

# **Framing of the Female Martyr**

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## Abstract

The onset of women as perpetrators of suicide attacks signifies the ever-changing dynamic of modern terrorism. Efforts to explain this particular trend indicate the widely held disbelief over women who choose self-immolation over motherhood or marriage. Debate exists over whether the moral and ideological imperative of women, who align with acts of martyrdom, deserves recognition in ant-terrorist research. Investigation addressing legitimisation of female martyrdom, as located in religious belief, is essential for gaining an understanding of the cultural value of certain practices of female suicide terrorism, particularly those represented by Islamic fundamentalist groups. This research analyses classic Islamic references and modern discussions on female martyrdom and female militancy, specifically those given by the communities of such perpetrators of suicide terrorism. The Palestinian trend in female suicide terrorism is considered, given the diverse discourse presented by local religious Islamic authorities and both secular and religious radical Palestinian groups on the topic. By investigating the qualitative aspects of religious discourse, the work assesses the presentation of such terms in medieval discourse and modern-day Muslim communities. Classic references to women, war and militancy are inconsistent and do not denote a specific role to female martyrdom. In contrast, recent discussions on Palestinian female suicide bombers by radical figures portray innovative ideological stands on female militancy, and specific links between woman and martyrdom. The modern 'framing' of the female martyr is apparent, whereby presentations of female militancy align with heroism and religious devotion. Given the prevalence of female martyrdom in religious discourse in the public realm, this research presents a vital area of consideration for anti-terrorism addressing religious terrorism.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Terrorism is considered “an act or threat of violence against non-combatants with the objective of exacting revenge, intimidation, or otherwise influencing an audience” (Stern, 2003, xx). The goals of a terrorist are to shock the world, instil fear into society and garner publicity for a cause. Suicide terrorism, in particular, is considered the most aggressive of all the tactics of a terrorist (Pape, 2006). A suicide attack, in particular, is defined as “an operational method in which the very act of the attack is dependent upon the death of the perpetrator” (Ganor, 2003). The fear associated with suicide terrorism amongst civilian populations stems from the idea that a perpetrator’s own desire for death is encased in the attack of others. This condition leaves the public feeling hopeless at the whim of an individual’s state of mind. The suicide terrorist has adopted various tactics to terrorize society, from detonating car bombs and suicide vests, to crashing airplanes into buildings (Pape, 2006). The suicide bomber, in particular, facilitates an acute sense of fear, with terror incited by the idea of concealed explosives around their body. Whether man or woman, they are individuals motivated towards self-immolation. The chilling image of the suicide bomber erodes the divide between civilian and terrorist, with every passer-by becoming a suspect perpetrator. In this instance, the spheres of terror, fighting and civil society collide. Terrorist activity is no longer confined to the realms of the underworld, with activity concealed from the public eye. Instead, the terror of the suicide bomber infiltrates into the homes of civilians, with circulation of images of disaster.

The image of the first Palestinian female suicide bomber, Wafa Idris, on January 27, 2002, left Western society with a particular sense of unease. The female suicide bomber represented a group of women, traditionally hidden from their wider community, who transcended domestic roles to become public figures. Mothers and daughters became militant fighters. The motivations for a female suicide bomber, to value her self-destruction over her existence as a homemaker, caregiver and child bearer, seem inconceivable. In order to understand what drives such women to suicide terrorism, or in their eyes, martyrdom, I look to uncover the dynamics surrounding the inherent value and

meaning placed on the act. Often, the chilling declaration of their martyrdom by themselves, in their final video, or by terrorist leaders, presents such insight. This research seeks to gain insight into how the female suicide bomber is represented, in order to better understand the dynamics behind female suicide bomb attacks.

## 1.1 Introduction of the Topic

### *Religious Terrorism*

Suicide terrorism has been historically enacted by groups defined by geographic location and differing religious affiliation, from non-religious secular/nationalist groups and religious groups, including those identified as Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Hindu and Sikh, all of whom encompass varying motivations towards terrorism (Bloom, 2007a).<sup>1</sup> Recent manifestations of suicide terrorism were marked by the 1983 suicide attacks by radical Islamic groups in Lebanon against American Marine barracks (Bloom, 2007a). This incident signalled a distinct shift in suicide terrorism and religious declaration and, therefore, presented a unique manifestation of the suicide bomber for Muslim groups. Various studies identify this wider trend with political ideology, nationalism and separatism as key motivations toward committing suicide campaigns. In the case of modern suicide terrorism, some authors dispel the religion of the perpetrator or group as ‘incidental’ to the act (Bloom, 2007a and Pape, 2006). Nevertheless, as presented in other studies, in fact we see religion has played a distinct role in the modern iteration of suicide terrorism (Khosrokhavar, 2005; Juergensmeyer, 2003; Stern, 2003). This is evident in the support of the suicide attacks by religious terrorist organisations declared across the world following the event. Furthermore, the religious undertones recognisable in public declarations by would-be and actual suicide bombers provide an undeniable link between religion and terrorism. This is evident in the last statement of Reem Raiyshi, who denoted herself on January 14, 2004:

By God, my heart is full of many mixed feelings that I cannot control as though a thought is filling my mind, and living in my heart, a pleasant dream is gripping

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<sup>1</sup> See Bloom for an overview of the historical precursors of suicide terrorism (2007).

my body, and the beats of my heart say: “God, make me a martyr for your sake” (BBC News, 2004b).

Here, religious grounds for terrorism are tied to the value of self-immolation, as defined as an act of God. Even more so, discourse concerning female suicide terrorists for the secular Palestinian group, Fatah, carry religious undertones, as will be discovered in the final declaration of Wafa Idris. Thus, I maintain that religion plays a key role in the dynamics of modern terrorism, as presented by ‘religious terrorism’ (Stern, 2003, Juergensmeyer, 2003). Such religious terrorism presents a unique presentation of war and martyrdom, concepts that are shrouded in religious text, holy meaning and expressions of sacredness. This instance of suicide terrorism has brought into question the role and weight of religious authority in supporting violence, in relation to society, the individual and the wider audience. This research will provide greater insight and exploration into the realm of religious terrorism. It will examine references of war and martyrdom in religious discourse and their projection into modern terrorism.

### *Women and Suicide Terrorism*

Female participation in suicide terrorism is not a new phenomenon and, as with the general trend in suicide terrorism, female suicide terrorist attacks have occurred throughout history in various locations and have been represented by an inconsistent profile, as defined by religion, nationality and motive. In particular to suicide bombing, Yoram Schweitzer, international terror expert, estimated that in the modern era of terrorism, female suicide bombers represented around 15 percent, or 220, of the total number of global suicide attacks between 1985 and 2006.<sup>2</sup> Female suicide bombers have detonated themselves on behalf of secular groups, driven largely by nationalist aims, such as Fatah, Sri Lanka’s Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and Turkey’s Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK), and religious groups, such as Hamas. Yet, attention notably focused on the female suicide bomber as a phenomenon, following Wafa Idris’ suicide attack in 2002. The appearance of a woman from a religious and traditional Muslim background participating in violent acts of suicide terrorism was not only a shock to the

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<sup>2</sup> This figure includes those attempts intercepted prior to attack (Schweitzer, 2006).

world, but also to her own community. Idris' participation suggested that the modern suicide bomber no longer fitted the single image of a man. More so, the act of a woman in the frontline of a Muslim group's activity, a realm predominantly dominated by men, signalled that fundamental changes were occurring regarding views of women and those considered *mujahadeen*, or Islam's fighters. Within her local community, Idris was transformed into a 'cult heroine'; her act of suicide was viewed as an inspiration and call to action for other Muslim women (Bloom, 2007a, 148). The trend of suicide terrorism among Palestinian factions following Idris witnessed the use of women. This was particularly exemplified during the Second Intifada of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which commenced in 2000 (appendix a).

The prevalence of the Muslim female martyr created a unique point of research in terrorism, making the immediate question of *why* an individual would be motivated towards suicide terrorism even more pressing. In order to understand the why, it is first necessary to comprehend the mechanics driving the act itself, as located in the social, organisational and individual spheres of civilian life. Arguably, individual motivations are not idiosyncratic desires, which operate in complete isolation from other dynamics and external drivers. Furthermore, motivations are enmeshed in social, cultural and organisational dynamics, which churn the tide of terrorism (Hafez, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c and Moghadam, 2006). In order to understand the individual's motivations, it is important to fully comprehend the possible forces at play.

### *The Martyrdom Narrative*

Suicide bombing is discussed predominantly in terms of 'martyrdom', meaning to witness. The martyr is described as an individual "who will choose suffering or death in order to demonstrate an absolute commitment to a cause" (Cook, 2007, 1). Cook asserts the role of martyrdom, as a form of witnessing, in the field of terrorism:

Witness is the most powerful form of advertisement, because it communicates personal credibility and experience to an audience (Cook, 2007, 1)

The individual martyr carries certain beliefs, and will be acting on the instance when he or she “becomes a living definition of the intrinsic nature of the belief system for which he or she was willing to die” (Cook, 2007, 2). For the act to be considered martyrdom, an audience is a necessary witness to the event, in that the enactment of the beliefs of the perpetrator are acted upon and narrated by some as ‘martyrdom’. The audience may witness the actual attack or, and in most cases, there is a ‘secondary’ audience who witnesses, or communicates, the event as martyrdom (Cook, 2007). Hence, the martyr’s role is to impart the martyrdom ‘narrative’, i.e. to establish a historical event, which will be defined by the audience as martyrdom.

Cook describes the importance of this form of witnessing as existing “in the shaping of the historical memory that takes place at this stage, during the course of which the traumatic events are moulded into the most powerful narrative that the transmitter is capable of composing” (Cook, 2007, 3). The audience understands future events based on the tradition defined by their earlier interpretation of martyrdom. Hence, the narrative becomes an imbedded memory of the event amongst the audience. Terrorist figures present rationale, as located in religious discourse, to provide meaning to the action of martyr, as described as the martyrdom narrative. This research will focus on the system of ideas, as conveyed in statements on Palestinian suicide attacks, by local radical groups involved in suicide terrorism, such as Hamas and Fatah, and radical Islamic leaders in the local region. In doing so, one can appreciate the information disseminated and the martyrdom narratives generated in the local environment within the local Palestinian audience. Such ideas do not necessarily reflect a specific group ideology, but arguably represent the manufacturing of Islamic concepts, or propaganda, which is used in a larger effort to generate support for certain military tactics, such as garnering recruits for suicide attackers.<sup>3</sup>

I will present in this paper the portrayal of the female martyr in the public arena, in particular to Palestinian territory. To uncover activity behind suicide terrorism, I turn

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<sup>3</sup> This latter point will not be tackled outright in this research; however, this thesis considers the ideas-systems, which operate on a group level. Such insight is useful for possible future research into organisational activity and group motivation.

to the written and vocal support of this activity by prominent Palestinian radical groups and Islamic fundamentalist figures, as founded in religious literature and public religious discourse. Research on the role of women in suicide bombing provides an opportunity to examine religious concepts and interpretations of religious values, and how such ideas manifest into ideas concerning social roles in a specific Muslim culture. I consider how religious discourse, shaping the female martyr's narrative, presents inconsistencies in the underlying principles guiding women in war and martyrdom. In particular, medieval discussions on female participation in war will not necessarily denote a specific role of female martyrdom. The discourse also provides an independent religious voice in the modern era, addressing the role of female martyr in Islam.

