salafi jihad to markers such as the entrance of the Muslim Brotherhood onto the world stage, legacies of Western colonialism, the Soviet-Afghan War, 9/11, or the U.S. invasion of Iraq, I argue that the revival of Salafi jihadism and its evolution into a transnational movement can be directly traced back to a relatively local and ongoing phenomenon: the Israeli occupation of Palestine. While the above factors contributed to the twentieth century revival of Salafi jihad, the cultural and religious significance of Jerusalem and the proliferation of an Israeli state in Palestine and the subsequent ethnic cleansing of Palestinians are significantly overlooked factors in current Salafi jihadi literature.

In order to understand the foundations of modern transnational Salafi jihadi movements and how Palestine has come to be utilized as both an annihilation and liberation movement by

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[1] Palestine is definitive of both the nation and physical borders of Palestinian land before the creation of the Israeli state.

[2] Thomas Hegghammer, "The rise of Muslim foreign fighters: Islam and the globalization of Jihad," *International Security* 35, no. 3 (2010): 53-94.

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said groups, a brief history of contemporary Islamist phenomenons and ideological contributions to the movement must be considered.

Hassan Al Banna, the late founder and leader of the Muslim Brotherhood (concieved in Egypt in 1928) was only active on social and political levels in Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Algeria, and Sudan[3] until Israel came into being, which in turn gave incentive for the group to engage in jihad against the Israelis and colonial powers in the region.[4] The Muslim Brotherhood made monumental contributions to the rise of modern Salafi jihadism in the twentieth century and played a large role in actually acting on the militant jihad ideas of Ibn Taymiyyah and Sayyd Qutb,[5] particularly regarding the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt's recruitment of over 10,000 Palestinian mujahid to fight for Palestine and the rights of its citizens following the UN resolution on the partition of Palestine in in 1947.[6] Al Banna himself wanted to equip over 70,000 mujahid to defend Palestine.[7] In addition, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt supported Palestinians against the British during the Arab Revolt in the mid-1930s, established the General Central Committee for Palestine's Aid, and ran a Palestine campaign that attracted thousands of new members and resulted in a number of new branches- including branches with military wings.[8] Within the next decade, the Muslim Brotherhood effectively mobilized in terms of political jihad and organized a series of widspread, pro-Palestine protests in Egypt that turned violent with police intervention.[9] However, the Muslim Brotherhood is not a violent organization

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[3] Kamal Helbawy, "The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt: Historical Evolution and Future Prospects," in *Political Islam: Context versus Ideology*, ed. Khaled Hroub (SOAS, 2010).
[4] Richard H. Shultz, *Global Insurgency Strategy and the Salafi Jihad Movement*, USAF Institute for National Security Studies 66, 2008.
[5] John M. Calvert, "The Striving Shaykh: Abdullah Azzam and the Revival of Jihad," *Journal of Religion and Society* 2 (2007).
[6] Helbawy, "The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt," 61-62.
[7] Ibid, 61-62.
[8] Israel Gershoni, "The Muslim Brothers and the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936-39," *Middle Eastern Studies* 22, no. 3 (1986): 367-97.
[9] Gershoni, "The Muslim Brothers," 367-369.

by nature, as it was founded on the ideals of using political and social jihad to usher in a return of the Islamic Golden Age.[10] At the same time, many of its offshoots, namely Hamas and Hasm, have military wings or function as predominantly militant organizations.[11] Strikingly, the Muslim Brotherhood's militant offshoots were directly inspired by the MB's pro-Palestine campaign during the 1930s.[12] Therefore, the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood as a transnational political force has contributed to the revival of transnational Salafi jihad by means of Palestine and its militant factions that formed in response to its Palestine campaign. Hence, the Muslim Brotherhood, while politically and socially nonviolent, created a vacuum for Salafi jihadists particularly inspired by Palestine.

Similarly, the war in Afghanistan during the 1980s contributed to the rise of transnational Salafi jihad, but it was not simply the mobilization of the Afghan and Arab mujahideen that caused Salafi jihad to go international. Rather, it was one of the first legitimate opportunities for emerging leaders of the Salafi jihadi movement to successfully infiltrate with their ideas and, consequently, carry out violent jihad. Abdullah Azzam, the leader of the mujahideen in Afghanistan, preached that the Soviet-Afghan war was a step towards eventually returning to Palestine and liberating it from the Zionists through violent jihad.[13] Hence, it was never truly about Afghanistan to begin with. Instead, the Soviet-Afghan War was, at its core, part of a broader Salafi jihadi strategy to liberate Palestine.[14]

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[10] Ibid, 369.
[11] Rep. *Muslim Brotherhood*. Counter Extremism Project, n.d.
https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/muslim-brotherhood.
Khaled Hroub, "Hamas's Ideology, Strategy, and Objectives," in *Hamas: A Beginner's Guide*, 15-33. London; New York: Pluto Press, 2010.
[12] Gershoni, "The Muslim Brothers," 367-370.
[13] Abdullah Azzam, *Al-Dfaa a'n Iradi al-Muslimeen: Aham Furood al-Ayen* [The Defense of Muslim Lands: The Most Important of Individual Duties], *Moussassa li-daam al-jihad wa al-mujahideen*.
http://www.almeshkat.net/books/archive/books/674_674.pdf.
[14] Azzam, *Al-Dfaa a'n Iradi al-Muslimeen*.

In regard to 9/11 and the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, these instances- while inflammatory-did not mark the beginning of modern, transnationalized Salafi jihad. As argued in *Global Salafism*, all conditions for confessional violence in Iraq were met after the U.S. invasion, as radicalized Sunnis believed Islam was in danger.[15] Abu Musab Al Zarqawi (the soon-to-be founder and leader of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) originally used the U.S. invasion to pit Sunnis against Shias before shifting focus to Americans.[16] While seemingly unconnected to Palestine and the Israeli occupation, 9/11 and the subsequent U.S. invasion of Iraq were actually byproducts of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as will be explored in chapter three. Therefore, I seek to answer the following research question: "How has Israeli's occupation of Palestine contributed to the rise of the modern, transnational Salafi jihadi movement and how does the occupation fuel international Salafi jihadi organizations, such as Al Qaeda and ISIS, today?"

The narrative of the influence and magnitude of Palestine in transnational jihad can be traced back, in part, to Abdullah Azzam- popularly coined as the "Spiritual Father of Global Jihad."[17] Azzam, a native of Silat al-Harithiya (a small village near Jenin in the West Bank), was deeply affected by the Israeli occupation of his homeland in 1948 and the Six Day War of 1967.[18] He would later become the leader of the mujahideen in Afghanistan during the Soviet-Afghan War in the 1980s, an internationally acclaimed freedom fighter, U.S.-lauded and sponsored war hero, and spiritual father to Hamas, Al Qaeda, and the modern, transnational Salafi Jihadi movement. According to Azzam, Palestine was at the heart of the jihad's broader strategy to create a unified, Islamic state by liberating Muslim lands from the *kuffar*[19] and returning to the

[15] Guido Steinberg, "Jihadi-Salafism and the Shi'is: Remarks about the Intellectual Roots of anti-Shi'ism," in *Global Salafism,* ed. Roel Meijer (Oxford University Press, 2009): 107-125.
[16] Steinberg, "Jihadi-Salafism and the Shi'is," 107-108.
[17] Thomas Hegghammer, "Icon," in *The Caravan: Abdullah Azzam and the Rise of Global Jihad* (Cambridge University Press, 2020): 463-492.
[18] Thomas Hegghammer, "Palestinian," in *The Caravan: Abdullah Azzam and the Rise of Global Jihad* (Cambridge University Press, 2020): 11-27.
[19] Non-believers, non-Muslims.

"Golden Age of Islam-" as he believed modern Muslims and the West were in a state of *jahiliyya* and needed to be liberated from secularism and the immorality of modern generations.[20]

Therefore, the jihad in Afghanistan was not an arbitrary war- it was the beginning of a larger movement with Palestine at the center. Azzam considered it a necessary step towards his vision of the imminent restoration of Jerusalem to Islamic and, consequently, Palestinian rule.[21] Today, Azzam's sermons and books, such as *The Defense of Muslim Lands* and *Join the Caravan*, continue to be extensively circulated within the Salafi Islamist dialogue.[22] Namely, Al Qaeda and ISIS, both of which capitalize on Azzam's call to retake historically Muslim lands through jihad as *fard 'ayn*.[23] Azzam also largely wrote Hamas' original charter in 1988, extensively fundraised for the organization throughout the Middle East and the United States, and his teachings are a cornerstone of Hamas' political and militant movements.[24]

In order to examine the "Palestine effect" on transnational jihad, I will examine both direct and indirect organizational and historical influences of Palestine in the movement, and will use Al Qaeda and ISIS as case studies. In regard to the direct influences of Palestine, I will examine its impact on non-Palestinian Salafi jihadi groups' recruitment ideologies and methods, propaganda, literature, and organization. On the other hand, I will examine how Palestine indirectly affects these groups in their accusations of the failures of modern Arab and Islamic governments to confront the Israeli occupation and secure permanent Palestinian rights.

I selected Al Qaeda and ISIS in order to highlight the transnational aspect of the "Palestine effect" on Salafi jihad, connections to Palestine via each organization's founding leaders and members, interpretations of the question of Palestine in recruitment propaganda and

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[20] Jed Lea-Henry, "The Life and Death of Abdullah Azzam," *Middle East Policy* 25, no.1 (2018): 1-16.
[21] Azzam, *Al-Dfaa a'n Iradi al-Muslimeen: Aham Furood al-Ayen*.
[22] Andrew McGregor, "'Jihad and the Rifle Alone:' 'Abdullah 'Azzam and the Islamist Revolution," *Journal of Conflict Studies* 23, no. 2 (2003).
[23] Individual obligation
[24] Asaf Maliach, "Abdullah Azzam, Al-Qaeda, and Hamas," *Military and Strategic Affairs* 2, no. 2 (2010)-1-15.

mythology, variations in regional aspirations, organizational size and scope, longevity and modernity, and end goals. In addition, the founding leaders of these organizations, respectively Osama bin Laden and Abu Musab al Zarqawi, were deeply connected to Palestine both by blood and ideology- bin Laden was Saudi but developed his ideology based on his relationship with Azzam (Palestinian) and his fixation on Palestine. Zarqawi, Jordanian-Palestinian, was the mentee of Ideologue Abu Muhammad al Maqdisi (also born in the West Bank) and his ideology- while deviating from that of his mentor- was also driven by Palestine. Further, both organizations emerged in tandem with and in the wake of regional geopolitical turning points. Al Qaeda, borne out of the Soviet-Afghan War, inspired the emergence of Palestine-based Salafi jihadi organizations, which grew up during the First Intifada 1987-1993. While Al Qaeda did not become a global phenomenon until 9/11, its attack on the World Trade Center was directly connected to Bin Laden's resentment towards the U.S. for propping up Israel- thus inherently connected to the Israeli occupation in Palestine. In Bin Laden's own words, "an attack on the United States is an attack on Israel."

ISIS, on the other hand, emerged from Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and fought with Iraqi insurgencies during the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. At the time, AQI was focused on the annihilation of Shi'ites under the leadership of Zarqawi.[25] However, its priorities have since shifted towards a greater focus on Palestine and using Judaism, the United States, and Israel as a means for annihilation of all unbelievers.

Regarding Al Qaeda, Osama Bin Laden's inherited organization was essentially a direct byproduct of the work of Abdullah Azzam. While Azzam's jihad in Afghanistan was in preparation for a larger war against the state of Israel that drew in Arab *mujahideen* from across

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[25] Steinberg, "Jihadi-Salafism and the Shi'is," 107-112.

the region, Palestine was nevertheless always at the heart of the war against Soviet invaders.[26] In a sense, Azzam's leadership drew attention to the spiritual significance of reconquering Muslim lands in an effort to retake Palestine, therefore "transnationalizing" ideas of waging jihad for the sake of Palestine. Since the end of the Soviet-Afghan War in 1989, Al Qaeda has managed to expand beyond Afghanistan and take root on a transnational level (e.g. Iraq, Pakistan, Syria, AQAP in Yemen, and Al Shabaab in Somalia). This is a reflection of Azzam's call to wage jihad wherever there is an opportunity- in efforts to eventually return to Palestine and wage jihad there.[27] Azzam's ideas were highly appealing and, considering recent events in Israel-Palestine, easily took root and led to a new generation of Salafi jihadis with Palestine in mind.