This study will address the following questions: are the actions of a female suicide bomber an upshot of her own motivations and beliefs? Are her actions a justifiable instruction of her Islamic belief? I then further enquire into how women are represented by the terrorist group to their local communities and the rest of the world. When the group discusses the individual women, does this discussion align with existing ideas on war and martyrdom, or does it present a departure? Does their presentation align with classic religious belief? If not, where do modern ideas on female martyrdom originate?

## **1.2 Importance of this Research**

Any advancement in modern terrorism research provides a greater opportunity for societies to come to grips with possible terrorist threats, and act accordingly to address national security. In current anti-terrorist efforts, there emerges an importance to understand how women are depicted as martyrs, and to recognise that these martyrs are women motivated by a collection of varying reasons, possibly deviating from those of the male martyr. By understanding the workings of public discussions and religious text, we gain insight into particular dynamics that possibly contribute to the dynamics behind the motivations of a terrorist; we gain some understanding of what possibly stands behind the female martyr's narrative, as shaped by the organisation; and lastly, we can begin to

understand in greater depth the workings of radical groups and public discourse, within the realm of terrorism.

This research offers discussion points for future research in various fields, such as the role of social policy and law, with respect to the perpetrator and the group, which will be examined in the conclusion of the research. It also has implications in terms of the impact of religious discourse on the individual of a particular society and the workings of media and communication.

### *Social Implications*

Fostering an understanding of why people participate in suicide terrorism will provide anti-terrorist circles with a better understanding of the nature and context of discourse, which possibly contributes to a deadly trend. This research focus provides an opportunity to appreciate the ideas behind the values allocated to female martyrdom and, hence, the possible values individuals place on their lives within a particular society. From a broader perspective, this research enables social circles to understand where attention is required, in order to address the dynamics of religious authority in society. Researchers can address how the prevalence of religious discourse, which possibly evokes violence, can be curtailed. For instance, efforts towards developing social opportunities and alternative sources of education for women that counter the strength of such belief systems can be considered.

### *Role of the Media*

It is vital that research on suicide terrorism will address the subtle factors that influence the final outcome of the martyr. The endorsement of the martyr by groups in public channels is prolific. It is argued that terrorism is only successful in the instant when the medium of communication facilitates the terrorist's publicity of messages to the wider world (Dershowitz, 2003). As previously discussed, the martyrdom narrative is only effective when an audience exists to absorb and appreciate the event and is made aware of the beliefs of the martyr. This is often communicated via secondary channels, such as television, radio and internet. If such messages are monitored and restricted and, therefore, the convictions of the group are not publicized, then the act of witnessing

becomes void, and the act of the terrorist simply becomes an act of violence. Hence, the importance of this research is to present the significance of western media outlets in presenting religious discourse of terrorist groups and the need to do so in a responsible and selective manner in order to not further perpetuate the wave of terrorism. Furthermore, martyrdom narratives in public discourse resonate particularly strongly in social environments where the presence of Islamic terrorist groups is evident, such as within the Palestinian authority. Hence, the role of media channels in such societies requires addressing, specifically when such public proclamations of terrorism influence the activity of more submissive groups, such as women and children.

### **1.3 Structure of this Research**

This study continues with chapter 2 and an introduction into the various ways of understanding suicide terrorism in research. I present various methods in order to provide different insights into understanding the many elements of this topic. This chapter will then present the central premise of this research, framing, as such an approach presents inroads into understanding a specific approach to suicide terrorism, the cultural approach, which considers the dynamic of religion. Hence, by considering framing, the research can provide an understanding of ideas pertaining to female martyrdom in modern religious discourse. The third chapter presents the research design, which includes the methodology and data selection of this research. Fourth, I will present the workings of medieval Islamic text, in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of the role of the female martyr, with reflection on concepts of war and martyrdom. Fifth, I present the findings of radical Islamic religious discourse research in uncovering a modern presentation of women and martyrdom, and in doing so, highlighting the framing of the female martyr. Lastly, the conclusion will discuss the notable findings of the research commenting on their social implications.

## **Chapter 2: Understanding the Current Trend In Female Suicide Bombing**

In order to develop an effective research method towards better understanding the dynamics behind the female suicide bomber, it is important from the outset to examine existing approaches used to explain the field of analysis. This literature review is based upon various types of sources covering the field of terrorism, including academic research, news articles, interviews and military reports. This scope of literature provides great insight, given the diverse and interdisciplinary nature of suicide terrorism.

Suicide terrorism is considered in terms of various overlapping perspectives, including rational-thinking, the individual, culture, organisation, psychology and political science. This literature review considers, however, three relevant and contrasting methods to understand suicide terrorism: the rational, individual and cultural approach. These areas of existing research are examined, as a means to identify an effective approach to uncovering the modern conception of female martyrdom by radical Islamic figures and Palestinian groups. Such multi-dimensional approaches have been recognised as an effective method to understanding suicide terrorism (Hafez, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c). Moghadam (2006), for example, considers this approach as useful in expanding our understanding beyond the ‘causes’ of suicide terrorism, to the ‘nature’ and ‘characteristics’ of suicide terrorism.

Following this examination, this chapter will discuss framing, as a specific perspective of the cultural approach to understanding female suicide terrorism. In particular, framing will be considered when investigating a modern conception of the Muslim female martyr.

### **2.1 Rational Approaches to Understanding Suicide Bombing**

Existing studies on suicide terrorism often attempt to explain the phenomenon of the suicide bomber in terms of group motivation, by identifying the strategic use of suicide

terrorism as part of achieving a group's political goals (Bloom, 2007a; Pape, 2006; Sprinzak, 2000; Hoffman, 2003). In an early study in the field of terrorism, Martha Crenshaw (1981) found terrorist activity was an outcome of a 'rational political choice' taken by a disenchanted group, which hold the same values and beliefs as their local environment, to contest a government. Crenshaw asserted that such terrorist groups make calculated decisions to perpetrate a terrorist attack, given that the outcome will fulfil their goals to "dramatize a cause, to demoralize the government, to gain popular support, to provoke regime violence, to inspire followers, or to dominate a wider resistance movement, who are weak vis-a-vis the regime, and who are impatient to act" (Crenshaw, 1981, 389). In achieving the aims of the organisation, terrorism is considered the sole option for a group to portray their discontentment. Crenshaw does note, however, that other dynamics reinforce the prolonged use of terrorism, such as the psychological dimension of loyalty and guilt amongst the individual members.

Extending from this rational approach is an organisational approach towards understanding suicide terrorism. Arguably, suicide terrorists rarely carry out acts of terrorism alone, but rather they are individuals operating on behalf of an organisation or group pursuing suicide terrorism (Moghadam, 2006). Moghadam considers the importance in distinguishing between the individual and organisation, when considering suicide terrorism, given it is considered 'uncommon' for an organisation to recruit internally. Terrorist groups are often driven by motivations distinct from the individual and so, the organizational approach arguably presents a clearer understanding of the tactics of the group and, ultimately, the situations in which suicide terrorism is more likely will arise in. Furthermore, Moghadam suggests that environmental factors, such as religion, economic and political circumstances, which may influence a trend towards suicide terrorism, do not necessarily 'directly' an increasing trend in suicide terrorism. Instead, these factors require the involvement of "intervening variables", i.e. the rationality of an organisation or individual, which more directly influences a trend in suicide terrorism (Moghadam, 2006). Despite such suggestions, the involvement of religion in inspiring terrorism is still not negated, and so one must still recognise the religious tenets of the organisation's representation of the act to the individual.

More recent studies applied the rational approach to understand the use of suicide missions by terrorist groups. Robert Pape (2006) presents the use of suicide terrorism by local groups of disenfranchised individuals, as an effective method to target foreign democratic countries who occupy their territory. Pape asserts “modern suicide terrorism is best understood as an extreme strategy for national liberation against democracies with troops that pose an imminent threat to control the territory the terrorists view as their homeland” (Pape, 2006, 23). In a similar vein, Mia Bloom (2007) asserts the deployment of a suicide terrorist is a rational and strategic approach to raise the status of a group and create fear amongst its target population. Bloom further suggests that women are recruited to suicide missions as part of a tool to win political wars, as they garner more publicity than male suicide terrorists. In particular, female suicide terrorists generate a “CNN factor”, attracting eight times more media attention than male suicide terrorists (Bloom, 2007a). Strong media reactions to the female suicide bomber are arguably logical, given western society’s disturbance by violence as represented by a woman. This image starkly contravenes universally accepted notions of femininity, such as being creator of life, care provider and nurturer (Yadlin, 2006). The violent image of a female suicide bomber is particularly shocking to Muslim communities, in which women tend to bear an exceptionally traditional and private role. Such women represent a trend of those “defying tradition to sacrifice their lives for the Palestinian cause” (Bloom, 2007a, 144). Hence, the ‘female suicide bomber’ arguably has a dual impact. First, it shocks the western world, by perpetuating greater fear of terrorism by removing “the imagined barriers between combatants and non-combatants, terrorists and innocent civilians” (Bloom, 2007a, 8). And second, it arguably stuns the Muslim community, by representing a shift in the dynamic of warfare and society, with women moving to the frontline of the very public activity of suicide terrorism.

Sprinzak develops the rational approach to suicide terrorism, highlighting the tactical benefits to send an individual on a suicide mission. First, it is a low cost and adaptable tactic, given the flexibility in locating the attack and limited weaponry. Second, the possibility to facilitate a large number of fatalities and extensive damage is highly probable. Third, the group’s risk of leaked information arising from the interrogation of its assailant is removed because the assailant’s death is an assured outcome of a

successful attack. And finally, the attack often generates significant media and public attention (Sprinzak, 2000). Developments in the rational approach, specific to tactical benefits, were considered by the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2003a), which reported that Israeli guards considered women less suspicious than men at security check points during the Second Intifada. Further, religious parameters limiting the searching of Muslim women meant Muslim women often avoided searching all together at check points. Given these dynamics raised by Israeli security circles, the benefits to utilising women offered a unique opportunity for radical groups, resulting in the ‘exploit’ of women to suicide missions (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2003b).

The rational approach to understanding the suicide bomber strips calculative thought of emotive influences impacting on the nature of terrorism. Such methods, therefore, provide research circles with quantifiable insight into understanding the logical fashion driving the trend and the motivations of terrorist groups towards suicide terrorism. However, there are certain limits to a rational approach in understanding the trend of the female suicide bomber, in particular to those dynamics associated with religious terrorism. Hafez (2006a) found that such an approach does not consider the presence of religious discourse prominent in terrorist’s motivational statements and an organisation’s justification for suicide terrorism. Moreover, Hafez highlights the ‘contingency’ of religious beliefs on the rationale to suicide terrorism.

The rationality of self-sacrifice is possible because of the transcendent belief system that links death with heavenly rewards, not just the instrumentality of human reasoning. If this is the case, the wall separating religious fanaticism and instrumental rationality withers away (Hafez, 2006a, 168).

Hence, a rational approach to understanding suicide terrorism does not explain the context of religious discourse, given the limits of rational calculation. Further, if an approach would consider religious discourse, it is arguable that ‘rationality’ would become irrelevant. Given this examination, the rational approach does not provide sufficient scope for understanding the intricacies of religious discourse, as relevant to this

study's focus on Islamic terrorism. The study now turns to an alternative approach to understanding the female suicide bomber, as located in the individual perspective.

## **2.2 Individual Approach to Understanding Suicide Bombing**

An individual motivation towards carrying out a suicide attack may or may not be tied to rationality and/or the goals of a terrorist group. Instead, it is more likely to be understood in terms of a range of factors, including the individual's background, mindset and personal experiences, all of which play a part in influencing the decision-process to become a suicide bomber (Berko, 2007; Victor, 2003; Stern, 2003). Pape found that suicide terrorists do not fit a single social status, psychological profile or background (Pape, 2006). Hence, the individual approach considers the various profiles of the suicide bomber, including those individuals from differing origins, religious affiliation, sex, education and so on.

Existing studies on female suicide terrorism attempt to explain personal motivations of the individual perpetrator, by examining their background, religious-orientation, age, social status and social experiences (Victor, 2003; Schweitzer, 2006). Anat Berko (2007) interviewed Palestinian women who were imprisoned for attempting a suicide bomb attack. This research offered an opportunity to uncover personal motivations towards becoming a suicide bomber. Berko found female interviewees revealed personal circumstances that often influenced them towards participating in suicide missions. These circumstances included avenging the loss of loved one killed by IDF soldiers; pursuing roles that allow them to defy their assumed role or work closely with young men; and, attempting to regain their honour in society and resolve a desperate situation of being caught committing 'dishonourable' behaviour, such as adultery, by committing an act considered honourable (Berko, 2007).<sup>4</sup>

The literature identifies women's experience within traditional religious societies, vis-à-vis their experience and involvement in terrorist organisations, as Bloom describes,

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<sup>4</sup> For instance, the suicide bomber, Fatma Omar An-Najar, is said to have been motivated to act in retaliation to the Israeli army, for destroying her home (Associated Press, 2006). The unsuccessful suicide terrorist, Najwa Hashash, is claimed to have been motivated to commit a suicide bomb, due to being unhappy in her marriage (Waked, 2007a).

“women are more vulnerable in such patriarchal settings and occasionally susceptible to mobilization against their will” (Bloom, 2007a, 164). Berko asserts that the role of women in Palestinian terrorist organisations is secondary to men, as found in society. For instance, the author affirms that Palestinian female suicide missions are a product of male instruction, organisation and design. Furthermore, female participation does not correspond with a strong drive and affiliation with the terrorist organisation’s objectives. Bloom (2007) and Jacques and Taylor (2008) similarly identified motivations between male and female suicide bombers to differ, whereby female suicide bombers were more often directed by their personal experiences and/or personal motivations. The author highlighted that male assailants are often motivated by religious and nationalist pursuits, whereas women are driven by the dynamics shaping their individual lives, such as their experiences in society and their private life. It can, therefore, be assumed that the motivations of female suicide bombers have little in common with the motives of the group, as with male suicide bombers. More importantly, given the motivations of suicide bombers vary, the interaction between motivation and recruitment can imply “either that different forms of recruitment evoke particular motivations in those who are exposed to them, or that extremist groups are sensitive to the motivational vulnerabilities of those that they attempt to recruit, and that they adapt their recruitment accordingly” (Jacques and Taylor, 2008, 322). Given this, the interaction between the group and the individual is crucial in locating a better understanding of the dynamics behind the trend in female suicide terrorism.

An Israeli Security intelligence report (2003) revealed women who had adopted a ‘bad name’, due to assumed promiscuity or extra-marital relationships, were often ‘convinced’ to participate in the groups’ terrorist activities. Suicide bombing was presented “as a means of rehabilitating their status and character in Palestinian society” (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2003). In particular, Fatah Tanzim was found to recruit “young women who find themselves in acute emotional distress due to social stigmatization” (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2003). Blackmail was identified as a tool used to recruit women into suicide missions. For example, a 20 year-old women residing in Bethlehem was “blackmailed into recruitment for a suicide operation by use of social and psychological coercion, after she had become involved in an illicit personal

relationship” (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2003). Coercion includes seduction or re-arranged raping of a woman, who is later encouraged to commit suicide, to avoid the disgrace from the misconduct, due to its possible revelation.<sup>5</sup> Even though this dynamic may be considered a unique experience of female participants, Jacques and Talyor identified no significant disparity between the recruitment of females and males by exploitation, proactive seeking or peer pressure.

Barbara Victor (2003) asserts Palestinian women’s social experience “pushes these young women over the edge of personal despair” towards suicide terrorism (Victor, 2003, 7). Victor uncovers the exploitation of women drawn into suicide bombing, and found women’s motivations towards suicide terrorism are largely determined by male family members and male terrorist group members. Ultimately, these members provide the moral discourse of personal redemption and family honor, which influence women into suicide terrorism. Hence, the degree to which women act upon their will to fulfil the goals of the group and innate motivations is questionable:

The motivation to become a martyr is a twisted ultimate fulfilment of patriarchal ideals. These phenomena don’t challenge the patriarchy but are clear examples of it: women are more socially vulnerable, especially because widows and rape victims are stigmatized; it is therefore not surprising that these women are recruited (Bloom, 2007a, 265).

Tactics used by Palestinian groups reflect the findings in the research. Berko and Erez (2005) describe Palestinian suicide bombers “as much victims as they are victimizers”, whereby the “social structures, value systems, and the collective memory of a group combine to produce a steady supply of motivated candidates, exert pressures on hesitant candidates, and persuade reluctant recruits to go forward with the act” (Berko and Erez, 2005, 616). This thesis seeks to understand such value systems; however future research may aim to further this approach in uncovering the relationship between such value systems and the motivation of the candidate.

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<sup>5</sup> For example, the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2003b) assert that the female suicide terrorists, Ayat Muhammad al-'Akhras and Andalib Suleiman, were recruited with the use of “emotional/social blackmail” by Fatah members.

Beyond the motivations driving women to suicide missions, the literature uncovers the dynamics surrounding the deployment of women to suicide missions and provides insight into whether women execute the mission under freewill. More recent research uncovers a trend of women supposedly fully motivated by the objectives of a terrorist organisation, as found with Hamas' wing devoted to women (De Quetteville, 2005). Fatah's spokeswoman, identified as Um al-Abed, suggested the group is expanding their recruitment of women. Al-Abed claims to have recruited 100 women, who wish to execute suicide bombings, as part of an attempt to attack both Israel and Hamas members, in retaliation for their involvement in killing Fatah members (Toameh, 2006a). Despite this assertion, the recruitment of women to suicide missions continues to reflect the influence of an organisation's operation on the motives of women to partake in terrorist activity. For instance, the motives of the suicide bomber, Reem al-Reyashi, who attacked an Israeli security checkpoint, conveyed thwarted motivations. At first, al-Reyashi claimed to have been motivated to martyr for Islam, as she asserts "I always wanted to be the first woman who sacrifices her life for Allah. My joy will be complete when parts of my body fly in all directions" (Fishman, 2004). However, Israeli military sources later discovered that al-Reyashi had been forced into the suicide mission by Hamas, as a punishment for committing adultery and as way to clear the shame brought onto her family's name by her behaviour (Fishman, 2004).

Other examples of Palestinian terrorist organisation's attempts to recruit female suicide bombers were identified. For instance, Islamic Jihad and Hamas are documented as having exploited women's emotional fragile state, by visiting them during the funerals of their male relatives who died in conflict with Israeli forces. It was found that such groups would "exploit emotionally loaded circumstances, when feelings for revenge are high for their own ends" (Fighel, 2003). Yoram Schweitzer (2006) researched the possible motives of female suicide bombers, by interviewing Palestinian female prisoners who had been intercepted whilst attempting to carry out a suicide mission. On the outset, the female prisoners' convictions were similar to those of their male counterparts, as they "bore a dominant nationalistic character, and reflected the uniform dogmatic messages that the organisations wished to deliver" (Schweitzer, 2006: 31). For instance, Wafa al Bas, who was physically scarred prior to an attempted suicide attack, expressed strong

nationalistic and religious motives to commit martyrdom. However, such convictions often changed, reflecting their more innate motivations. Feelings of forgiveness and sorrow often surfaced during the interviews, as al Bas conveyed in an interview:

Forgive me Mother, I wish I hadn't done this to myself, I wish I had listened to you (Interview with Wafar al-Bas, Schweitzer, 2006: 38)

Such inconsistencies reflect “the typical fluctuating and contradictory versions of their motives given by female suicide terrorists.”(Schweitzer, 2006: 38). Hence, individual motivations of female suicide bombers present complexities and inconsistencies, which often come to reflect their personal experiences in life.

The individual approach to understanding the incidence of the female suicide bombing provides deep insight into the dynamics shaping the individual motivations of a suicide bomber. However, this approach is limited by the fact that it does not necessarily provide a comprehensive understanding of the larger dynamic precipitating the use of bombers. Arguably, the individual motivation to perform a suicide attack is not the sole proponent towards the act itself; as individual reason operates within a web of motivations, including those of the group and society at large (Hafez, 2006a). Furthermore, female motivations towards suicide terrorism are not necessarily based on a rational calculation of weighing the benefits and costs of each move, and are often disparate to the underlying strategic motive of the group. For instance, Hafez identifies that individual motives are influenced by the value of martyrdom and the cultural values, as represented by symbolic meanings of the ‘martyr’ held within society. Arising is an individual suicide bomber motivated by the cultural value of martyrdom, which presents a “redemptive nature of self-sacrifice” (Hafez, 2006a, 67). The interaction between the group and individual role in suicide terrorism provides inroads into presenting a bigger picture of why the individual does eventually partake in the act. Hafez found that Palestinian terrorist groups have fostered a culture that is supportive of martyrdom through the alignment of the cultural value of martyrdom with certain beliefs. For instance, Islamic Jihad’s activities to identify ‘potential candidates’ in West Bank University, towns and villages are documented as including attempts to legitimise the act:

Once a prospective suicide bomber is found, the organization invests considerable effort in convincing women that this kind of activity does not contradict the Islamic principles nor “the daily duties of the Muslim woman” (Fighel, 2003)

Hence, an approach that considers the values held of martyrdom is crucial, in order that one fully understands the trend in female suicide terrorism. The cultural approach, this research’s central premise of discover, highlights the correlation between individual motivation and group dynamics, arising in the pursuit of martyrdom.