Therefore, the international size and scope of Al Qaeda speaks to the global significance of Jerusalem, which is widely present in the organization's social media, recruitment methods, and overarching strategies. By examining the recruitment materials, methods, organization, size, scope, history, and ultimate strategy of Al Qaeda, I aim to highlight the Israeli-Palestinian conflict's longstanding role, nonnegotiability, and permanent presence in the heart of the organization.

ISIS, on the other hand, is the more complex case study, as its founder, Abu Musaab al-Zarqawi (Palestinian-Jordanian), was deeply focused on the annhilation of the Shiites and purging Islam of its internal impurities (e.g. the Shiites, Yazidis, Christians).[28] At the same time, Zarqawi had intentions in Palestine and a goal, inherited from Al Qaeda, to form an Islamic caliphate around Israel in order to eventually establish and create a unified, Islamic state.[29]

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[26] Azzam, *Al-Dfaa a'n Iradi al-Muslimeen.*
[27] Abdullah Azzam, *The Defense of Muslim Lands: The Most Important of Individual Duties.* C.a. 1987. https://english.religion.info/2002/02/01/document-defence-of-the-muslim-lands/.
[28] Steinberg, "Jihadi-Salafism and the Shi 'is," 107-125.
[29] Lawrence Wright, "The Master Plan: For the new theorists of jihad, Al Qaeda is just the beginning," *The New Yorker*, September 4, 2006. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2006/09/11/the-master-plan.

Further, the usage of Palestine and anti-Zionist sentiments in ISIS' recruitment videos, newsletters, and propaganda suggest a potential shift in focus from ethnic and religious minorities in Iraq. In light of Zarqawi's assassination in 2006, I will look at how the organization has potentially shifted focus from the Shiites to Palestine, its broad strategy of establishing an Islamic caliphate that includes Palestine. I will go on to analyze ISIS' usage of Palestine in recruitment literature and propaganda, as well as the prevalence of Palestine in ISIS's broad strategy, regional and international aspirations, and how it connects to ISIS's past strategy in northern Iraq and Syria.

While Azzam is, no doubt, one of the most influential figures in the birth of Hamas, I am excluding Hamas from my case studies of Al Qaeda and ISIS for several reasons. First, militant jihad is only one wing and function of Hamas in Gaza and the West Bank. Hamas, an offshoot of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, was founded on the notion of waging militant jihad against the Israeli state in the wake of the First Intifada.[30] Further, Hamas' original charter of 1988 states that "it is compulsory that the banner of jihad be raised… to instill the spirit of jihad in the heart of the nation so that they would confront the enemies."[31] Considering the charter's full context and the fact that Azzam inspired the breadth of it, "jihad" is likely definitive of *militant* jihad-delineating to the engagement in acts of war against the Israeli occupation. While the ideals of waging jihad are still relevant in Hamas' militant wing, the organization has since evolved into an entity that has won seats in Palestinian elections and acts as the ruling party on the Gaza Strip.[32] Hence, Hamas' interpretation of jihad and its regional goals have evolved to those of more accessible and realistic goals, and its success as a political organization has thereby

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[30] Ziad Abu-Amr, "Hamas: A Historical and Political Background," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 22, no. 4 (1993): 5-19.
[31] "The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement." *Lillian Goldman Law Library*, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp.
[32] Hroub, "Hamas's Ideology, Strategy, and Objectives," 15-33.

distanced itself from the core functions, objectives, and transnationality of prominent Salafi jihadist organizations (e.g. Al Qaeda and ISIS)- also inspired by Palestine and the teachings of Azzam.

As will be demonstrated in chapter three, Al Qaeda and ISIS each have an overarching strategy to create an Islamic caliphate around Palestinian land. Hamas currently only conducts local operations- mostly political- and focuses on liberating Palestinians through political representation and actively refusing a two-state solution, rather than solely waging militant jihad.[33] Furthermore, Al Qaeda and ISIS have condemned Hamas for its complacency, failure to actually wage jihad against the Israelis.[34] Azzam also criticized the movement and eventually disassociated from it, although he was a prominent supporter of its founder, Ahmad Yassin, and wrote a book praising Hamas (*Hamas: The Historical Roots and Charters*) shortly after its conception.[35]

Section 1.2: Historical Background

In order to understand the significance of the "Palestine effect"[36] on modern, transnational Salafi jihad, an overview of the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is neccesary. The emergence of the Israeli state in Palestine has acted as a catalyst (if not the root of the issue, as will be discussed later) in the Salafi jihadi narrative. However, current scholarship either passes off the conflict as insignificant or merely a coincidence in discussions about the revival of Salafi jihad in the twentieth century.[37] I argue the opposite: it was the entry of Israel onto the world stage and the subsequent wars, *nakba*, and humiliation of Arab nations that both

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[33] Ibid.
[34] Barak Mendelsohn, "Al-Qaeda's Palestinian Problem," *Survival* 51, no. 4 (2009): 71-86.
[35] Lea-Henry, "The Life and Death of Abdullah Azzam."
[36] Thomas Hegghammer and Joas Wagemakers, "The Palestine Effect: The Role of Palestinians in the Transnational Jihad Movement," *Die Welt des Islams* 53, no. 3/4 (2013): 281-314.
[37] John A. Turner, *Religious Ideology and the Roots of Global Jihad: Salafi Jihadism and International Order*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

birthed and catalyzed the resurgence of Salafi jihad and the decades of transnational militantism and terror to follow.

Nearing the end of World War Ⅰ and the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Palestine fell under the British mandate, which included the Balfour Declaration of 1917, a statement expressing support for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.[38] From 1922-1947, Palestine witnessed its first wave of jihad, as anti-Zionist, Arab nationalist groups formed to counter both British rule and rumours of the establishment of a Jewish state in their homeland.[39] Jews, fleeing persecution in Europe, immigrated to Palestine in masses, leading to the Arab uprising of 1937 and prolonged violence with Jewish settlers.[40] Domestic violence was further exacerbated by the United Nations' vote to divide Palestine into an Israeli and Arab state in November of 1947, leading to a mass exodus of Palestinians fleeing Zionist violence to Syria, Egypt, the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, and Jordan- coinciding with the militant involvement of neighboring Arab states.[41] By the end of 1947, over 75,000 Palestinians had been forced from their homes or voluntarily left (according to Israeli sources) and became indefinitely displaced both internally and externally.[42]

Conflict between Zionists and Arabs continued through May 14, 1948, when Jewish settlers formed a provisional national council and declared the state of Israel, leading to a regional war including Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan.[43] The conflict between Zionists and Palestinians, once localized, became regional. Israelis celebrate their independence on this

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[38] "History of the Question of Palestine," United Nations, https://www.un.org/unispal/history/.
[39] Tom Bowden, "The Politics of the Arab Rebellion in Palestine 1936-39," *Middle Eastern Studies* 11, no. 2 (1975): 147-74.
[40] Mark Tessler, "Emergence and History of the Conflict to 1948," in *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, Second Edition*, (Indiana University Press, 2009): 123-185.
[41] "Arab-Israeli wars." Britannica Encyclopedia. https://www.britannica.com/event/Arab-Israeli-wars
Mark Tessler, "The Palestinian Disaster and Basic Issues after 1948," in *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, *Second Edition* (Indiana University Press, 2009): 273-335.
[42] Ilan Pappe, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, Oneworld, 2006.
[43] Tessler, "Emergence and History of the Conflict."

day, while Palestinians remember the same day as *al-nakba*, the catastrophe. After months of intercommunal war in the wake of Israel declaring independence, separate armistice negotiations between Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon began in January 1949.[44] However, the Palestinian struggle for independence was far from over. Essentially the events of 1947-48 mark a turning point for both Israelis and Palestinians- Israel became independent, while Palestinians were forcefully and indefinitely expelled from their land.[45] The implications of these events still echo in international politics in addition to inciting Salafi jihadi movements at the international level.

In 1956, Israel would face another challenge from its Arab neighbor, Egypt. Known as the Suez Crisis, Egypt's nationalist and anti-Zionist president, Gamal Abdel Nasser, nationalized the Suez Canal in July 1956 and triggered another crisis between Egypt and Israel.[46] Two years prior, Nasser's military had been engaging in sporadic fighting with the Israelis at the border.[47] Nasser, with the backing of the Soviets, nationalized the Suez Canal, leading to a British-French-Israeli alliance that attempted to retake the canal via invasion.[48] In reality, the Israelis were offered little and belated assistance by their European allies, which caused the UN to condemn Israel's invasion, call for a ceasefire, and vote to create a peacekeeping force.[49] The Suez Crisis once again exacerbated Arab resentment towards the state of Israel, as it became seen as a larger regional security threat that had the military power and international backing to potentially overtake Arab forces.

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[44] Kirsten E. Schulze, "The 1948 war: The battle over history," *The Routledge Handbook on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (2013): 45.
[45] Tessler, "The Palestinian Disaster."
[46] Derek Varble, *The Suez Crisis*, The Rosen Publishing Group, 2008.
[47] History.com editors, "Israel invades Egypt; Suez crisis begins," History.com, October 29, 2009. https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/israel-invades-egypt-suez-crisis-begins.
[48] "Israel invades Egypt; Suez crisis begins."
[49] "The Suez Crisis, 1956." U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian. https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/suez.

In 1967, Arab forces confronted Israel again. In the years leading up to the Six Day War, Israel experienced in influx of attacks by Palestinian guerilla groups from Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.[50] These attacks, some of the first instances of modern Salafi jihad in action,[51] were performed by groups such as the *fedayeen[52]* in Jordan, of which Azzam was a member and gained his first taste of militant jihad after fleeing Silat al-Harithiya. The *fedayeen* in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon would eventually come under the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which was fabricated at the Arab League Summit of 1964 in Cairo.[53] At Nasser's summit, the leaders of Arab nations met together while Nasser successfully paved the way to see into fruition his goals to divert the Jordan Valley's resources, create the United Arab Command to prepare for an offensive military campaign, establish the PLO, and start the process of standardizing Arab arms and sending military aid to Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.[54] In late 1966, political tensions escalated between Israel and the Arab states when Syria attempted to divert the Jordan river to prevent Israel from cultivating the DZs, leading to a short battle between Syria and Israel.[55] Continued Israeli border disputes and the increased activity of the PLO continued to deepen regional political tensions, and the Arab states prepared for confrontation with Israel.[56] By May 1967, Nasser had mobilized his military in the Sinai, closed the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping, and demanded the removal of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) in the Sinai.[57] On May 30, King Hussein of Jordan signed a mutual defense pact with Egypt, along with Iraq, and thus the stage was set for war.[58]

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[50] "Six-Day War," Britannica Encyclopedia, https://www.britannica.com/event/Six-Day-War.
[51] Shultz, *Global Insurgency Strategy.*
[52] Arab guerilla forces
[53] "PLO," History.com, May 7, 2018. https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/plo.
[54] Michael B. Oren, "Arabs, Israelis, and the Great Powers," in *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East.* Presidio Press, 2017.
[55] Oren, "Arabs, Israelis, and the Great Powers."
[56] Ibid.
[57] "Six-Day War."
[58] Ibid.