### **2.3 Cultural Approach to Understanding Suicide Bombing**

The decision to carry out a terrorist attack can be considered a ‘collective’ decision, dependent upon the moral, ideological and organisational support by the individual perpetrator, the terrorist group and their community (Juergensmeyer, 2003, 11). Juergensmeyer suggests that suicide attacks by Hamas were presented as acts “enmeshed in great struggles that gave their own violent actions moral meaning” (Juergensmeyer, 2003, 12). For an individual to decide to act upon self-immolation, the perpetrator accepts a degree of legitimisation of the act itself, so they feel justified to act.<sup>6</sup> Culture, which denotes the ‘ideas’ and ‘social groupings’ concerned with the act of suicide terrorism, ultimately shapes legitimisation (Juergensmeyer, 2003). The term ‘culture’, as Mark Juergensmeyer (2003) refers to, combines elements of ideas and community and, therefore, provides “the ethical and social values underlying the life of a particular social unit” (Juergensmeyer, 2003, 13). Individual legitimisation towards self-immolation is, therefore, influenced by cultural tenets, history, traditions and religion, as recognised as culture. A cultural approach offers a particular understanding of suicide terrorism, by providing inroads into appreciating a particular value of self-immolation and, ultimately, the premise of legitimised violence held by the individual in a social setting.

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<sup>6</sup> The extent that individual choice exists in the decision-process towards self-immolation of the suicide bomber, particularly for female suicide bombers, versus the degree to which the act is an outcome of force, manipulation and, hence, an individual choice is debatable.

### *Religion and Culture*

Religion is one of the many elements that shape culture; however, it is a vital element, especially when considering Islamic suicide terrorism. Bruce Lincoln (2006) ties culture with moral legitimacy, as found in religion. Culture nurtures the moral codes for accepting particular religious beliefs and standards, by embedding “specific human preferences with transcendent status by constituting them as revealed truths, ancestral traditions, divine commandments, and the like” (Lincoln, 2006, 55). Such moral codes, which are transcendent in certain societies, become shaped by values, traditions, rituals and language of the local culture. The introduction of religion to a cultural approach of understanding suicide terrorism is recognised as “a qualitative transformation”, as Lincoln describes:

Human propositions, precepts and preferences are (mis)represented as distinctly more than human, with the result that they insulated against criticism by mere mortals (Lincoln, 2006, 55).

Religion, therefore, defines human doctrine with values that transcend interpretation. In this instance, religion is a crucial dimension when considering activities involving suicide terrorism, such as those of radical groups, as appose to activities of terrorist groups in other regions, such as the nationalist group, LTTE (Moghadam, 2006).

Culture, as defined by religious values, provides a degree of ‘social organisation’ (Lincoln, 2006). Religion becomes the dominant mechanism in generating solidarity of a group of individuals in a society, by establishing group mobility and a collective identity, by “... excluding those whom they identify as outsiders, while simultaneously establishing their own internal hierarchy, based on varying degrees of adherence to those values that define the group and its members” (Lincoln, 2006, 52). Specifically, religion has been able to mobilize individuals to great lengths, given its ‘transcendent’ image as somewhat above and independent of human activity and, therefore, an integral part of culture (Lincoln, 2006, 56). Hence, a cultural approach provides insight into both how activity, such as martyrdom, is valued by individuals who conduct suicide terrorism, and further, how such values impact on social movement.

*Religious Discourse, Islam and Martyrdom*

Terrorism studies have examined the religious underpinnings located in the activities of religious radical groups. In doing so, such studies highlight the religious texts and historical sources used to understand suicide terrorism (Hafez, 2006c; Khosrokhavar, 2005; Bukay, 2006; and, Firestone, 1999). Traditionally, religious groups operate on an ideological front, such as fundamental Islamic groups, in order to facilitate a presentation of their objectives with a particular tone, such as how they define the enemy. In the modern era, the enemy against Muslim society has been defined as the West, with the idea that Western society is attempting to destroy Islam (Khosrokhavar, 2005). Subsequent ideological transformations on war and martyrdom have occurred over time. For instance, radical Islamic ideology has presented a particular theme of war, *jihad*, with the use of a particular tactic, martyrdom. Farhad Khosrokhavar (2005) examines the concept of martyrdom and *jihad* in religious discourse and the dynamics of suicide ideology within the contrasting political environments of modernity and conflict regions. Islamic religious groups present varying religious teachings as moral justifications for martyrdom. Khosrokhavar asserts “martyrdom is bound up with situations in which the martyr believes he is being persecuted by the forces of Evil” (Khosrokhavar, 2005, 8). Through the deciphering of the fundamental concepts, Khosrokhavar asserts that radical interpretations of Islam become “...no more than one of the many tendencies within Islam, and by no means the only tendency or the sole possible interpretation of this religion” (Khosrokhavar, 2005, 15). The appreciation of religious text in the modern use of martyrdom presents the “rereading and politicisation of the religion of Allah in the light of a new politico-religious mentality” (Khosrokhavar, 2005, 28). Some of these studies will be discussed in further detail throughout the thesis.

The term martyr (*shahid*) originates from the Greek term for martyrdom, witness. However, in the modern age of Islamic terrorism, the term has developed specifically in the realm of religious discourse.

In most cases, martyrdom is regarded not only as a testimony to the degree of one's commitment, but also as a performance of a religious act, specifically an act of self-sacrifice (Juergensmeyer, 2003, 170).

Variations in the definition of martyrdom by different Islamic groups are evident throughout history. For instance, a prominent disparity lies between the Sunni and Shi'ite appreciation and value of martyrdom. For Shi'ite Muslims, the deaths of imams, descendents of Allah recognised for their spiritual command, is relayed in history as pivotal acts of martyrdom for the sake of Islam. A particularly significant martyring for Shi'ites is that of Husain, the Prophet's grandson, whose death is considered the outcome of an active defence of Islam. Husain stood in opposition to Yazid, the leader of the Caliphate during the third Shi'ite imam. Yazid was known for conducting a life that was considered to defy core Islamic values, such as his apparent desire for luxury (Khosrokhavar, 2005). Husain, who opposed this leadership, was killed by Yazid's force in battle. For Shi'ite Islam, Husain's death brought Yazid's leadership into disrepute, and by doing so, represented a move that would "reawaken Muslims and turn them against this inauthentic Islam" (Khosrokhavar, 2005, 20). In modern times for Shi'ite Islam, the death of Husain can induce a sense of activism of martyrdom, with the notion of "fight to the death" in defence of Islam (Khosrokhavar, 2005, 22). Martyrdom not only becomes legitimised, but further, it transforms into a pursuit of Islam, whereby "activism becomes the cornerstone of insurrectionary movements" (Khosrokhavar, 2005, 22).

Historically, Sunni Islam's correlation between martyrdom and religiosity is less developed. For them, the martyring of Husain, although presented in their history, did not represent a particular premise of martyrdom in the defence of Islam. However, such a disparity in this historical approach does not negate the possibility for an alternative development in the premise for martyrdom for Sunni Islam. In fact, discussions over martyrdom in Sunni societies have become increasingly apparent in the modern era, particularly amongst Islamist groups, whose activities challenge such notion, in terms of their own aims for pushing Islamic standards within their political systems. For the nationalist Islamic group, Hamas, martyrdom developed upon the "crisis of nation-building", and for and Al Qaeda, a Salafi-Jihadist group, the threat of the survival of its

Muslim nation (Khosrokhavar, 2005, 70). Hence, across Islamic groups, the occasion for martyrdom is dynamic and ever changing throughout its historical course. This backdrop to the development of martyrdom, as a particular Islamic concept of fighting, provides inroads into understanding the nature of religious discourse concerning the duties of Muslims in times of war, as will be discussed in the later chapters.

Modern transformations on female martyrdom are particularly apparent amongst Islamic groups. The social dimension of women in the public and private has had substantial bearings on the acceptance of women to martyrdom missions, with women traditionally excluded from suicide operations. However, even the role of ‘martyrdom’, one profusely denied to women, has undergone modernisation and has challenged underlying assumptions of the role of women (Khosrokhavar, 2005). In Palestinian society, the modern occurrence in female martyrdom, as represented by both and secular nationalist groups, raises questions over legitimisation and acceptance of female martyrdom within social circles. In this case, certain Muslim belief systems have continued to develop an ideological acceptance for suicide terrorism, whereby martyrdom becomes a justifiable tactic in this battle. As Juergensmeyer describes, “martyrdom provides symbols of a violence conquered – or at least put in its place – by the larger framework of order that religious languages provides” (Juergensmeyer, 2003, 171). Religiosity has been used by both religious and non-religious groups within Palestinian society to frame a value of female martyrdom to society, and it is such discourse this research seeks to uncover. Al-Qaeda members, who live in particularly western environments, have been adamant in maintaining a particular ‘Islamic’ role for women, as defined by the private space and detached from public activity. Yet, again, as Khosrokhavar notes, “many women would like to take their (men’s) place in the pantheon of martyrs and thus win a collective recognition of their citizenship and equal dignity in society” (Khosrokhavar, 2005, 219). The female role in the modern era has been heavily defined by their supportive role for male martyrdom, as defined in religious terms (Dickey, 2010). However, as women assume the role of martyr on behalf of such groups, the traditional notions and legitimisations for existing roles are shaken to the core, leaving the query as to how Islamist groups deal shape religiosity around women and martyrdom.

The cultural approach, as located in religious discourse, provides a comprehensive understanding of an ideas system on which a group operates, regardless of the strategy that determines its individual tactical steps. As Juergensmeyer asserts, "... religion has supplied not only the ideology but also the motivation and the organizational structure for the perpetrators" (Juergensmeyer, 2003, 5). Hence, this approach is vital, as lacking an ideological basis, suicide terrorism arguably becomes a redundant tool, given that justification embedded in group ideology provides the necessary value for such activity.<sup>7</sup> As with Palestinian groups involved in suicide terrorism, its leaders have instilled sense of support for the actions of their perpetrators in the wider public, on the basis of "a widely shared perception that the world was already violent, it was enmeshed in great struggles that gave their own violent actions moral meaning" (Juergensmeyer, 2003, 12). Justification for Palestinian suicide terrorism by religious and secular figures has been built upon the ideas of nationalism, a joint struggle against Israeli troops and a religious pursuit, which defines the use martyrdom. Religious discourse, therefore, runs a cord between the individual (Muslim) perpetrator and the group, which is active in a Muslim community. It is this realm of data that will be used, therefore, in the research.