Aware of the mobilization of Arab states to confront Israel, the Israelis prepared for imminent war and planned a preemptive strike. On June 5, 1967, Israel launched Operation Focus, an aerial attack on Egypt, catching Nasser's forces off guard.[59] On the same day, Israel gained air superiority and proceeded to invade Gaza and the Sinai, coinciding with the opening of a second front in Jerusalem in wake of a Jordanian attack.[60] By June 7, the Old City was captured, embarrassing the Arab alliance. The final phase of the war along the northern Israeli-Syrian border ended in the Israeli's successful capture of the Golan.[61] On June 10, the United Nations declared a ceasefire, signaling the end of a miraculous victory for the Israelis, on one hand. On the other hand, the Arab states were left humiliated and to deal with the severe casualties and economic consequences of the war. Though only six days, the war sent shockwaves throughout the region and indefinitely changed the social, political, and security landscape of the Middle East. For decades to come, the world would watch the evolution of Salafi jihadists from freedom fighters to terrorists. Roughly twelve years after Israel won the Six Day War, Palestinians would flock to Afghanistan to wage jihad against the infidels, learn from the internationally-lauded freedom fighter and mujahideen leader, Abdullah Azzam, and prepare to liberate Palestine through militant jihad.

In the meantime, Syria and Egypt launched another offensive on Israel in 1973, known as the Yom Kippur War. The war, which lasted only three weeks, was another attempt by the Arab states to regain territory lost during the Six Day War. With support from Iraq and Jordan, Syria and Egypt attacked Israeli forces in the Golan Heights and Sinai Peninsula on Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) on October 6, 1973.[62] With U.S. support, the Israelis secured another military

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[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] "The 1973 Arab-Israeli War." The United States Department of State, Office of the Historian. https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/arab-israeli-war-1973.

victory and the UN declared a ceasefire on October 22.[63] In 1974, Egypt and Israel signed

disengagement agreements and Israel conceded parts of the Sinai. In 1979, Israel signed the first

peace treaty with an Arab state, Egypt, then ruled by Sadat who was eager to strengthen ties to

Washington in order to boost Egypt's failing economy.[64] Syria, on the other hand, was left

devastated from war as it lost more of the Golan Heights to Israel, which in turn led to Syria and

the other Arab states voting to expel Egypt from the Arab League.[65]

In 1982, Israel formally withdrew from the Sinai Peninsula, while simultaneously facing

increased threats from the Palestinian Liberation Organization in Lebanon at home.[66] As a result,

the Israeli Defense Forces proceeded to invade southern Lebanon and siege Beirut for two

months in efforts to drive out the PLO.[67] Israel's invasion devastated Palestinians that had fled to

southern Lebanon in the wake of 1948 and 1967. Three months after the invasion, Israel's

Christian, Lebanese paramilitary ally murdered thousands of displaced Palestinians in Lebanon's

Shatila refugee camp.[68] Israel, along with their allied paramilitary force, known as the

Phalangists, ignored the UN's ceasefire agreements and the US-brokered agreement allowing

PLO members to exit Lebanon.[69] On September 16, the Phalangist militia surrounded the camp

and began brutally killing Palestinians, whom they accused of having ties to the PLO, for forty

hours, followed by Israel firing into the camp at nightfall.[70] The Phalangists, supported by the

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[63] "The 1973 Arab-Israeli War."

[64] Ibid.

[65] "Yom Kippur War, " *History.com*.
https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/yom-kippur-war#:~:text=On%20October%206%2C%201973%2C%20hoping,day%20in%20the%20Jewish%20calendar.

[66] "Arab-Israeli wars."

[67] Mark Tessler, "Violent Confrontations in the Early 1980s," in *A History of the Israeli Palestinian Conflict, Second Edition* (Indiana University Press, 2009): 535-599.

[68] Nassim Ahmed, "Remembering the Sabra and Shatila Massacre," *Middle East Monitor,* September 16, 2019.
https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20190916-remembering-the-sabra-and-shatila-massacre/.

[69] Ahmed, "Remembering."
Tessler, "Violent Confrontations."

[70] Leila Shahid, "The Sabra and Shatila Massacres: Eye-Witness Reports," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 32, no. 1 (2002): 36-58.

IDF, were met with little resistance.[71] For Palestinians, the cycle of oppression and injustice was inescapable on every side- revealing itself to be more than a localized, isolated moment.

In the remaining decades of the twentieth century, the land in Israel-Palestine witnessed two Palestinian uprisings (the first and second intifadas), Israel's signing of a peace deal with Jordan, the signings of the Oslo Accords, and the rise of Hezbollah, Hamas, Fatah, and many other local, Palestinian-aligned militant and political organizations. Today, the consequences of the intifadas, normalization of diplomatic ties between Israel and Arab states, and longstanding oppression of Palestinians by the Israeli government remain. All consequences considered, the establishment of the Israeli state in Palestine has become central to the rhetoric and grand strategies of transnational Salafi jihadi organizations.

1.3 Research Methods and Limitations

In order to investigate my research question, I am taking a qualitative approach and will study open-source Salafi jihadi recruitment propaganda, particularly those of Al Qaeda and ISIS, in the form of magazines published in both English and Arabic. I will also use Abdullah Azzam's books, specifically *Join the Caravan* and *Defense of Muslim Lands*, and a selection of primary sources in Arabic such as government agency reports, speeches, and previously conducted interviews. I will further examine primary sources from Jihadology, such as newsletters, correspondence, press releases, and *nasheeds* (anthems) originally published by ISIS and other Salafi jihadi organizations. By analyzing a comprehensive selection of both primary English and Arabic sources from current Salafi jihadi dialogues, I will add to the gap in literature surrounding the organizational and motivational influences of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on transnational Salafi jihad by focusing on the inner mechanisms that draw organizational or motivational inspiration from the conflict. Further, I will examine how the above recruitment materials portray

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[71] Shahid, "The Sabra and Shatila Massacres."

Palestine and how both Al Qaeda and ISIS differ in terms of ideology and grand strategy regarding the conflict.

There is not a strong reason to use an excess of quantitative data in my project, nor is it available or would be particularly useful. This thesis seeks to establish that Israel's occupation has contributed to the rise of and continues to fuel transnational Salafi jihad by analyzing recently published magazines and printed materials; thus there is not a need to prove this hypothesis via quantitative methods. As such, I am reliant on the above qualitative data. While there is a plethora of information on jihadist recruitment, marketing methods, and history, there is remarkably less work done on the influence of the Palestinian question on the organizational innerworkings of Salafi jihadist organizations and even less studies on Palestinian Salafi jihadist leaders aside from Azzam. Therefore, my goal is to fill this gap in literature by analyzing current, unclassified primary materials and the comprehensive history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its intersection with the revival of Salafi jihad in order to speak to the organizational and motivational influences of the conflict on the proliferation and evolution of transnational Salafi jihad.

Current literature on the influence of Palestine on Salafi jihadism is limited to biographies of Abdullah Azzam, Sayyid Qutb, Hassan al Banna, and others who have contributed their highly popular and controversial teachings and ideologies to the movement.[72] I will be heavily utilizing the biographies and analyses of these ideologues- Abdullah Azzam in particular- in order to support my research question. However, I aim to add to the current literature by discussing the organizational and motivational implications of the conflict and how

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[72] Hegghammer and Wagemakers,"The Palestine Effect."
Robert Manne, "Sayyid Qutb: Father of Salafi Jihadism, Forerunner of the Islamic State," *ABC Religion and Ethics*, November 7, 2016.
https://www.abc.net.au/religion/sayyid-qutb-father-of-salafi-jihadism-forerunner-of-the-islamic-/10096380.

Palestine is used by both Al Qaeda and ISIS as part of each organization's respective grand strategy. In order to do so, I examine Salafi jihadi recruitment methods, ideologies, literature, political involvement, and relationships with Palestinian-based militant jihadi organizations. Salafi jihadi ideologues are a major part of looking at the conflict as a whole, however they are not the root of the phenomenon.

There is also scholarship denoting the rise of global Salafi jihad to populist pan-Islamism, Iran's Islamic revolution, the rise of anti-Semitism, and the steady decline of Arab nationalism in the mid twentieth century.[73] However, these assertions are largely neglected and understudied in the current literature.

Hegghammer, the foremost scholar on Abdullah Azzam and the first to write on the "Palestine effect," has attributed the rise of transnational Salafi jihad to Azzam's influence and leadership and the subsequent role of Palestinians in Salafi jihadi circles.[74] In regard to the "Palestine effect," he takes a historical approach by analyzing influentials from the Palestinian diaspora that have contributed to transnational Salafi jihad.[75] While I agree with Hegghammer in that Azzam's life had and continues to have remarkable influence on transnational Salafi jihad, I hesitate to give Azzam all of the credit for proliferating the transnational movement. He was a Palestinian who acted as a vessel to internationalize the movement via his ideological contributions, but it was the question of Palestine and war in present-day Israel that drove and

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[73] Hegghammer, "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters."
Robert S. Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad,* Random House, 2010.
David Snow and Scott Byrd, "Ideology, framing processes, and Islamic terrorist movements," *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (2007): 119-136.
Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Harvard University Press, 2002).
[74] Hegghammer and Wagemakers, "The Palestine Effect."
Thomas Hegghammer, *The Caravan: Abdullah Azzam and the Rise of Global Jihad* (Cambridge University Press, 2020).
Calvert, "The Striving Sheikh."
Asaf Maliach, "Abdullah Azzam, Al Qaeda, and Hamas: Concepts of Jihad and Istishad," *Military and Strategic Affairs* 2, no.2 (2010): 79-93.
[75] Hegghammer and Wagemakers, "The Palestine Effect."

continues to drive the evolving Salafi jihadi narrative. The "vessels," while important, were not and are not individually influential and powerful enough to single-handedly sustain a steadily growing, international movement. Therefore, I intend to examine how the domestic and regional consequences of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have contributed to transnational Salafi jihad via the internal mechanisms, organization, goals, and strategies of prominent international Salafi jihadi organizations- ISIS and Al Qaeda.

Lastly, the historical accounts and hagiagraphies of prominent ideologues and leaders in the Salafi jihadi movement are inconsistent. I recognize that I will have to engage in substantial fact-checking and read many sources on the same subject or leader in order to present historically sound analyses. Further, a substantial amount of research is conducted in Arabic, so there is the risk of misinterpretation. In order to minimize the risk of mistranslation, I have utilized vetted English translations of sources originally published in Arabic.

Section 1.4 Overview of Chapters

In chapter two, I analyze the life and upbringing of Abdullah Azzam (1941-1989) and his leadership of the mujahideen in Afghanistan, relationship with Osama Bin Laden, U.S.-sponsored tours for mujahideen recruitment in the United States, significant ideological influence on Bin Laden, and *Join the Caravan* and *Defense of Muslim Lands.* In regard to Azzam's literature, I specifically analyze his usage of Palestine as being central to modern Salafi jihadi movements. l end with an analysis of Azzam's strategic ideological influence (both direct and indirect) on the likes of Maqdisi, Zarqawi, Yassin, and Bin Laden.

In chapter three, I examine the history, scope, and leadership of Al Qaeda Central. I go on to discuss its motivational and organizational connections to Palestine by analyzing Al Qaeda's usage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in its recruitment propaganda and ideology. In order to

argue for the organizational connection, I analyze Al Qaeda's connections and influence with Salafi jihadi groups based in Palestine. In addition, I connect the historical connection to Palestine to the motivational and organizational links via Azzam. Lastly, I examine the usage of Islamic apocalyptic literature and *nasheeds* in Al Qaeda's recruitment strategy and analyze how the organization is connected to Palestine on every level- historical, motivational, and organizational.

In chapter four, I analyze the history, scope, and leadership of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. I then discuss its motivational connection to Palestine by examining its English-printed propaganda magazines, *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*. Then, I will look at how ISIS is gaining influence in Palestine with anti-Hamas Salafi jihadi cells in Gaza in order to assess ISIS' organizational connection to Palestine. Lastly, I demonstrate how ISIS' connection to and utilization of Palestine in its propaganda and grand strategy differs from that of Al Qaeda. Specifically, I examine the role of ISIS' Palestine *nasheed* and its emphasis on apocalyptic literature and religious justification.

I conclude the findings of my research in chapter five by analyzing how both Al Qaeda and ISIS frame Palestine in their respective recruitment propaganda and grand strategies. In particular, I focus on how Palestine is used by both organizations as justification for two different movements and, therefore, end goals. I also examine the future impact of the occupation of Palestine on Salafi jihadi movements with a focus on the potential implications of Israel's annexation plans. Lastly, I assess gaps.

Chapter II: *Defense of Muslim Lands*

Section 2.1 The life and death of Abdullah Azzam

Before the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and Al Qaeda gained international followings

and global attention, before 9/11 and Bin Laden's proliferation onto the world stage as the United

State's most-wanted man and the justification for the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the War on

Terror, was the man who laid the ideological foundations of modern, globalized, Salafi jihad:

Abdullah Azzam.

In order to understand the breadth of the motivational and organizational influences of the

Israeli-Palestinian conflict on transnational Salafi jihad, it is necessary to discuss the historical

influences of the conflict and, specifically, one of the movement's most influential leaders.

Abdullah Azzam, the Palestinian leader of the mujahideen in Afghanistan, made monumental

ideological contributions to the revival of global Salafi jihad. Due in part to the dissemination of

his books, *Defense of Muslim Lands* and *Join the Caravan*, the case of Palestine became

intertwined with the proliferation of Salafi jihad and its globalization. Propelled into Salafi jihad

due to his experiences in the Israeli-occupied city of Jenin in Palestine, stint with the PLO in

Jordan, and resentment toward Arab governments and their failures in the Palestinian struggle,

Azzam quickly rose through the ranks of Islamic scholarship and became one of the foremost

leaders in the twentieth century revival of transnational Salafi jihad.[76] Azzam's roles in

mobilizing the mujahideen in Afghanistan, ideologically legitimizing Hamas, and laying the

ideological foundations for Al Qaeda have thus contributed to the endurance of the modern

transnational Salafi jihadi movement fueled by the question of Palestine.

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[76] Thomas Hegghammer, "'Abdallah Azzam and Palestine," *Norweigian Defense Research Establishment* (2013): 1-31.

The "Imam of Jihad" was born in the village of al Silat al Harithiyya (near Jenin) in the West Bank in 1941.[77] Born into a modest family of farmers, Azzam grew up under the legacy of resistance and insurgency- as the Arab Revolt of the 1930s was still relevant in the community's collective memory.[78] Roughly ten years after the Palestinian Arab Revolt, the 1947 United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine prompted another Arab insurgency that lasted from December 1947 to May 1948 when Israel declared its independence in Palestine.[79]

While Azzam's family was physically unaffected by the political violence in Jenin in 1948, they lost most of their ancestral farming land and his memoirs attest to the atrocities Jewish militias committed against local Palestinian farming families.[80] Further, the humanitarian crisis (*al-Nakba*)[81] that ensued deeply affected Azzam by sowing seeds of resentment towards the Israeli state and the Jewish people. Azzam's early experiences in Palestine would eventually fuel his dogmatic call to defend Muslim lands as *fard 'ayn* (individual obligation) and inform his mission and leadership in the Soviet-Afghan War.

Following the Arab-Israeli War, Azzam enrolled in Khadoorie Agricultural College in Tulkarm.[82] The college was funded by a Jewish Iraqi philanthropist by the name of Ellis Khadoorie and was built in order to bolster British colonial interests.[83] Ironically, the Palestinian "Imam of Global Jihad" was educated at a school with Jewish roots. Upon graduating from the Khadoorie school, Azzam moved to Jordan in order to teach in the small town of Adir, only to

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[77] Hegghammer, "Palestinian."
Hegghammer, "Icon."
[78] Hegghammer, "Palestinian."
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Hegghammer, "Abdullah Azzam and Palestine."
[83] Tamar Novick and Arie M. Dubnov, "The unknown history of a Palestinian school funded by an Iraqi Jew," *+972 Magazine, Haokets*, February 25, 2017.
https://www.972mag.com/the-unknown-history-of-the-palestinian-school-funded-by-an-iraqi-jew/.

return to Jenin.[84] His burgeoning interest in Islamic law led him to pursue a bachelor's degree in Islamic Law in Syria at Damascus University, where he studied remotely from Jenin and graduated in 1966.[85]

The Six Day War of 1967 drastically shifted the trajectory of Azzam's life. Due to the Israeli military occupation in Jenin, he fled to Jordan where he took refuge in Zarqa before permanently relocating to Amman in order to reunite with his family.[86] Shortly after arriving in Jordan in 1967, Azzam joined the Jordanian chapter of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic Action Front (IAF), where he learned from Al Banna's ideas of localized struggle and the faction's services and activities.[87]

His developing ideology thus became rooted in justice for the Palestinian people, along with hatred of the Israeli state. Essentially, the Six Day War radicalized his thought process and activated his teachings on returning to the Golden Age of Islam, therefore setting the direction for the rest of his life in Islamic scholarship, Palestinian activism, and the pursuit of jihad.[88]

Early Jihad

While Azzam was initially drawn to the Muslim Brotherhood's founder, Hassan Al Banna, and his idea of a global expansion of Islam with roots in the Nile, he quickly grew disillusioned with the IAF's methodology and plans for a distinctly localized ideological expansion in Jordan that did not seek to change existing power structures or focus on Palestinian liberation.[89] Further, the IAF vocally supported the Hashemite Monarchy and was both underprepared and unwilling to take tangible action against Israel.[90] As for Azzam, his vision

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[84] Hegghammer, "Palestinian."
[85] Calvert, "The Striving Sheikh."
[86] Hegghammer, "Palestinian."
[87] Lea-Henry, "The Life and Death."
[88] Quintan Wiktorowicz, "The new global threat: transnational salafis and jihad," *Middle East Policy* 8, no. 4 (2001): 18-38.
[89] Calvert, "The Striving Sheikh."
[90] Lea-Henry, "The Life and Death."

revolved around Palestine and his overarching vision of globalized Muslim unity with Palestine at the center.[91] Disillusioned with the IAF, Azzam slowly disaffiliated only to later find a new home in Afghanistan.

In the meanwhile, Azzam joined the *fedayeen* (PLO) in Jordan and gained his first combat experiences fighting the IDF in Palestine.[92] His stint in the *fedayeen* was short-lived, however, as it dissolved in 1970 after the Black September. After actively fighting for the Palestinian cause, Azzam spent the next decade quietly furthering his education in Islamic law and thought.

Later Education

After the dissolvement of the *fedayeen*, Azzam began his doctoral studies at Al Azhar University in Cairo- the most prestigious Islamic university in the world- where he graduated with a PhD in Islamic Jurisprudence in 1973.[93] Azzam returned to Jordan where he taught at the College of Sharia Law at the University of Jordan until he was fired for his pro-Palestinain rhetoric that challenged the legitimacy of the Hashemite monarchy in 1980.[94] He then moved to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia where he taught Islamic Law at King Abd Al-Aziz University. He only taught at Abd Al-Aziz University for one year before assuming another professorship at the International Islamic University in Islamabad, Pakistan.[95] However, after a few months in Pakistan, he permanently relocated to Afghanistan to recruit and train the mujahideen.[96]

Section 2.2 Afghanistan and Bin Laden

Azzam's involvement and commitment to the war in Afghanistan- though outwardly appearing to contradict his grand strategy of liberating Palestine- actually reaffirmed his

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[91] Ibid.
[92] Hegghammer, "Abdallah Azzam."
[93] Lea-Henry,"The Life and Death."
[94] Calvert,"The Striving Sheikh."
[95] Lea-Henry, "The Life and Death."
[96] McGregor, "'Jihad and the Rifle Alone.'"

commitment to Palestine and the liberation of Muslim lands. According to Azzam in his book,

The Defense of Muslim Lands:

> Whoever can, from among the Arabs, fight jihad in Palestine, then he must start there. And, if he is not capable, then he must set out for Afghanistan. For the rest of the Muslims, I believe they should start their jihad in Afghanistan. It is our opinion that we should begin with Afghanistan before Palestine, not because Afghanistan is more important than Palestine, not at all, Palestine is the foremost Islamic problem. It is the heart of the Islamic world, and it is a blessed land but, there are some reasons which make Afghanistan the starting point.[97]

Therefore, the issue of Palestine remained at the core of Azzam's reasoning to join the "jihad against the unbelievers" in Afghanistan, as he sought to establish a unified Muslim body that would spread to Palestine. Azzam argues that it is *fard 'ayn* (individual responsibility) on each Muslim to fight where there is the most imminent need and opportunity.[98] Hence, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict drove Azzam's motives to conduct jihad in Afghanistan and fueled his operations throughout the duration of the Soviet-Afghan War.

Azzam became the main leader and mobilizer of Arab foreign fighters and provided them with weapons, tools, and trained them in his bases throughout the region.[99] He also established the *maktab al-khidmat* (Services Bureau) in order to house foreign fighters and publish his books and fatwas.[100] Azzam used funding from both Osama Bin Laden and the CIA in order to train and equip the mujahideen.[101] Further, the United States sponsored Azzam and his recruiting trips to 50 U.S. states for the mobilization of Arab foreign fighters in the mid-1980s.[102] Generous funding from the U.S. and private donors further legitimized Azzam's ideological mission and

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[97] *Defense of Muslim Lands* by Abdullah Azzam (Shaheed), English translation by Brothers in Ribatt. www.religioscope.com.
[98] Azzam, *Al-Dfaa a'n Iradi al-Muslimeen.*
[99] Wiktorowicz, "The new global threat."
[100] Lea-Henry, "The Life and Death."
[101] Mary Anne Weaver, "Blowback," *Atlantic Monthly* 277, no. 5 (1996): 24-28.
[102] Hegghammer, "Palestinian."

organization of the *maktab al khadmat*.[103] Meanwhile in Afghanistan, Azzam's reunion with his

former student, Osama Bin Laden, became the part of the foundation for the transnationalization

of the Palestine connection to modern jihad.[104]

Before meeting Azzam, Bin Laden was ideologically aimless and had no spiritual

authority or standing.[105] Born into a wealthy, well-connected family in Riyadh, Bin Laden grew

up close to the Saudi royal family and had no predisposition to Salafi jihad until his encounter

with Azzam at King Abdul Aziz University. [106] As a student of Azzam and surrounded by a

plethora of Islamic fundamentalist-leaning peers, Bin Laden became indoctrinated by Azzam's

call to a revival of Muslim unity and a return to the "Golden Age of Islam."[107]

Therefore, the man who would inherit- albeit controversially- the globally reknowned

Salafi jihadist organization, Al Qaeda, was invented. While Bin Laden is typically given credit

for the rise of Salafi jihadi activities in the 1980s and until his death, it was Azzam who initially

indoctrinated Bin Laden and pioneered the establishment of Al Qaeda. Therefore, Azzam gave

Al Qaeda spiritual authority and legitimacy that it would have otherwise lacked.

In Afghanistan, Azzam also met Abu Muhammad Al Maqdisi, the influential

Jordanian-Palestinian Salafi jihadi ideologue who would become the mentor of Abu Musab Al

Zarqawi.[108] Azzam and Maqdisi shared a common Palestinian heritage, however Maqdisi

distanced himself from Azzam and his teachings, as he was keener to a quietest approach to

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[103] Jason Burke, "Frankenstein the CIA created," *The Guardian*, January 17, 1999.
https://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/jan/17/yemen.islam.
[104] Aryn Baker, "Who Killed Abdullah Azzam?," *Time*, June 18, 2009.
http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1902809_1902810_1905173,00.html.
[105] Lea-Henry, "The Life and Death."
[106] Ibid.
  Ahmed S. Hashim, "The World According to Usama Bin Laden," *Naval War College Review* 54, no. 4 (2001): 11-35.
[107] Youssef Aboul-Enein, *The Late Sheikh Abdullah Azzam's Books, Part 3: Radical Theories on Defending Muslim Land through Jihad,* Military Academy West Point NY Combating Terrorism Center, 2008.
[108] Abdullah Bin Khaled al-Saud, "The Spiritual Teacher and His Truants: The Influence and Relevance of Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 41, no.9 (2018): 736-754.

jihad.[109] While Maqdisi closely adhered to the quietest sect of Salafism, quietest salafism does not formally forbid Salafi jihad and quietest adherents do not typically engage in violent jihad.[110] Although Maqdisi would never engage in violent behavior himself, his mentee, Palestinian-Jordanian Abu Musab Al Zarqawi, would disregard his advice and go on to establish Al Qaeda in Iraq, which eventually developed into the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).[111] Therefore, Zarqawi became more closely associated with Azzam's extremist expressions of jihad in the end.