This literature review on suicide terrorism research leaves certain questions unanswered: how do Palestinian groups create the instance in which Muslim women and the local community consider the tactic of suicide bombing as legitimate? If it is accepted that such groups adopt the tactic of suicide bombers on the basis of strategy, how do groups render moral legitimisation for the act? How do they promote female suicide terrorism to the community and the individual? In order to start answering these questions, a particular perspective for considering religious discourse, framing, will be introduced to the research. This concept provides the necessary channels to analyse religious discourse on female martyrdom and, therefore, begin to address these research questions.

## 2.4 Framing and Suicide Terrorism

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<sup>7</sup> Whether religious concepts relayed by such groups can be considered an ideology is debatable. It is arguable whether they can be considered ideas or concepts, which are then presented as group ideology.

Having analysed certain approaches to suicide terrorism, this chapter presents a crucial process associated with a cultural approach to understanding female suicide terrorism. Framing uncovers the nature of religion dominating a particular culture, as introduced by Hafez in terrorism research.

### *Defining Framing*

Framing, a social process based on Goffman's 'frame analysis', is used to garner insight into how we understand and value everyday experiences. A frame, or "principles of organization", organise a social experience, by providing meaning and value of the event (Branaman, 1997, xlvi). Benford and Snow (2000) further discuss framing, whereby "frames help to render events or occurrences meaningful and thereby function to organize experience and guide action" (Benford and Snow, 2000, 614). The framing process entails "bracketing an activity and providing some sort of cue as to what the bracketed activity means" (Branaman, 1997, xlvi). In this instance, Goffman presents social activities as not activities in themselves, but rather an understanding of an activity on the basis of how it was framed, or presented according to certain values

Tversky and Kahneman (1986) present proponents of framing theory, in relation to the decision process of an individual. The authors suggest when an individual is presented with certain options, even if it is the same option presented differently, their decision to choose a particular option is dependent upon the analysis and evaluation of the value assigned to each option. Disparate representations of a single issue result in varied values placed on each option and, therefore, a choice of a particular option is made (Frisch, 1993). A variation in choice reference is known as the 'framing effect'. The value of each choice is determined by the one which is calculated as carrying the "prospect of highest value" (Tversky and Kahneman, 1986, S257). The frame is determined by "the manner in which the choice problem is presented as well as by norms, habits, and expectancies of the decision maker" (Tversky and Kahneman, 1981, S257).

Framing, therefore, provides insight into how individuals value actions, possibilities and experiences in the social world and how such values and choices are reached. The underlying idea is that individuals view the world through a social process,

perspective, or frame. This frame is determined by cultures and norms, which define the value of the social activity. The importance of framing is discussed by Tannen:

The only way we can make sense of the world is to see the connections between things, and between present things and things we have experienced before or heard about. These vital connections are learned as we grow up and live in a given culture (Tannen, 1993, 14).

In the social setting, for instance, culture plays a role in determining the value we appropriate to an experience or event. In the case of social organization, Benford and Snow discuss ‘collective action frames’, whereby framing is recognised to “mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists” (Snow and Benford, 1988, 198). In this sense, framing aligns “action-orientated sets of beliefs and meanings” towards social mobilization organization (SMO) (Benford and Snow, 2000, 614). Doug McAdam further considers framing, in terms of social action, and identifies the ‘environmental challenge’ of movement groups to encourage such change. Such challenges include how to: “attract new recruits”, “sustain the morale and commitment of current adherents”, “generate media coverage, preferably, but not necessarily, of a favourable sort”, “mobilize the support of various “bystander publics”, “constrain the social control options of its opponents” and “ultimately shape public policy and state action” (McAdam, 1996, 339). Efforts to arouse mobilization and address such environmental challenges, by Hamas and Fatah within Palestinian territory, will be recognised in this research.

The process of framing has developed in various disciplines. Norris, Just and Kern (2003) provide insight into how terrorism is framed in the world of news and communication. Framing also provides insight into how problems are presented in the political world. Mintz and Redd suggest “... political leaders often use information and rhetoric to induce decision makers (allies, adversaries, the public, the media, constituencies, voters and third parties) to adopt particular frames” (Mintz and Redd, 2003, 194). Pan and Kosicki (2001) assert that the structuring, or framing, of ‘public deliberation’ is influenced by political figures, as they impose certain symbols to actions

or events to create a certain ‘spin’, whereby “[it] is not a harmonious process but an ideological context and political struggle”. In the context of this research, framing can provide inroads into determining how an audience values the act of martyrdom. In terms of discourse analysis, religious discussions on suicide attacks provide the ‘linguistic means’ to uncover the definitions and interpretations of an act, and the opportunity to analyse how the frames are established (Tannen, 1993). Through the analysis of local deliberation on Palestinian suicide terrorism, one can recognise the framing of a social event (i.e. the suicide attack) and consider how the individuals of such communities interpret and value such events.

### *Framing and Martyrdom*

Framing offers an opportunity to understand how the local audience values martyrdom and, arguably, provides insight into the nature of martyrdom narratives. Hafez (2006b) applies framing to understand how the individual interprets the value of martyrdom and how terrorist organisations represent the act of martyrdom to the local community. The framing of the martyr is arguably nurtured by an environment of political conflict and Islamic revitalisation, whilst playing on the individual’s sense of powerlessness and wish for vengeance (Hafez, 2006b). Radical groups harness the value of martyrdom by asserting a particular meaning of the act through religious appeal and symbolism (Hafez, 2006b). Methods of framing are recognised in religious terrorist dialogue, whereby radical groups “engender the myth of the “heroic martyr” in public discourse and debates” (Hafez, 2006c, 5). Hence, interpretation of Islamic religious discourse on martyrdom can assist an understanding of how the martyr is framed by Palestinian organisations involved in suicide terrorism. For instance, Hafez identifies how Palestinian organisations have framed martyrdom around the value of “self-immolation as a meaningful act of redemption” with reference to religious text and historical traditions (Hafez, 2006c, 16).

Strategically-oriented organizations employ religion, ritual, and ceremony to legitimate and honor martyrdom; frame their tactics as a continuation of accepted and revered historical traditions; and enshroud their worldly goals with a

transcendent morality associated with national salvation or religious redemption (Hafez, 2006c, 5).

The framing of martyrdom influences how individuals may value the act of martyrdom, whereby the individual pursuing the act recognises it as an opportunity to “frame their suicide attacks as fulfilment of sacred imperatives to fight injustice” (Hafez, 2006a, 19). In another study, Hafez identified how religion provides “tool kits from which organizers of collective action strategically select narratives, traditions ... to imbue risky activism with morality” (Hafez, 2007, 118). Hence, analysing religious discourse on martyrdom provides insight into recognising how terrorist organisations and radical leaders frame the martyr.

The current discussion on framing of martyrdom in religious discourse is predominantly specific to the male suicide bomber. However, whether such frames are also relevant to the female suicide bomber is not yet fully considered. Prior to the notable modern trend in female suicide bombing, a ‘social dissymmetry’ was seen to exist between men and women in the Muslim world, whereby women were generally denied the role of martyrdom (Khosroahavar, 2005). In the First Intifada, Islamic fundamentalist groups prohibited the involvement of women to martyrdom. Instead, female activity was confined to the private space of the home, being typified by women’s productive role of child-rearing. This function was instrumental in sustaining “an insurgency by giving birth to many fighters and raising them in a revolutionary environment” (Bloom, 2007a, 1). The Palestinian national movement urged women to partake in the struggle of the First Intifada by being a ‘Mother of a *Shahid*’ by rearing future men for *jihad* (Tzoreff, 2006). The women’s womb itself became ‘nationalized’ as a ‘military womb’ and “women’s contribution to the Palestinian cause was measured by their degree of productivity, in its purest and most basic meaning of re-productivity” (Tzoreff, 2006: 14). Women’s involvement was framed in accordance to group strategy:

The Hamas movement, which wanted to turn this political capital (mothers of *shahids*) and Islamicize the Intifada according to goals and needs, created an

uncompromising link between the norms of feminine modesty (*'ard*) and the honor (*ard*) of the national *shahids* (Tzoreff, 2006, 14).

By the Second Intifada, however, women became direct participants in fighting as suicide bombers. A shift in public discourse was apparent, whereby *fatwas* (Islamic legal codes) justifying female martyrdom were pronounced by radical Islamic group leaders.<sup>8</sup> Hence, “(t)he advent of women suicide bombers has thus transformed the revolutionary womb into an exploding one” (Bloom, 2007a, 2). This research will attempt to uncover the modern framing of the female martyr, in comparison the medieval representation, in order to locate some cultural understanding for this trend.

This chapter critically analysed various approaches to understanding suicide terrorism. In doing so, we gained insight into the most useful tool for analysing the female suicide bomber. As identified, the rational approach to suicide terrorism uncovers the calculative mindset of terrorist organisations into pursuing suicide terrorism. However, this leaves little indication as to the context of religious pursuits and language. The individual approach provides particular insight into the various experiences of the suicide bomber, which is particularly relevant to the female suicide bomber. However, little is still understood about how female martyrdom is presented and how this presentation may shape the values of martyrdom held by the perpetrator and the community, in supporting such action.

The final method, the cultural approach to suicide terrorism, provides a comprehensive understanding into the dynamics of cultural values and religious tenets, vis-à-vis the support and acceptance of martyrdom by the individual and society. This dynamic is an integral process that provides inroads into understanding how the act may be legitimised by the individual. The application of the cultural approach to explaining the female suicide bomber is of particular interest to this research. The new trend in female suicide terrorism has been characterized by political entities’, radical groups’ and Islamic Fundamentalist leaders’ use of religious discourse. The goal of this research is to apply the cultural approach to suicide terrorism, in order to highlight how female

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<sup>8</sup> This trend is discussed in greater detail in later chapters.

martyrdom has (or has not) been framed in modern public discourse by radical leaders and Palestinian groups. This sample is of particular interest, given its notable shift in the modern usage of female suicide bombers. The following chapter will present the methods used to approach the research query, whilst shedding light on the selection of the research sample, Palestinian groups involved in terrorist activity and the associated radical religious leaders.

## Chapter 3: Research Design

This research intends to provide a better understanding of cultural dynamics possibly influencing the trend in female suicide terrorism, with the case of Palestinian suicide terrorism. As previously outlined, the aim is to understand the religious undercurrent shaping a culture, which offers moral and ideological support for suicide bombing to the individual, group and community. The main focus is to investigate how Palestinian groups and religious Islamic leaders discuss, and ultimately, frame the Palestinian female suicide bomber, in order to gain insight into the moral legitimisation of such activity, particularly as a determinant of religious values. This chapter will address methods and data used, in order to identify the relevant religious discourse, analyse the language used and investigate the framing of the Palestinian female suicide bomber.