Overall, the last decade of Azzam's life in Afghanistan proved to be his most influential. Azzam's intentions in pursuing jihad in Afghanistan over the jihad in Palestine was justified in his belief that Palestine is at the center, therefore the mujahideen would go on to pursue jihad against the Jews in Palestine after the liberation of the Afghans from the Soviets.[112] Notably, Azzam's partnership with Bin Laden shaped the trajectory of transnational jihad and ensured that Palestine would be a constant feature in the ideology of transnational jihad.

Further, Azzam published several books and essays including *Join the Caravan*, *Defense of Muslim Lands: The First Obligation After Faith*, and *Hamas: Historical Roots and Charter*-among many other essays and articles circulated among jihadi groups and in *Al-Jihad Magazine*.[113] Azzam's work in Afghanistan therefore connected the Palestinian cause to Salafi jihad and permanently fixed the issue as a pillar of modern Salafi jihadi literature.

Section 2.3 Azzam's literature

Abdullah Azzam's books, *The Defense of Muslim Lands: The First Obligation After Iman* and *Join the Caravan* are ideological hallmarks of the transnational Salafi jihadi movement and

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[109] Joas Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihadi: The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi*, (N.p.: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
[110] Wagemakers, *A Quietest Jihadi.*
[111] Ibid.
[112] *Defense of Muslim Lands* by Abdullah Azzam (Shaheed).
[113] Hegghammer, "Abdullah Azzam and Palestine."

still circulated amongst the ranks of Al Qaeda and ISIS today. The common thread throughout

each book is the incumbent call upon every Muslim to wage jihad wherever there is opportunity

as connected to the grand strategy of liberating Palestine. In *Defense of Muslim Lands* (*al Dfa'a*

3n Eraadi al Muslimeen), Azzam argues that defensive jihad is *fard a'ayn* upon every Muslim

near or living in the land which the kuffar (unbelievers) have taken.[114] This call is echoed in the

creeds of both ISIS and Al Qaeda (*aqida wa almanhaj*), but more clearly addressed in the Creed

and Path of the Islamic State. In lines 8-9 of the Creed and Path of ISIS, Azzam's call is clear:

We believe that jihad in God's path is an individual obligation, from the fall of al-Andalus until
the liberation of [all] Muslim lands, and [that it is an individual obligation] in the presence of a
pious person or an impious person. And [we believe that] the greatest of sins after disbelief in
God is barring from jihad in God's path at the time when it is an individual obligation.[115]

These sentiments are echoed in the Creed and Path of Al Qaeda:

This *jihad* is accomplished by a single individual or more, and will not be stopped by the tyranny
of the oppressors or the defeatist talk of the demoralizers.[116]

Taking into consideration Azzam's ties to Palestine and involvement in the war in

Afghanistan, his sentiments expressed regarding the oppressor are in reference to both Palestine

and Afghanistan. He expands on this further in *The Defense of Muslim Lands*:

Whoever can, from among the Arabs, fight jihad in Palestine, then he must start there. And, if he
is not capable, then he must set out for Afghanistan. For the rest of the Muslims, I believe they
should start their jihad in Afghanistan. It is our opinion that we should begin with Afghanistan
before Palestine, not because Afghanistan is more important than Palestine, not at all, Palestine is
the foremost Islamic problem.[117]

Azzam reasons that the jihad in Afghanistan is obligatory before Palestine at this moment in

history because of the sheer opportunity. In Afghanistan, the mujahideen are trained to fight, thus

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[114] Azzam, *Al-Dfaa a'n Iradi al-Muslimeen.*
[115] Cole Bunzel, "The Islamic State's Creed and Path," in *From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State*, (Brookings Institution, 2015).
https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/the-ideology-of-the-islamic-state.pdf
[116] Bernard Haykel, "On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action," in *Global Salafism*, ed. Roel Meijer (Oxford University Press, 2009).
[117] Azzam, *Al-Dfaa a'n Iradi al-Muslimeen.*

making them better suited for the end goal of fighting the oppressor in Palestine. Azzam also

clarifies that Palestine is the "foremost Islamic problem," but goes on to argue that the fight in

Palestine has become a secular movement driven by a variety of individuals (Muslims,

nationalists, communists).[118] Hence, he argues that the Palestinian fight has been appropriated

whereas Islamists initiated the fight in Afghanistan.[119] Taking cues from Salafist ideology, he

thus views the struggle in Palestine as purely Islamic in nature and uses the political and

religious diversity of its current liberation movement as a means to discredit its legitimacy:

The situation has become a game in the hands of the great powers. Gambling with the land, the
people and the land of Palestine, pursuing them even into the Arab states, until their military
power is exhausted. There are more than 3000 kms of open border in Afghanistan and regions of
tribes not under political influence. This forms a protective shield for mujahideen. However, in
Palestine the situation is entirely different. The borders are closed, their hands are bound, the
eyes of the authorities spy from all sides for anyone who attempts to infiltrate its borders to kill
the Jews.[120]

Azzam's disillusionment with the manipulation of Palestine by the world powers and realization

of the futility of using the current moment to retake Al Aqsa culminates in his final points about

Palestine and vision of a transnational jihadi movement:

If only the Muslims would apply their Allah's command and implement the laws of their Shariah
concerning the General March for just one week in Palestine, Palestine would be completely
purified of Jews... Unfortunately, when we think about Islam we think nationally. We fail to let
our vision pass beyond geographic borders that have been drawn up for us by the Kuffar.[121]

Today, the above excerpts from Azzam's most notable book, *The Defense of Muslim*

Lands, are critical to understanding the "Palestine effect" and conection to transnational jihad.

While Azzam was the first to explicitly connect the Palestinian case to his reasoning for

engaging in defensive jihad and incorporate the issue into his doctrine, the impact of the

proliferation of the Israeli state has contributed to the twentieth century Salafi jihadi revival on

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[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.

motivational and organizational levels by means of recruitment materials, nasheeds, poetry, and grand strategy as well, as will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Regarding Azzam's second book of interest, *Join the Caravan*, he expands less-so on the call to jihad for the sake of Palestine and further expands on "responding to the call of the Lord" and, again, freeing occupied Muslim lands from the oppressor.[122] However, *Join the Caravan* is still relevant, as it expounds upon several pillars of Salafi theology including: the following of the pious predecessors, *tawhid* (the oneness of God), ensuring that unbelief is fought, and the authority of Qur'an and Sunna.[123]

Section 2.4 Conclusion

Considering the life of Abdullah Azzam and his ideological contributions to transnational Salafi jihad, it is clear that his focus on Palestine both in his books and teachings have both indirectly and directly fueled the transnational jihadi movement. Directly, Palestine was continuously at the center of his activities in Afghanistan and Palestine's occupation by Israel furthered Azzam's arguments of jihad as *fard 'ayn* throughout his repertoire. As will be discussed in the following chapters, Azzam was not solely responsible for the rise of transnational Salafi jihad, nor did he single-handedly cause Palestine to become the focus of the movement. Rather, the proliferation of the Iraeli state, inadequacy of the Palestinian local government, and the suffering of Palestinians at the hands of the Israelis both motivationally and organizationally fuel modern transnational jihad.

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[122] Abdlullah Azzam, "Join the Caravan," [al huq bilqafila]. https://english.religion.info/2002/02/01/document-join-the-caravan/.
[123] Azzam, "Join the Caravan."
  Haykel, "On the Nature of Salafi Thought."

Chapter III: Al Qaeda

"Jihad is a duty to liberate Al-Aqsa, and to help the powerless in Palestine, Iraq and Lebanon and in every Muslim country."[124]

Section 3.1 Early history

According to most sources, Al Qaeda was formed between 1987-1988 as a splinter group of Azzam's *maktab al-khadmat*[125] and led by Bin Laden.[126] Bin Laden was not merely the financier of *maktab al-khadmat*, which led to rifts in his relationship with Bin Laden in the late 1980s.[127] Rather, he was a militarist with a vision for a unified Arab militant organization, whereas Azzam tended to take a centrist, neutral approach to military engagement.[128] Further, discrepancies in strategy and vision between Bin Laden and Azzam led to the splintering off of Bin Laden's group from the *maktab al-khadmat*, as Bin Laden was more concerned with the caliber of military training and funding than his counterpart, Azzam, who envisioned *maktab al-khadmat* as the first step towards establishing a modern Islamic state with Palestine at the center.[129] In the end, Bin Laden became captivated by the region of Jaji in the northeast and decided to set up his camp there- despite concerns of the area's exposed location overlooking enemy frontlines.[130] Bin Laden went on to recruit Egyptian foreign fighters- one of whom would become Al Qaeda's first military commander (Abu Ubaydah al Banshiri).[131] With the addition of

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[124] Sheikh Osama Bin Laden, Al Jazeera Interview, 2002. http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/south/02/05/binladen.transcript/.

[125] "Bureau of Services"

[126] Leah Farrall, "Revisiting al-Qaida's Foundation and Early History," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 11, no.6 (2017): 17-37.

[127] Lea‑Henry, "The Life and Death."

[128] Thomas Hegghammer, "Mujahid," in *The Caravan: Abdallah Azzam and the Rise of Global Jihad*," (Cambridge University Press, 2020): 328-368.

[129] Farrall, "Revisiting al-Qaida's Foundation." Hegghammer, "Mujahid."

[130] Ibid.

[131] Ibid.

al Banshiri and several Egyptian Jihad-affiliated recruits to Bin Laden's ranks, Al Qaeda[132] quickly started to become a reality.

While initially led and managed by Bin Laden, who was predominantly focused on effective military training and rising up against Arab governments at the time, Al Qaeda nonetheless came to embody the vision of Azzam in the end.[133] After Azzam's assassination in 1989, Al Qaeda continued to mobilize and organize under the influence of Azzam's *Defense of Muslim Lands*, which provided the early organization with the ideological framework and vision by which to build and sustain a transnational movement.

Today, the ideals upheld by *Defense of Muslim Lands* continue to guide Al Qaeda's grand strategy and inform its propaganda. Notably, in AQAP's (Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula) magazine, *Inspire,* the ideas of *Defense of Muslim Lands* and the liberation of Palestine (and subsequent emancipation of *masjid al aqsa*) are prominent themes in each issue. Remarkably, the usage and AQAP's portrayal of Palestine in *Inspire* denotes an inherently localized agenda and grand strategy within the bounds of a transnational movement. As quoted by Abu Musab Al Zarqawi at the end of each issue (albeit ironically), "Here we start and in Jerusalem we meet."[134]

As will be discussed in detail in this chapter, the vision of Azzam to create a transnational movement that would function as a state and establish a front around Palestine to retake Jerusalem is central to the messaging of *Inspire* and functions as both a motivational and organizational means of creating a unified front around Palestine- using Palestine as a regional "connector," and common rallying point. Further, as

Section 3.2 Magazine analysis

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[132] "Base" in Arabic.
[133] R. Kim Cragin, "Early History of Al Qa'ida," *The Historical Journal* 51, no. 4 (2008): 1047-1067.
[134] Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. *Inspire,* no. 2. (2010).

Inspire, first published in English by Al Malahem Media in the Fall of 2010, is a propaganda tool of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula that ran until 2017. Currently, there are seventeen printed issues in English, all with Arabic translations. In order to analyze the magazine issues, I specifically looked for articles on Palestine, grand strategy, and ideological connections to Palestine. I also measured the number of times "Palestine," "Palestinians," "Israel," "Israelis," "Jews," and "Zionist/ism" were mentioned. While this data points to a larger picture of the role of Palestine in Al Qaeda's organization and transnationality, I particularly looked at how each mention, article, and/or quote pertaining to Palestine and/or Israel connected transnational Salafi jihad to the Palestinian issue as a motivational and/or organizational influence.

Regarding Al Qaeda's portrayal and usage of Palestine in *Inspire*, the Palestinian issue is a significant motivational factor for joining the jihad, as most eloquently expressed in the articles, "Palestine: Betrayal of Human Conscience" (Issue 12) and "Let Us Unite for Palestine" (Issue 15). Contrary to its competitor, ISIS, Al Qaeda elaborates on the issue of Palestine as a *human rights issue* and asserts that sympathy for the Palestinian cause suffices a means to engage in jihad against Israelis and perpetuators of the Jewish state.[135] In addition, my findings reveal that Palestine plays a larger role as both a motivational and organizational factor than simply improving the image of Al Qaeda.

Section 3.3 *Inspire*

Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's *Inspire* magazine draws on both current events and history to portray the liberation of Palestine as incumbent upon all Muslims. In particular, it reflects the intentions of Osama Bin Laden in which he equates attacks on the West with attacks on Israel. Hence, the glorification of 9/11 is a prominent theme throughout the series, as well as

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[135] Samir Khan, "Palestine: Betrayal of the Human Conscience," in *Inspire: Shattered: A Story About Change* 12 (2014): 23-24.

imagery related to Palestine in general. Unlike the magazines of ISIS, AQAP's series uses heroic

language to describe the spiritual blessing and personal benefit of engaging in jihad for the sake

of the ummah and Palestine. In particular, issue 15 publishes the article, "Let us unite for

Palestine," which states that Muslims are to target the West and all Israel supporters as part of the

movement to liberate Palestine.

In addition, Inspire includes many excerpts from famous leaders in the U.S. government

to highlight their hypocrisy and why Al Qaeda affiliates should attack Western interests in order

to "fight for Palestine." Essentially, it has never been about the West. It has always been about

Palestine in the eyes of Al Qaeda and its late leader, Osama Bin Laden.

In waging war on the U.S. and its interests, Al Qaeda frames itself as "cutting off the

head of the snake" (the U.S.) so that it can move in on Israel and take Palestine. Further, *Inspire*

reveals that the grand strategy of the organization has maintained consistency over time, unlike

younger and less established Salafi jihadi organizations- Jerusalem has always been at the center

of its objectives. Notably, before the mysterious death of Bin Laden's son, Hamza Bin Laden, in

2019, Hamza announced in an audio message release that "Jerusalem is a bride whose dowry is

our blood."[136]

Section 3.4 The Palestine *nasheed*

Nasheeds, Islamic hymns used by the Islamic State and Al Qaeda as a messaging and

propaganda tool, consistently draw on Jerusalem as a means to inspire men and women to join

their respective ranks. In the case of Al Qaeda's strategy, *nasheeds* are used to incite strong

emotions toward a particular issue or characteristic of God. Thus, in this instance, the *nasheed* is

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[136] Ali Soufan, "Hamza bin Laden, Osama's Son, Is Helping Al-Qaeda Stage a Deadly Comeback," *Newsweek*, June 19, 2017.
https://www.newsweek.com/2017/06/30/bin-laden-osama-son-helping-al-qaeda-stage-deadly-comeback-627207.html.

used as a call to engage in jihad for the sake of liberating Palestine. In particular, the "Palestine nasheed" has grown in popularity thanks to the propaganda of Hamas in the wake of the First Palestinian Intifada in the late 1980s.[137] While Hamas has always been at odds with Al Qaeda and ISIS, its propaganda and recruitment strategies have informed a bulk of the ideological and strategic anecdotes in its enemies' recruitment propaganda.

Specifically, Al Qaeda has used the Palestine nasheed as a means of both advertising the dire situation of a majority of Palestinians and recruiting mujahideen to join Al Qaeda for the sake of Palestine. In the nasheed, *Sahm al ams* (Arrow of Yesterday), Al Qaeda portrays a deep longing for Jerusalem and an endurance in jihad that is explicitly connected to Jerusalem:

> Yesterday's arrow still remains, buried in my heart.
> And the wounds in my ribs, I hide it O Jerusalem!
> I walk with fear, and the humiliation overburdens me.
> But I will never be chained up by despair!
> What type of crimes have been committed in your sacred land
> And the land has been polluted by those who want its destruction
> My mistake is that I, O Jerusalem, long ago,
> I was tempted by wealth and illusions and trophies.
> I will walk with fear, and the humiliation overburdens me.
> But I will never be chained up by despair.[138]

In using the Palestine nasheed for recruitment purposes, Al Qaeda reiterates its commitment to Palestine's liberation and uses it to instill a sense of moral obligation to "leave everything behind" to liberate Palestine. Therefore, this *nasheed* in particular asserts that the liberation of Palestine is reason to engage in jihad. Further, it frames Palestine as a moral issue, therefore equating the liberation of Palestine with moral obligation.

Section 3.5 Organizational links

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[137] Hayat Alvi, "Musical Criminology: A Comparative Analysis of Jihadist *Nasheeds* and *Narco Corridos*," *European, Middle Eastern, and African Affairs*, Summer 2020.
[138] MercifulServant, "Arrows of Yesterday- Castillo Nasheeds," YouTube video, 3:42, September 26, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUGG9eQ0wnQ.

Jund Ansar Allah, a former Salafi jihadi group based in Gaza, pledged allegiance to Al Qaeda and rose in prominence within the Gaza Strip after successfully attacking Israeli security forces in 2009.[139] The organization started as a counter to Hamas and its overtly nationalist position and was later ended by the organization it sought to counter within the next year.[140]

In addition, Al Qaeda has established ties with several other significant Salafi jihadi organizations (specifically, organizations solely established to challenge Hamas' influence) in Gaza.[141] Two of the most notable organizational linkages include Jaysh al Islam and Jaljalat.[142] Jaysh al Islam (Army of Islam) emerged in 2006 as an effort to rebuke Hamas' participation in Palestinian elections.[143] Its successes include the kidnapping of an IDF soldier in conjunction with Hamas' Qassem Brigades and the PRC's Salah al Din Brigades, as well as the hostaging of a BBC reporter and cameraman.[144]

On the other hand, Jaljalat ("thunder" in Arabic; also known as Ansar al Sunna) is led by a former Hamas military commander and has goals in tandem with those of Al Qaeda: "to maintain the 'flame' of jihad against Israel and to 'purify' Palestinian society from Western presence and influence."[145] Further, Jaljalat acts as an umbrella for smaller, lesser-known Salafi jihadi and Al Qaeda-inspired organizations in Gaza. Namely, Army of the Ummah Jerusalem, The Jerusalem Jihad Warriors Movement, and The Army of Believers- Al Qaeda in Palestine.[146]

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[139] "Mapping Palestinian Politics," European Council on Foreign Relations. https://ecfr.eu/special/mapping_palestinian_politics/jund_ansar_allah_gaza/.
[140] Boaz Ganor, "Israel and Hamas: Is War Imminent?" *Orbis* 57, no. 1 (2013): 120-134.
[141] Benedetta Berti, "Salafi Jihadi Activism in Gaza," *CTC Sentinel* 3, no. 5 (2010): 1-5.
[142] Warren Marshall, "Al Qaeda in Gaza: Isolating 'the Base,'" *Journal of Terrorism Research* 1, no. 1 (2011): 1-16.
[143] Berti, "Salafi Jihadi Activism."
[144] Michael Slackman, "A New Group That Seems to Share Al Qaeda's Agenda," *The New York Times*, July 8, 2006. https://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/08/world/middleeast/08islam.html.
[145] Jonathan Fighel, "Hamas, Al Qaeda, and the Islamisation of the Palestinian Cause," *Elcano Newsletter* 53 (2009): 1-10.
[146] Fighel, "Hamas."

A major exception to the organizational links between Al Qaeda and locally-driven Islamic militant organizations is none other than Hamas. In fact, Al Qaeda and Hamas have been at odds from the very beginning of each organization in the late 1980s- undoubtedly due to the power struggle between Azzam and Bin Laden.

Al Qaeda started the feud with Hamas. Al Qaeda, ironically the embodiment of Azzam's vision that eventually came to be led by and most closely associated with Bin Laden, began to view Hamas and its leadership as at odds with Al Qaeda's unwavering values of *al wala wa'l bara* (loyalty and disavowal), *tawhid* (the oneness of God), jihad, and Islamic land.[147] This change of heart was in response to Hamas' victory in the 2006 Palestinian elections and truce with Israel (in blatant contradiction to AQ's stance on jihadi involvement in secular government elections).[148] Hence, any organizational connection between Al Qaeda and Hamas was severed under Bin Laden's leadership.

In reviewing primary sources (videos and press releases) from the above Gaza-based Salafi jihadi organizations, these groups were both inspired and created in response to Al Qaeda's Palestine-centered globalization strategy and ideological "purity." In effect, the Palestine-centered propaganda strategy of Al Qaeda is directly mirrored in the respective strategies of said Salafi jihadi organizations in Gaza. Therefore, the question of Palestine functions as one of two organizational links between Palestinian nationalist Salafi jihadi organizations and the broader global jihad: ideological adherence to Al Qaeda and the countering of Hamas' influence and leadership in Palestine.

These organizational linkages are important because they position Al Qaeda as the "defender of Palestine" on a transnational level by reinforcing Al Qaeda's ideological reach

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[147] Mary Habeck, "Al Qa'ida and Hamas: The Limits of Salafi Jihadi Pragmatism," *CTC Sentinel* 3 no. 2 (2010): 1-3.
[148] Habeck, "Al Qa'ida and Hamas."

while forming a physical front in Palestine for the purpose of liberation. In addition, Al

Qaeda-connected Salafi jihadi cells in Palestine are the embodiment of Azzam's call to "wage

jihad wherever there is opportunity… [specifically], in Palestine."[149] Therefore, the

organizational links between Al Qaeda and Palestine are clear: Al Qaeda uses Palestine as a

liberation movement. As first exhorted by Azzam, Al Qaeda is using Palestine to recruit by

framing it as a liberation movement while, quite literally, forming a front around and within

Palestine via Al Qaeda affiliated Salafi jihadi cells.

Section 3.6 Motivational links

The motivational connection between Palestine and Al Qaeda's transnational agenda is

not only central to, but highly effective, in Al Qaeda's international messaging and propaganda

strategies. Specifically, Al Qaeda uses Palestine to instill a sense of moral obligation to join the

jihad in order to liberate their Muslim brothers and sisters in Palestine. This argument is most

eloquently portrayed in AQAP's *Inspire* magazine. In particular, the articles "Let Us Unite For

Palestine," "Inside Obama's Rationality," "Palestine: Betrayal of Human Conscience," and

"Protect Focus" portray Palestine as a nation and land that must be liberated at all costs, a moral

obligation to all Muslims, and one of the driving motivations for Al Qaeda's war against the

West (the United States, in particular).

In addition, Bin Laden's statements almost always mention the liberation of Palestine. In

one of his most popular *fatwas*, "World Islamic Front For Jihad Against Zionists and Crusaders:

Declaration of War," Bin Laden states:

The ruling of killing Americans and their allies- whether civilians or military- is incumbent upon
every Muslim who is able and in whichever country is easiest for him, in order to liberate the

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[149] Azzam, *Defense of Muslim Lands*.

Mosque of al Aqsa and the Holy Mosque [in Mecca] from their grip, and until their armies leave the lands of Islam, punished according to the law, broken and unable to threaten any Muslim.[150]

Therefore, as it is incumbent upon every Muslim to wage war against the West and its allies, Al Qaeda also asserts the United States as a common enemy- one in the same with Israel- as an addition to its grand strategy of liberating Palestine. According to Bin Laden, the United States and Israel are one in the same, which is why he encourages Al Qaeda to attack the West.[151]

Overall, the motivational influence of Palestine in Al Qaeda's propaganda is undeniable- each issue ends with the quote, "O Aqsa we are coming," and uses graphic images of injured Palestinian children and teenagers in an effort to invoke a sense of duty to joining international jihad for the sake of eventually liberating Palestine.