### 3.1 Methodology

In order to explore the framing of the Palestinian female suicide bomber by local authority, in-depth analysis of religious discourse concerning the female suicide bomber was required. Given the nature of the data under study, qualitative methodology was selected as it offers “an interpretative epistemology that stresses the dynamic, constructed and evolving nature of social reality” (Devine, 2002, 201). Qualitative data provides the researcher with an epistemological position, and thus facilitates research into cultural references of a particular social group, in this case those presented by radical Islamic figures. Ultimately, qualitative research assists this investigation by leaving queries open for exploration, rather than directing the research to a single aim of locating a scientific logic guided by pre-determined assumptions (Devine, 2002). This research would benefit less from the use of quantitative research methodology, given the rigidity and inflexibility of such methods in answering a question of this nature. The chosen approach to qualitative research enables the researcher to tap into variations in the language of the

historic religious text, discourse analysis and framing of the subject, which is not possible when using static numerical data.

### *Methods of Research*

The conventional qualitative method of research is to interview a particular individual or group. In this case, the collection of individuals to interview could possibly include successful female suicide bombers, unsuccessful female suicide bombers, imprisoned perpetrators and terrorist members. First, however, access to such individuals presents moral, security and logistical difficulties, particularly given the prime participants would have largely not survived the terrorist act. Research of the same vein has successfully interviewed unsuccessful suicide terrorists in prison, exploring the motivations of suicide bombers.<sup>9</sup> Although, given the resource limitations of this research, this approach for data gathering was not possible. Second, the research investigates the cultural context of religious discourse, which requires alternative methods of research, as will be discussed.

This investigation does not purport to offer a cause-and-effect relationship between terrorist activity and an incidence of suicide terrorism. Rather, it provides a comprehensive investigation into a dynamic vital to appreciating *why* female suicide terrorism occurs. Given this purpose for research, historical document review methods are used, which entails the extensive collection and meticulous analysis of texts. This method provides an opportunity to identify crucial patterns in religious discourse and terrorism and, therefore, better explain the dynamics influencing a trend in female suicide bombing. Furthermore, this method removes possible ethical issues that could stem from researching terrorist activity and a social group.

## **3.2 Research Sample**

This research investigates radical Islamic notions on Palestinian female suicide bomb attacks by various religious figures. Hence, public responses to Palestinian suicide bomb attacks (appendix a) by Palestinian groups, Hamas, Fatah al-Islam and Islamic Jihad, and

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<sup>9</sup> For example, Bloom (2007a), as discussed in Chapter 2.

prominent radical Islamic figures in the Middle East, are gathered.<sup>10</sup> This sample offers data, defined by a particular religion (Islam) and radical terrorist activity within a particular location (Palestinian territory).<sup>11</sup> Hence, the parameters of the research sample reduce possible variances between the social, economic and political factors that possibly impact on the rate of activity.

This sample provides an opportunity to examine the responses to Palestinian female suicide bombers by radical religious figures and both religious and secular Palestinian groups, by including both Hamas and Fatah. Given the number of radical groups and figures considered for research, the range of discourse offers ample opportunity to analyse variances in discourse analysis between different groups within a single location. Furthermore, the value of women to suicide missions by some of these groups has shifted from prohibition to acceptance. Hence, these sources not only provide the opportunity to investigate the nature of public discourse arising from representatives of similar profiling, but further, the changing nature of the discourse in the public realm.

### 3.3 Data Collection and Selection

This research considers two areas of religious discourse: 1) medieval references to women and martyrdom and 2) modern conceptions of the female martyr by Palestinian groups. The first is based upon primary sources of medieval Islamic literature, which include the Qur'an, *hadith* and *sunnah*. These data were obtained from reputable English translations of classic texts, such as those provided by Khosrokhavar (2005), Asad (2003), Firestone (1999) and the University of Southern California's Muslim Students Association's Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement (CMJE). The second area of data collection is public discourse concerning female suicide terrorism (or female martyrdom). Public discourse includes verbal and written dialogue presented on television, internet and radio. The format of public discourse includes translated announcements, charters, speeches and statements, by Palestinian leaders and other radical Islamic figures. The

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<sup>10</sup> The United States considered these groups as part of their list of foreign terrorist organisations during the research period (US Department of State).

<sup>11</sup> Suicide terrorism was initially conducted by religious terrorist groups in Palestinian territory, such as Hamas. Following 2001, secular terrorist group activity was marked by female suicide terrorism (Shai, 2004).

time frame of the data gathered includes all discourse communicated subsequent to the onset of female suicide bombers in the Palestinian territory in 2002 (appendix a).

Primary data is obtained from research search engines, including Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) and the Palestinian Media Watch. Secondary data includes news articles and commentary, largely gathered from online security research portals, governmental and academic portals, including RAND Corporation, the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Institute of Counter Terrorism; search engines, such as Google Scholar and Lexis Nexis; and newspapers, including Ha'aretz, Jerusalem Post and BBC News. These sources provide both international and local coverage, and varying positions regarding security, academia and media, which assists in maintaining a more balanced representation of suicide terrorism.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

This research analyses gendered references to war and martyrdom, including women's roles, activity and prohibitions to religious pursuits, fighting and martyring. The research offers a structural analysis of key Islamic terms, *jihad*, *qital* and *shahid* (*shahida*), and their inference to women. The analysis consists of these terms being searched throughout the texts consecutively. References concerning women in general or specifically to female figures, and their involvement in fighting, are then gathered. These references are placed under emerging topics, such the 'believer' of Islam, or executor of *jihad*. In this process, historical references to female figures in Islamic history and gendered references to the key terms are critically analysed, in terms of their apparent relevancy to martyrdom and a conceptualized female role in *jihad*. References to women and martyrdom, in construing the modern presentation of female martyrdom, are considered with respect to their reference in fighting *jihad* by radical Islamic figures. The terms 'female warrior', 'female martyr' and 'female believer', are analysed in terms of reoccurring themes and descriptions. Arising from this analysis is the apparent 'framing' of the female martyr. I consider disparities between the representations and references to men and women, with regards to martyrdom and roles in war, and disparities to such gendered references between medieval and modern discourse.

### 3.5 Limitations of the Research

This research presents certain limitations in the methodology and the data. First, the opportunity to tap into the personal insights of those involved directly in suicide terrorism, such as those of the perpetrators, terrorist members and the public, is lost in this research, due to the constraint from interviewing. The research data available are, therefore, limited to that which already exists. Nevertheless, the opportunity to make new discoveries of the primary data is open, especially given the wide range of data available and the lack of research on this topic using the existing data. Furthermore, the authenticity in the data gathered from interviewing would be arguably subjective.<sup>12</sup> This is particularly apparent with this research group, as previously discussed. Hence, interviewing would arguably be unhelpful in addressing the underlying query.

A second limitation to this research is that the data, which is largely based on translations, can present interpretation inconsistencies, according to the translator. For instance, different translations of religious text provide varying interpretations of the same words. This issue is particularly relevant, given the linguistic complexity of the Arabic language and interpretation of religious text over history. This factor can ultimately impact on the validity of the research findings, to locate a valid conceptual development and framing of the ‘female martyr’. Given this factor, specific attention was given to the translations selected, such as those recognised in the academic field. The grounds to the development of classic Islam literature have had considerable impact over its interpretation. This limitation is discussed comprehensively in the next chapter and throughout the research.

A final limitation of this research concerns the possibility for uncovering definite explanations into the research query. Brule and Mintz (2009) assert that concrete inferences, towards a theoretical position in explaining suicide terrorism, are hard to reach from the application of qualitative methodology. The authors suggest that such research designs present selection, reliability and testability issues, which can only be

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<sup>12</sup> The dialogue of interviewed unsuccessful suicide bombers is often swayed or thwarted by party alliance, guilt persuasion and or intimidation, and ultimately does not provide accurate insight into their motivations (Crenshaw, 1981).

assured with extensive quantitative research. Arguably, this research design will not provide scientific inferences towards identifying the framing of the female suicide bomber, and its impact on individual attitudes. However, this research does not claim to make such inferences in explaining the trend in female suicide terrorism. And nevertheless, this research does offer a solid analysis and an appreciation for a specific dynamic, often ignored by anti-terrorist circles. The research presents an in-depth analysis into how the female martyr is constructed in religious text, which is vital in understanding the origins of moral guidance of martyrdom in a particular society, and the underlying driving forces behind suicide terrorism.

### **3.6 Expectations of the Research**

Even though a qualitative methodology is not rooted in hypotheses, there are several expectations I have upon entering this investigation. I expect to locate a variation in the value of the female martyr between medieval and modern discourse. In the classic literature, I expect to see terms of war and martyrdom in classic religious discourse largely concern Muslim men. In modern religious discourse, I expect that Muslim men and women are considered in more concrete and consistent terms in discussions on war and martyrdom, whereby the ‘female martyr’ is defined in terms of religious reference. The remaining chapters turn to the research findings and the findings are interpreted in the final chapter.

## Chapter 4: Classic Islamic Definitions of Women, War and Martyrdom

This chapter presents Islamic references to war, martyrdom and Muslim women in medieval religious discourse. These findings are used towards identifying those considered participants of war in Islam, as part of an attempt to locate cursors for the framing of the Muslim female martyr in modern discourse. The conception of the Muslim female fighter, in terms of classic Islam, is built upon the analysis of references, assertions and omissions of women vis-à-vis war, fighting and martyrdom in medieval discourse.

It should be noted that a great deal of research on Islamic theology and history presents the inconsistent nature of Islamic religious literature. This dynamic has arguably led to variations in the understanding and interpretation of vital concepts, such as those concerning war and martyrdom (Firestone, 1999; Bonney, 2004; Khosrokhavar, 2005). It is, therefore, vital to firstly consider the nature and development of the Islamic medieval body of religious text, as this will provide crucial insight into the dynamics and innate dilemmas pertaining to the development of Islamic theology in the modern era. For instance, it is through this discussion that we uncover grounds for possible shifts in ideas and understandings of Islamic religious thought. Such shifts will be recognised in the development of the framing of particular tenets of fighting, such as *jihad* and *shuhada*. In such cases, radical groups have, arguably, reinterpreted crucial terms of reference, in order to impart a particular moral and legitimacy for its activity. Hence, this first step of analysis is crucial, in order that the crux of research, concerning the framing of the female martyr, is fully considered and understood.

I will examine a particular Islamic concept of fighting, located in *jihad*, and martyrdom in Islam. This analysis allows us to appreciate its particular stand and the inherent value it places on suicide bombing, as an act of *jihad*. Given the scope of religious literature, I will specifically analyse those texts that can provide insight into

how women fit into participations of war in Islam. Last, I will attempt to portray a female instance of a military *jihad*.