Section 3.7 Al Qaeda, "Defender of Palestine"

AL Qaeda has thus positioned itself to be the imminent "Defender of Palestine," although it has never actually launched an attack against Israel. Nonetheless, it intentionally seeks to overshadow this fact and support this blatant performance gap by attacking the West/Western interests and equating these attacks with attacks on Israel. In reality, Israel would not exist without the United States- hence, Al Qaeda views the U.S. as the most enduring obstacle to its strategy of liberating Palestine. The most notable instances of such attacks on the West are embodied in 9/11, the attack on the U.S. Embassy in Kenya, and the Khobar Towers attacks in Saudi Arabia. Until Bin Laden's assassination in 2011, he asserted that the "Zionist-Crusader" alliance (Israel and the United States) is the biggest threat to the Islamic Caliphate- which is still true over ten years later.

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[150] Shaykh Usama b. Muhammad b. Laden, Ayman al Zawahiri, Rifa'i Ahmad Taha, Mir Hamza, and Fazlur Rahman, "World Islamic Front For Jihad Against Zionists and Crusaders: Declaration of War" in *Understanding Jihad* (University of California Press, 2015).

[151] "Qaedat al-Jihad: New Name on the Road to Palestine," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy* no. 623 (2002).

Therefore, Al Qaeda uses Palestine as both a moral and religious justification for carrying out jihad on an international level in an effort to liberate Palestine. Hence, Palestine is used by Al Qaeda as a liberation movement, as the organization frames the issue as *fard 'ayn*- a moral duty upon every Muslim. In addition, the moral and therefore motivational influence of Palestine on transnational Salafi jihad is emphasized throughout Al Qaeda's propaganda as it is pitted against Western powers, the United States in particular, as Israel would be unable to survive without the military and intelligence backing of the United States.

Section 4.1 The emergence of the Islamic State

The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS or *Daesh*)[152] was born of a combination of the

paroxysms of the U.S invasion of Iraq in 2003, Arab Spring revolutions of 2011-2013, and the

Syrian civil war.[153] Essentially, the product of over a decade of regional socio-political pressures

culminating in U.S. policy decisions that opened the door for ISIS to successfully establish a

caliphate in Iraq and Syria. Specifically, Abu Musab al Zarqawi, the late founder and leader of

the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, used the U.S.' (convenient) War on Terror and invasion of

Iraq to provoke the sectarian rifts necessary to induce civil war between Sunnis and Shiites in the

"cradle of civilization."[154]

In order to understand how ISIS became a reality and eventually became intertwined with

Al Qaeda and Bin Laden- thus furthering the Palestinian liberation agenda- it is necessary to first

understand the life and motivations of its founder and strategical mastermind, Abu Musab al

Zarqawi. Zarqawi, a non-affluent Palestinian-Jordanian raised in Zarqa, Jordan, first engaged in

jihad as a foreign fighter against "Afghan communism" in 1990.[155] It was in his training camp in

Pakistan where he met Abu Muhammad al Maqdisi (also Palestinian-Jordanian), the foremost

Salafi jihadi scholar at the time.[156] After returning to Jordan, Maqdisi and Zarqawi met again and

were alleged to have been planning an attack on Israel in 1994, leading to their respective arrests

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[152] "*Al Dula al Islamiyya fi al aaraq wa suria.*"
[153] Willem Theo Oosterveld, Willem Bloem, Nicholas Farnham, Barin Kayaoğlu, and Tim Sweijs. Report. *Hague Centre for Strategic Studies*, 2017.
[154] Randy Dotinga, "Zarqawi: a martyr, his motives, and the 'rise of ISIS,'" *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 4, 2016. https://www.csmonitor.com/Books/chapter-and-verse/2016/0104/Zarqawi-a-martyr-his-motives-and-the-rise-of-ISIS .
[155] Mary Anne Weaver, "The Short, Violent Life of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi," *The Atlantic*, July/August 2006. https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/07/the-short-violent-life-of-abu-musab-al-zarqawi/304983/.
[156] Weaver, "The Short, Violent Life."

by the Jordanian *mukhabarat*.[157] After being released from prison, Maqdisi stayed in Jordan while Zarqawi went against his mentor's wishes and traveled to Afghanistan and Iraq to engage in jihad.[158] According to Maqdisi, however, Zarqawi was "not knowledgeable enough… and his efforts were too unorganized to be successful [in jihad]."[159] Further, Zarqawi differed from Maqdisi in that his perception of the foremost enemy was Shi'ism rather than the foreign invader (e.g. the West) as had always been prioritized by Al Qaeda.[160]

As it turns out, Maqdisi was right: Zarqawi was never a visionary like Bin Laden, Azzam, or Zawahiri. Rather, he was overtly focused on his immediate surroundings and local circumstances and thus eventually centered his war strategy in the circumstances around him, never outwards.[161] When Zarqawi met Bin Laden in Iraq in the early 2000s, he initially refused to pledge allegiance to him or join Al Qaeda unless the organization changed its plan of action to mirror his own: annihilation of the Shi'ites first.[162] Unwilling to collaborate with Al Qaeda due to ideological and strategic differences, Zarqawi started his own training camp to recruit Palestinians and Jordanians to the jihad in Iraq, calling it *al tawhid wa al jihad*.[163] Eventually, however, it became clear to both Bin Laden and Zarqawi that they needed each other's respective organizations to survive and maintain legitimacy- thus, Zarqawi pledged allegiance to Bin Laden, was appointed as an *amir*, and Al Qaeda in Iraq was born.[164]

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[157] Joas Wagemakers, "Invoking Zarqawi: Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi's Jihad Deficit," *CTC Sentinel* 2, no. 6 (2009): 1-3.
[158] Wagemakers, "Invoking Zarqawi."
[159] Abu Muhammad al Maqdisi, "al-Zarqawi; Advice and Counsel," abuqatada.com, http://www.ilmway.com/site/maqdis/MS_7930.html.
[160] Steinberg, "Jihadi-Salafism."
[161] Hassan Hassan, "The True Origins of ISIS," *The Atlantic*, November 30, 2018. https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/11/isis-origins-anbari-zarqawi/577030/.
[162] Fawaz A. Gerges, "Where ISIS Came From: From Zarqawi to Baghdadi," in *ISIS: A History* (Princeton University Press, 2016).
[163] Gregory D. Johnson, "The Rise of ISIS," in *Great Decisions* (Foreign Policy Association, 2015). Gerges, "Where ISIS Came From"
[164] Ibid.

Especially in 2003-2004 Iraq, Zarqawi's strategic emphasis on the local worked because the U.S. unsolicitedly brought the war to his own backyard, therefore legitimizing ISIS' ideology, emphasis on establishing an Islamic state, and driving up recruitment.[165] When the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003, the foundations were laid for the proliferation of new substate militant organizations and the entrance of militant organizations already in existence- enter Al Qaeda and Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI).

Zarqawi's Al Qaeda in Iraq, which would later change its name to The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, initially used AQI solely to carry out his rage against Shi'ites. However, as he was under the spiritual guidance of Bin Laden, his strategy eventually evolved to target Westerners, especially Americans, in Iraq. Zarqawi's strategy, therefore, was designed to target whatever enemy was in his immediate surroundings.[166] Thus, in terms of grand strategy, ISIS' agenda began as the inverse of Al Qaeda's: destruction of the *near* enemy (as opposed to destruction of the far enemy) and really only evolved under the prodding of Bin Laden.[167]

While the grand strategy of ISIS has evolved to mirror a more internationally-focused agenda after the death of Zarqawi, subsequent changes in leadership, and the fall of the caliphate in 2015, its strategy still differs from Al Qaeda's regarding the sheer significance of Palestine. Rather than focusing on the literal liberation of Jerusalem, ISIS' propaganda focuses on the annihilation of Jews and Christians *everywhere* in order to achieve the liberation of Palestine. Therefore, ISIS' inclusion and portrayal of Palestine within its propaganda and new strategy is still significant and relevant to the purposes of this thesis, as will be discussed in the following sections.

Section 4.2 Magazine analysis

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[165] Dotinga, "Zarqawi."
[166] Johnson, "The Rise of ISIS."
[167] Gerges, "Where ISIS Came From."

In order to analyze how Palestine plays into ISIS' propaganda and grand strategy, I

examined their English and Arabic print magazines, *Al Dabiq* and *Rumiya*, as well as a number

of nasheeds used by ISIS for recruitment purposes. A common theme throughout these

magazines and nasheeds is the Islamic apocalyptic narrative: Jews allying with Dajjal (the

Islamic antichrist), living in Jerusalem, and conspiring against Islam.[168] The point being: *Muslims*

must have control of Jerusalem for end times events to take place, according to Islamic

eschatology.[169] Currently, this is not the case- which is why ISIS, in particular, does not ally itself

with Hamas, the Palestinian Authority- or any other Arab government for that matter- as they are

seen as traitors of Islam and Palestine. In addition, Zarqawi's successor, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi,

released a statement to the Jewish people in 2015 and announced:

"God caused the Jews of the world to gather in Israel, and the war against them has become easy.
It is the obligation of every Muslim to carry out Jihad… Jews, you will not enjoy in Palestine.
God has gathered you in Palestine so that the Mujahadeen can reach you soon and you will hide
by the rock and the tree. Palestine will be your graveyard."[170]

ISIS therefore asserts itself as an "end times army" and portrays this image in its

recruitment propaganda through gruesome pictures of war, beheadings, suicide bombings, and

martyrs of Islam. Further, ISIS uses both the Bible and Torah to validate its arguments about the

end times, behavior of the *kuffar*,[171] and the purity and preeminence of Islam. By capitalizing on

the failures of Islamic governments, the hypcocrisy of the West, and the heresy of Christianity,

Judaism, Shi'ism, and all other religions and sects of Islam, ISIS asserts itself as the imminent

savior of Islam from modernity and Western values.

Section 4.3 *Dabiq*

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[168] David Cook, *Contemporary Muslim Apocalyptic Literature*, Syracuse University Press, 2008.
[169] Cook, *Contemporary Muslim Apocalyptic Literature*.
[170] Reuters, Yasser Okbi, and Maariv Hashavua, "ISIS leader Baghdadi to Jews: Palestine will be your graveyard," *The Jerusalem Post*, February 25, 2020.
https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/ISIS-leader-Baghdadi-to-Israel-We-havent-forgotten-about-you-438483
[171] "Unbelievers"

Throughout the fifteen issues of *Dabiq* that ran from 2014 to 2016, ISIS emphasizes the annihilation of the Jewish and Christian peoples as its end goal. Differing from Al Qaeda's assertion that freeing all Muslim lands from the foreign occupier is the end goal (particularly, liberating Palestine), ISIS asserts that the Islamic caliphate will not be truly legitimate until all of the *kuffar* are annihilated, then giving ISIS the uncontested space to establish the state as foretold in Islamic end times eschatology.

Explicitly, the content in *Dabiq* justifies every action of ISIS with Islam. In doing so, ISIS attempts to create an image of religious superiority and know-all in regard to both the end times and Islam in general. Further, its use of graphic imagery, focus on ISIS heroes and martyrs, and emphasis on apocalyptic literature and the end times asserts ISIS as a powerful, victorious, and vision-oriented organization.

Section 4.4 *Rumiyah*

The shift in style, graphic design, and messaging from *Dabiq* (2014-16) to *Rumiyah* (2016-17) is significant: *Dabiq* focuses on theology and religious justification for ISIS' long-term agenda, while *Rumiyah* encompasses a shorter, current-event focused dialogue that plays to ISIS' short-term goals and focuses on practical ways to engage in jihad anywhere in the world (e.g. instructionals on how to select the right knife and/or car to attack crowds). In addition, the general focus of *Rumiyah* is on how to plan and carry out attacks as an individual rather than as a group. Further, apocalyptic language that was prevalent in *Dabiq* is largely absent from *Rumiyah* issues. As will be discussed at the end of this thesis, ISIS' history and propaganda reveal a highly decentralized organization that lends itself towards prioritizing global participation over globalization- the opposite of Al Qaeda.