#### 4.1 Interpreting the Classic Texts of Islam

Islam, meaning ‘submission’, represents the act of submitting, or surrendering to God (Bonney, 2004). Islamic belief centres on the assertion that the Word of God was revealed to Prophet Muhammad, as imparted in the Qur’an. The central body of medieval Islamic literature, the Qur’an, consists of 114 chapters, *surat* (singular is *sura*), all differing in length, and 6235 verses (*ayat*) (Bonney, 2004). Given the size and incremental development of the Qur’an, issues over consistency and reliability of its interpretation have been raised (Firestone, 1999; Bonney, 2004; Bukay, 2006). First, interpretation of the text was based upon its chorological formation, from its oral acceptance, during the life of Prophet Muhammad, to its written form as a body of literature. During the later stage, the teachings underwent an interpretative and organisational transformation, which ultimately impacted on the literature’s degree of coherency. Arising was a disordered chronological format of chapters referring to God’s revelations in the Qur’an. Such disorder has led to probing over the context and relationship between each verse and chapter (Firestone, 1999). Furthermore, the large number of interpretations of the many revelations by Islamic scholars created further confusion over the inherent nature of Islamic teachings. An amalgamation of disparate ideas and concepts concerning vital areas of Muslim life has evolved, whereby the inherent value of the teachings remains inconsistent.

A second issue with the interpretation of the classic texts is uncertainty over whether a verse can/should be read in isolation, or in reference to surrounding verses. This uncertainty ultimately impacts on further interpretation of the text. Given the contradictory and abundant nature of Islamic teachings, the developmental process of the classic text was influenced by certain ‘interpretative mechanisms’ in the pursuit of clarity (Firestone, 1999). For example, “abrogation” (*naskh*), an interpretative formation of Islamic text, presents the revoking and/or substituting of Islamic rulings. In cases where verses seemingly contradict each other over a particular topic, those verses carrying

greater command would take precedence. Those alternative verses, carrying less authoritative weight, would be abrogated. These mechanisms present an opportunity for subjectivity and an overall stance in the development of vital concepts. For instance, the interpretation of *jihad* was deduced to a particular approach, with passive verses often dissolving in the developmental stages in place of those revelations imparting a particular militant approach. With particular reference to *jihad*, the meaning and value placed on this Islamic term of fighting remains ambiguous, specifically in terms of the type and instance for such action. Issues associated with the development of the Qur'an, therefore, raised complexity over the interpretation of the nature of war and martyrdom, including teachings concerning women and martyrdom.

As highlighted, an increasing move towards a militant stance in Islamic theology in the early developmental stages of the Qur'an is evident. In particular, the abrogation of verses associated with defensive action in war meant that a more militant stance of the text surfaced (Bukay, 2006; Firestone 1999; Khosrokhavar, 2005; Knapp, 2003). The historical development towards an Islamic case for war is, in fact, grounded in conflicting opinions amongst exegetes. Khosrokhavar asserts that interpretations of *jihad* have transpired "in accordance with historical circumstances and the emergence of new groups with varying degrees of militancy" (Khosrokhavar, 2005, 17). Firestone concludes:

The fact is that the conflicting qur'anic verses cannot prove an evolution of the concept or sanction for religiously authorized warring in Islam from a nonaggressive to a militant stance. To suggest that they do is nothing more than an interpretation applied to the obvious problem of disparity in the qur'anic revelations treating war (Firestone, 1999, 64).

Disparate interpretations of the revelations and verse association reflect the varying opinions amongst the different factions of the Muslim community, a dynamic that has continued to subsist amongst modern theologians.

Further diversity in interpretation is evident, given the development of the *hadith* literature. Following the acceptance of the Qur'an by the Muslim community, Islamic history and tradition was further explicated in *sunna*, the narratives of Muhammad's

ways, upon which *hadith* (plural is *ahadith*), or traditions, were built. This body of literature provides guidance on a Muslim believer's way of life. The *hadith* literature carries a significant weight in Islamic behaviour, since it is the basis to Islamic (*Shar'ia*) law, and it is within this realm of classical literature that the meaning of *jihad* developed and provided meaning behind the activity and roles in warfare (Firestone, 1999).

An increasing demand for traditions, concurrent with the increasingly authoritative command of the *sunna*, led to the augmenting of the 'status' of the narratives amongst Muslim believers and a greater number of *hadith* (Firestone, 1999). For instance, in areas of Muslim life that required specific Islamic theory for further guidance, traditions were often established. The development of the traditions ultimately led to a trend in the forging of *hadith*, which contributed to the increasing volume of teachings. Subsequently, increasing apprehension grew over the authenticity of existing traditions, whereby "both the motives and the signs of falsification are sometimes quite apparent" (Firestone, 1999, 96). Khosrokhavar asserts that radical Islamic interpretations, particularly of *jihad* and martyrdom, owe much of their ideological grounds to the digression that arises in the separation of traditions from the Qur'an. Subsequent to the extraction of *sunna* from medieval text, Khosrokhavar asserts that interpretations of Islam become "...no more than one of the many tendencies within Islam, and by no means the only tendency or the sole possible interpretation of this religion" (Khosrokhavar, 2005, 15). This finding, arguably, provides crucial insight into understanding how certain nuances, relating to Islamic theory on war and martyrdom, came about in the modern era.

An upshot of the development of Islamic literature is the emphasis on certain verses and the disregard of others, as located in radical Islamic ideology. As the ideological premise of radical Islamic groups has shifted, the roles and methods of warfare associated with their ideology have changed. Arising is the development of a particular religious-ideology, which provides the backbone to Islamic terrorist ideology and modern radical interpretations of holy war and martyrdom. Modern interpretations are represented by *fatwas* and recent teachings, such as those presented by the cleric Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, theoretician Sayyid Qutb and Palestinian theologian Abdullah Azzam, whose linkages to medieval sources are often dubious (Fine, 2008). This will be raised in the next chapter, as an illustration of the female role in martyrdom.

For now, given the nature of the development of the text, an appreciation for the classic notions of war is required, in order to fully appreciate the development of contemporary Islamic literature. Given the constraints of this research piece, the results presented refer to relevant topics of discussion, and provide insight into the representation of the female martyr in religious discourse.

## 4.2 Classic Islamic Ideas on War

As highlighted in the previous section, the developmental nature of classic Islamic text has led to inconsistencies in the interpretation of its teachings. This process has influenced how the nature of *jihad* is conceived, from individual forms of prayer, to collective forms of fighting. With regards to the latter, such fighting varies in its approach, from defensive to the more active pursuit of religious war. This nature of *jihad* is considered throughout the analysis of the medieval discourse on war.

*Jihad* concerns the Islamic world view of a division between the domain of peace (*dar al islam*), led by Islam, and the domain of war (*dar al harb*) (Abo-Kaleh, 2006). This division primarily centres on the distinction between believers and non-believers of Islam. Within the domain of peace, the necessity for non-military efforts for the defence of Islam and the implementation of ‘Islamic’ standards of behaviour amongst its believers is crucial. Arising is the practice of certain forms of *jihad*, such as striving in the way of prayer. *Sunni* Muslims, for example, apply their individual efforts of *jihad* towards spiritual practices in overcoming their ‘rebellious’ ego (*nafs e ammareh*), as characterised by material desires (Khosrokhavar, 2005). The domain of war, conversely, presents *jihad* in terms of ‘the sword’, whereby believers fight in the name of Allah through means of defending the Islamic community against its enemy (*ummah*). It is in this realm of theology that uncertainty lies over the appropriateness of war, such as if it is justified in the defence of Islam or as part of an unrestricted measure against all non-believers. For instance, *jihad* is conveyed in the following *sura* 2:219:

And slay them wherever ye catch them, and turn them out from where they have  
Turned you out; for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter; but fight

them not at the Sacred Mosque, unless they (first) fight you there; but if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith (2:219, Yusuf Ali translation, Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement Web site)

This verse locates an active command for Muslims to kill the ‘enemy’. This militant approach to interpreting the classic text has continued into modern Islamic discourse, particularly amongst radical Islamists, who have come to associate *jihad* with the European notion of ‘holy war.’ In this case, *jihad* is considered “the ideological responsibility of religious commitment” (Firestone, 1999, 91). Yet, other interpretations and verses associated with *jihad* present an alternative approach to fighting in Islam.

The literature imparts inconsistent presentations of key concepts relating to war and martyrdom. From the outset, confusion arises when considering the value of practicing *jihad*, in relation to the many other duties of a Muslim. The importance of *jihad* is considered in the fourth book of *hadith* by Sahih Bukhari, “Fighting for the Cause of Allah”:

I asked Allah’s Apostle, “O Allah's Apostle! What is the best deed?” He replied, “To offer the prayers at their early stated fixed times.” I asked, “What is next in goodness?” He replied, “To be good and dutiful to your parents.” I further asked, what is next in goodness?” He replied, “To participate in Jihad in Allah's Cause... (4, 52:41, translated by M. Muhsin Khan, CMJE Web site)

This extract identifies *jihad* as third important, following the duties of prayer and filial piety. Taken in isolation, this teaching presents a clear organisation of the duties, in consideration of the importance of *jihad*. Yet, once other verses are consulted for further guidance, confusion arises. For example, an alternative tradition of the same *hadith* affirms there is no act ‘equal’ to *jihad* (4, 52:44, CMJE Web site; Firestone, 1999). When considering both teachings, uncertainty over the actual value of *jihad* arises. Efforts towards identifying the context of *jihad* and those considered participants of Islamic war within the classic text face the same dilemma.

*Limits of Jihad*

Islamic notions of war are discussed with reference to 3 terms: *qital* (fighting), *harb* (war) and *jihad* (exert or strive). The religious application of *qital*, fighting, is one form of *jihad* and is located in the phrase “Fight in the cause of Allah” in *sura* 2:190:

Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loveth not transgressors (2:190, Yusuf Ali translation, CMJE Web site)

This verse presents a more defensive interpretation of fighting, as restricted by a ‘moral order’ of Islam (CMJE Web site). Khosrokhavar’s translation further supports this approach, in which *sura* 2:190 is translated as “do not attack them first” rather than “do not transgress limits” (Khosrokhavar, 2005, 16). The recognised commentator, Muhammad Asad, supports a defensive approach with his translation, “but do not commit aggression” (Asad, 2003). Asad suggests assertions of *jihad* “lay down unequivocally that only self-defence (in the widest sense of the word) makes war permissible for Muslims” (Asad, 2003, 63). These translations support a defensive, rather than offensive, approach to *jihad*, in which fighting is instrumental as defence against attack. A defensive approach to *jihad* is further supported with the following *sura* 22:39:

To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight), because they are wronged;- and verily, Allah is most powerful for their aid (22:39, Yusuf Ali translation, CMJE Web site)

This translation considers restrictions on fighting in areas of defending the Muslim community when it has been ‘wronged’. Again, *jihad* is considered in terms of defensive fighting, rather than to those that should not participate.