Section 4.5 The Palestine *nasheed*

Unlike the numerous and publicly available Al Qaeda affiliated Palestine nasheeds, the ISIS version of the Palestine nasheed is less common and not as accessible due to internet censorship. Still, the ISIS nasheed, "Oh Victory to Whoever Obtains Martyrdom" is centered around calling Muslims to engage in jihad for the sake of Jerusalem (*al Quds*):

> I convey a call to those strongholds
> And to those that have prepared to depart
> Make strong for the departure to jihad
> Perhaps you will be killed for the sake of God,
> or maybe you will be victorious
> And perhaps you will terrorize your enemy
> For *al-Quds* is weeping while the Jews are being insolent.[172]

The general focus of ISIS' propaganda is victory for Islam *as a religion*, not necessarily for the sake of a specific space or people. Therefore, the nasheeds of ISIS echo this call, particularly in its version of the Palestine nasheed.

Section 4.6 Motivational links

Motivationally, Palestine is used by ISIS as a religious justification for engaging in jihad. In reviewing ISIS' magazines and a number of nasheeds, ISIS presents the Palestinian cause as an Islamic cause, rather than a wholistic issue encompassing place, the longevity of a nation, religion, and human rights. By presenting all Jews (and Christians) as conspirators against Islam, ISIS provokes its followers to annihilate the *kuffar* in exchange for the holy land. The emphasis placed on eradicating inferior religions and Islamic sects as preeminent, opposed to the emphasis placed on moral obligation to fight for Palestine in the propaganda of Al Qaeda, reveals ISIS' ultimate commitment to justifying Islam and using the liberation of Palestine to do so. This strategy has been particularly effective for ISIS in terms of recruitment, as its recruits are drawn

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[172] *Oh Victory to Whoever Obtains Martyrdom.*

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to these issues and the promise of the religious and personal benefits that purportedly come with ISIS' version of Islam.[173]

In addition, the death of Zarqawi and shift in leadership to Baghdadi signaled a monumental shift in strategy that included Palestine at the center. Baghdadi was more of a visionary than Zarqawi- he believed Palestine was central to the organization's objectives both in the short and long term. He proved his commitment to Palestine by actively encouraging his mujahideen to donate money and resources to Palestinians.[174] However, he was also interested in ensuring the jihad was successful in Iraq, so his strategy eventually became "establish the caliphate in Iraq and then create the front against Israel and take Jerusalem."[175] Yes, Palestine was a point of interest for Zarqawi as well, he saw it as the culmination of his objectives in Iraq.[176] However, he did not live to see his agenda come to fruition and Baghdadi took a more liberal approach to the issue.

Lastly, ISIS' former designation, AQI, used the Palestinian cause to recruit Palestinians themselves to fight in Iraq and ultimately go back to Palestine and liberate it.[177] In doing so, AQI/ISIS incorporated Palestine's most relevant sympathizers into its ranks. Additionally, ISIS capitalizes on the fact that Palestine is a religious issue in which all enemies of Islam are compliant, therefore driving its recruitment narrative and vision via the Palestinian cause.[178]

Section 4.7 Organizational links

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[173] David J. Craig, "How ISIS Really Recruits its Members," *Columbia Magazine*, Fall 2019. https://magazine.columbia.edu/article/how-isis-really-recruits-its-members.

[174] Mendelsohn, "Al Qaeda's Palestine Problem."

[175] Ibid.

[176] Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, "Palestine: Betrayal of the Guilty Conscience," *Inspire Magazine*, March 2014.

[177] Gerges, "ISIS: A History."

[178] Samar Batrawi, Jihadology Podcast: Palestinians and Global Jihad with Samar Batrawi, Jihadology, podcast audio, August 17, 2015. https://jihadology.net/2015/08/17/palestinians-and-global-jihad-with-samar-batrawi/.

ISIS has recently attempted to create linkages between Salafi-jihadi organizations in Gaza

and therefore infiltrate Palestinian land in order to wage war against Hamas and the Israelis from

within.[179] Since ISIS frames the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as an Islamic cause, it has found

many anti-Hamas, religiously driven sympathizers in Gaza who also equate Hamas with Israel,

as they are both believed to be traitors of Islam.[180] Explicitly, its ties to the Sheikh Omar Hadid

Brigade (also known as the Islamic State in Palestine) and the so-called "Islamic State in

Jerusalem" have been publicized in the wake of numerous Salafi jihadi attacks on Israeli security

forces in Gaza. Therefore, ISIS is able to exploit the growing power vacuum in Gaza by

mobilizing Palestinians to establish the foundation for a caliphate in Palestine and provoke

Israeli security to the point of confrontation.[181]

Lastly, Al Qaeda never had the success ISIS has had in Gaza, so it eventually terminated

its efforts. ISIS, on the other hand, has delivered where Al Qaeda never did.[182] ISIS has seen

great successes among Salafi jihadis in Gaza aside from recent ISIS-connected attacks against

Israel and Hamas, particularly in regard to the dissemination of its ideology. Many Salafi jihadi

groups in Gaza have been using nasheeds from ISIS' propaganada, therefore both furthering the

agenda of ISIS and driving up recruitment objectives among Gaza's youth.[183] Further, Salafi

jihadi groups based in Gaza are mirroring ISIS and explicitly targeting Hamas in order to counter

[179] John Reed, "Hamas seeks to stamp out Isis in Gaza," *Financial Times*, June 1, 2015.
https://www.ft.com/content/7d6c49d0-0547-11e5-9627-00144feabdc0.
Samar Batrawi, "What ISIS Talks About When It Talks About Palestine," *Foreign Affairs*, October 28, 2015.
https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/israel/2015-10-28/what-isis-talks-about-when-it-talks-about-palestine.
[180] Batrawi, "What ISIS Talks About."
[181] Peter Beaumont, "Palestinian Salafists pose dangerous new problem for Hamas," *The Guardian*, June 10, 2015.
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/10/gaza-salafists-problem-hamas-islamic-state-isis.
Rachel Levy, Adi Kochavi, Gilad Shiloach, and Amit Weiss, "ISIS: We Are Operating in Gaza," *Vocativ*, July 15,
2014. https://www.vocativ.com/world/israel-world/isis-operating-gaza/.
[182] Batrawi, Jihadology Podcast.
[183] Gregg Carlstrom, "Is the Islamic State on the Rise in Gaza?" *Foreign Policy*, June 17, 2015.
https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/06/17/is-the-islamic-state-on-the-rise-in-gaza-hamas-israel/.

Israel in a way that they deem successful and in agreement with their interpretation of Islam.[184]

Overall, Palestine has connected ISIS to the Palestinian cause on a deeply organizational level

via the dissemination of its ideology among Salafi jihadis based in Palestine and a shared disdain

of Hamas and its foreign and domestic policy decisions.

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[184] Colin P. Clarke, "How Salafism's Rise Threatens Gaza," *The RAND Blog*, October 11, 2017. https://www.rand.org/blog/2017/10/how-salafisms-rise-threatens-gaza.html.

Chapter V: Conclusion

Section 5.1 Overview

As seen in the previous two chapters, Palestine is used by Al Qaeda and ISIS as both a liberation and annihilation movement, respectively. Al Qaeda and ISIS differ substantially in terms of tactical strategy, ideology and rhetoric, yet Palestine is the "common denominator" and serves the purpose of motivationally and organizationally driving the modern transnational Saladi jihadi narrative. ISIS, on the one hand, uses Islamic eschatology and end times rhetoric, with Palestine at the center, as its dominant recruitment tactic. On the other hand, Al Qaeda's ideology and strategy is centered around the liberation of Palestine. It is not simply the end times narrative that drives Al Qaeda's influence and global presence. Rather, Al Qaeda's leadership and spiritual father (Azzam) set the liberation of Palestine at the center of the organization's grand strategy. Under the leadership of Bin Laden, Al Qaeda adopted a propaganda strategy that capitalizes on the liberation of Al Aqsa and the targeting of U.S. forces and interests as equitable to attacks on Israel.

Section 5.2 Palestine as an annihilation movement

As seen in ISIS' *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* magazines, Palestine is a prominent theme that is used almost exclusively in the context of Islamic end times rhetoric and, consequently, as a motivational and organizational means to execute the unbeliever in an effort to retake Muslim lands in preparation for the last days, according to Islamic end times eschatology.

Motivationally, ISIS uses Palestine as a religious justification for engaging in jihad. Unlike Al Qaeda, ISIS presents the Palestinian cause a a purely Islamic cause by equating the liberation of Palestine with the annihilation of the *kufar* (Jews, Christians, Shiites, etc.). Hence,

ISIS' insistence on (a) joining the jihad to liberate Sunni Muslims from oppressive regimes and (b) fighting as *fard 'ayn* places Palestine at the forefront of ISIS' grand strategy of annihilation.

Organizationally, ISIS has used Palestine as a means to liberate the nation from the inside out- starting in Gaza. By establishing both Salafi jihadi cells and connections with pre-existing groups in Gaza such as the Sheikh Omar Hadid Brigade, ISIS has succeeded at consolidating a presence in Palestine in preparation for its liberation as foretold by the end times narrative in Islam.

Section 5.3 Palestine as a liberation movement

Al Qaeda, on the other hand, uses its magazine, *Inspire*, to encourage Muslims to join the jihad against Israel and the West as part of its grand strategy to liberate Palestine from the Israeli occupation and, consequently, Western influence.

Motivationally, Palestine is used by Al Qaeda in its propaganda in order to instill a sense of moral obligation among its audience to join its ranks for the sake of liberating Palestine from the Israeli occupation. Differing from the rhetoric of ISIS, Al Qaeda asserts itself as the imminent defender of Palestine and this image is interwoven throughout each issue of *Inspire*, in particular. In doing so, Al Qaeda positions itself as the sole body that will actually liberate Palestine, thus using Palestine's liberation as a means to encourage its audiences to join Al Qaeda cells across the world.

Organizationally, the issue of Palestine has helped Al Qaeda establish an international presence- most importantly in Palestine and the surrounding states. By positioning itself as the defender of Palestine and establishing ideological and organizational ties with Salafi jihadi cells both in Palestine and in the Levant, Al Qaeda has used the issue of Palestine to establish an

international base and build up an international following that is centered around the liberation of Palestine.

Section 5.4 Looking forward

The proliferation of the Israeli state undeniably led to the revival of transnational Salafi jihad in the twentieth century and still contributes to its longevity. Today, Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel is both in the process of and planning to continue annexing sections of the West Bank. Taking into account the growing influence of ISIS (and Al Qaeda, to an extent) in Gaza, this constitutes a substantial security threat to Israel's legitimacy. If Israel continues to annex Palestinian land, the influence of ISIS in Gaza and amongst Salafi jihadi cells located elsewhere in Palestine will only grow. Further, if U.S. policy continues to bolster Israel on every side while refusing to condemn its human rights abuses, the Salafi jihadi threat in both Gaza and the international arena will only increase. Therefore, if the rights and privileges of Palestinians are not confronted at the international level, specifically by the U.S., transnational Salafi jihadi organizations will only grow in power, influence, and recruitment success.

Section 5.5 In conclusion

Israel's occupation of Palestine has undeniably conduced the revival of Salafi jihad in the twentieth century and contributes to the longevity, transnationality, and ideology of the movement today.

Taking into account the propaganda, grand strategies, histories, and leadership of Al Qaeda and ISIS, there is no doubt that Palestine both drives and inspires the growth and relevance of transnational Salafi jihadi organizations. While the situation in Israel-Palestine is an objectively local issue, it has inspired the rise of transnational Salafi jihadi organizations ideologically, historically, motivationally, and organizationally. The scopes of the most

prominent Salafi jihadi organizations as discussed in this thesis attest to this fact: there would not be any motivation to joining such an organization without the Palestinian issue. Organizationally, these transnational organizations have always focused their end-goals on Palestine. By establishing influence and ideological connections to small Salafi jihadi groups in Gaza, ISIS and Al Qaeda have secured the foundation to potentially confront Israel militarily in the future.

Overall, neither Al Qaeda or ISIS would be half as relevant or successful without the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the failures of neighboring Arab countries to put a stop to the occupation. In taking advantage of regional wars and revolutions, capitalizing on liberating Palestine as *fard 'ayn*, moral obligation, and/or part of the Islamic end times narrative, Al Qaeda and ISIS maintain their relevance, create jobs and purpose for many Palestinians and/or sympathizers of Palestine, and continuously drive a narrative of imminent annihilation and liberation.

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