With regards to considering the nature of *jihad*, the phrase “do not transgress limits” of *sura* 2:190 is considered. Further variations in interpretation arise over what alternative limits could be considered of *jihad*. For some exegetes, certain times of the year, i.e. the Sacred month, is considered a period when fighting is prohibited (Firestone, 1999). Other exegetes denote prohibition from fighting certain non-combatants. For

instance, Ibn ‘Umar asserts Muhammad was ‘disturbed’ by the sight of women and children being killed during raids, whilst Ibn Kathir maintained the Prophet forbid the weak and oppressed from fighting (Firestone citing Ibn al-Jawzi, Nahhas and Ibn Kathir, 1999). These interpretations first offer insight into a restrained approach of *jihad* and *qital*, and second provide direction in ascertaining those considered fighters in the Muslim community. In this instance, the nature of the role of women is considered to one of vulnerability, rather than as one of a fighter.

### *Participants of War*

The key topic of discussion to identify those considered obligated to the pursuit of *jihad*, i.e. whether it includes certain members of the community or every individual, men and women, adults and children, and so forth. The obligations of *jihad* are divided between the legal obligation of the individual (*fard ‘ain*) and the collective responsibility of the community (*fard kifaya*), with the latter requiring a sufficient number of the community to fulfil (Khosrokhavar, 2005).<sup>13</sup> The inconsistent nature of the text presents difficulty when attempting to consider the role of the individual Muslim, as opposed to the community, and within that, the role of men and women.

In order to identify those considered participants of *jihad*, a distinction should first be made between those that fight and those that require protection. *Sura 4:75* illustrates the case when Muslim believers were encouraged to engage in battle against the Meccan state, in order to protect those oppressed (Firestone, 1999).

How should ye not fight for the cause of Allah and of the feeble among men and of the women and the children who are crying: Our Lord! Bring us forth from out this town of which the people are oppressors! Oh, give us from thy presence some protecting friend! Oh, give us from Thy presence some defender! (4:75, Pickthall translation, CMJE Web site)

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<sup>13</sup> The collective obligation of *jihad* is noted as being more prominent in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, with Muslim societies’ reacting to European authorities in the form of political movements, and later in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Khosrokhavar, 2005). During the latter period, *jihad* became tied to references of war, whereby “the fight against non-Muslim foreigners has been justified by reference to *jihad*” (Khosrokhavar, 2005, 14). *Jihad*, therefore, developed as a concept disparate from its intrinsic medieval value.

In this verse, ‘feeble’ men are grouped with women and children, which suggests a division between the strong (men) and the weak (feeble men, women and children). In such an instance, women would not be considered participants of *jihad*, given their suggested inherent weakness and need of protection.

A second distinction should be made between believers and unbelievers, whereby “ideology (belief) becomes the determinant of identity” (Firestone, 1999, 71). The inherent equal value assumed of female and male believers can be considered in reflection of the rewards bestowed on them:

If any do deeds of righteousness,- be they male or female - and have faith, they will enter Heaven, and not the least injustice will be done to them (4.124, Yusuf Ali translation, CMJE Web site)

In this instance, given that men and women are considered believers, the query remains whether if the duty of *jihad* is prescribed to all believers, and whether women are appropriated the duty to participate in battle, as with that of male believers. *Sura* 4:95 describes the inequality amongst believers who participate in *jihad* and those that refuse:

Those of the believers who sit still, other than those who have a (disabling) hurt, are not on an equality with those who strive in the way of Allah with their wealth and lives. Allah hath conferred on those who strive with their wealth and lives a rank above the sedentary. Unto each Allah hath promised good, but He hath bestowed on those who strive a great reward above the sedentary (4:95, Pickthall translation, CMJE Web site)

This verse condemns believers who are passive versus believers who are active in their participation in *jihad*, whether it be physically or materially. Those excused from the duty of *jihad* are the disabled. Firestone considers this verse as the main proponent of deferment from *jihad*. However, given the previous deferment, which includes women and the feeble, confusion arises over whether the role of a fighter is considered for all believers, or if they should be treated with caution.

Aside from the Qur'an, the body of *hadith* literature has offered Islamic scholars a great abundance of teachings to consult, especially in gaining a more detailed insight of *jihad*. In the opening to “The Book of Jihad and Expedition (Kitab Al-Jihad wa'l-Siyar)” by Sahih Muslim, the context of *jihad* is outlined:

... Fight in the name of Allah and in the way of Allah. Fight against those who disbelieve in Allah. Make a holy war, do not embezzle the spoils; do not break your pledge; and do not mutilate (the dead) bodies; do not kill the children. When you meet your enemies who are polytheists, invite them to three courses of action. If they respond to any one of these, you also accept it and withhold yourself from doing them any harm ... (2, 19: 4292 translated by Abdul Hamid Siddiqui, CMJE Web site)

The complete verse presents the stages towards military action against the enemy in the name of Allah. This text confers those excused as being the children. The absence of women in this discussion could either infer that both men and women are considered fighters, or that it is presumed women do not could carry an active role in war.

The medieval text, so far, presents uncertainty over the nature of *jihad* in relation to women. In particular, in verses discussing the Muslim ‘believer’ and their duties of *jihad*, such as *sura* 4:95, no differentiation is made between male and female believer. The absence of distinction could imply one of two things: women are either assumed a role in war, as the same with men; or, the believer is generally considered male, and hence, a distinction between the genders is redundant. If the latter assumption applies, women are not afforded the role as fighter in Islam. Further clarity is reached in *sura* 2:190, which considers prohibitions from fighting non-combatants. In this instance, women were not classified as a non-combatant and, therefore, the possibility for a female role in *jihad* arises. Hence, when the different verses are considered in union, an incoherent presentation of the Muslim women’s role in war arises. In order to provide a clearer definition of the role for women in fighting, the research will examine particular inferences of the female instance of *jihad*.

*Female Instances of Jihad*

The following verses provide specific consideration for female Muslim believers.

O Prophet! When believing women come to thee to take the oath of fealty to thee, that they will not associate in worship any other thing whatever with Allah, that they will not steal, that they will not commit adultery (or fornication), that they will not kill their children, that they will not utter slander, intentionally forging falsehood, and that they will not disobey thee in any just matter,- then do thou receive their fealty, and pray to Allah for the forgiveness (of their sins): for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful” (60:12, Yusuf Ali translation, CMJE Web site)

For Muslim men and women,- for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in Charity, for men and women who fast (and deny themselves), for men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who engage much in Allah's praise,- for them has Allah prepared forgiveness and great reward (33:035 Yusuf Ali translation, CMJE Web site)

These verses present the duties of women, as assigned by Islam. With regards to the first verse, Muslim women are allocated the duties of Islam in terms of those that ‘believe’. If *sura* 4:95 holds true, Muslim women can be assumed to shoulder the responsibility of *jihad*. Alternatively, such a distinction made of the duties concerning the female believer may indicate that women are considered in disparate terms to the ‘regular’ (male) believer. If so, women may not be considered fighters of *jihad*. With reference to the second verse, women and men are discussed in terms of being equally responsible to the duties of Islam. This verse could, therefore, imply that male and female believers are equally responsible to fulfil other duties of Islam, such as *jihad*. The research, therefore, presents a dichotomy between women, on the one hand, requiring protection by those fulfilling *jihad*, and on the other hand, women as a believer, who is arguably obliged to fulfil *jihad*.

Historical references to female figures in times of war can be considered for further insight into the role for women in *jihad*, in the classical text. To commence, we return to the previous analysis, which presented the various ways in which *jihad* can be pursued. This feature is recognised in the classic text with Prophet Muhammad's wife, A'isha, who asks what the most appropriate form of *jihad* for women is. The Prophet responds "The best *Jihad* (for women) is Hajj-Mabrur (i.e. Hajj which is done according to the Prophet's tradition and is accepted by Allah)" (4, 52:43, translated by M. Muhsin Khan, CMJE Web site). Here, it can be affirmed that women were denoted a role in *jihad*, albeit a certain type, pilgrimage (*Hajj*). Other occasions in Islamic history present women's involvement in military pursuits of *jihad*. For example, A'isha is widely regarded as having led the Battle of the Camel. Another case presents Muhammad's granddaughter, Zaynab bint Ali, as fighting in the Battle of Karbala (Farhana , 2005). In the Sahih Bukhari *ahadith*, "Fighting for the Cause of Allah", Muhammad's female companions are illustrated as having participated in the Battle of Uhud (4, 52:132, CMJE Web site). In particular, the text refers to Um Salit, who "used to carry the water skins for us on the day of Uhud" (4, 52:132, translated by M. Muhsin Khan, CMJE Web site). Women's participation in battle with Muhammad was described as follows:

We used to take part in holy battles with the Prophet by providing the people with water and serving them and bringing the killed and the wounded back to Medina (4, 53:134, translated by M. Muhsin Khan, CMJE Web site).

This *hadith* presents women's non-militant duties in times of war. In the same *ahadith*, chapter 46, *Fighting of women side by side with men*, women continue to be described as having taken a militant role in war. In this event, Umm Sulaim holds a dagger during the Battle of Hunain; yet she is probed over her actions:

It has been narrated on the authority of Anas that, on the Day of Hunain. Umm Sulaim took out a dagger she had in her possession. Abiu Talha saw her and said: Messenger of Allah, this is Umm Sulaim. She is holding a dagger. The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) asked (her): What for are you holding this

dagger? She said: I took it up so that I may tear open the belly of a polytheist who comes near me. The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) began to smile (at these words). She said: Messenger of Allah, kill all those people-other than us-whom thou hast declared to be free (on the day of the Conquest of Mecca). (They embraced Islam because) they were defeated at your hands (and as such their Islam is not dependable). The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) said: Umm Sulaim. God is sufficient (against the mischief of the polytheists) and He will be kind to us (so you need not carry this dagger) (19:4453, translated by Abdul Hamid Siddiqui, CMJE Web site).

This tradition presents female militancy as a pursuit of *jihad*. The translation towards the end of the verse, "... God is sufficient (against the mischief of the polytheists) and He will be kind to us (so you need not carry this dagger)", presents insight into how female militancy was regarded in earlier times. This text can be construed as an idea that women are not required to fight, as there are enough (men) fighting the *jihad*. Nevertheless, such a depiction reflects consideration within Islam for the instance of female militancy.

Further insight into the role of women in war, within the classic texts, is found in the same *ahadith*, chapter 47, *Women participants in jihad to be given a prize but not a regular share in the booty, and prohibition to kill children of the enemy*. This verse continues to illustrate women's involvement in a militant *jihad*. However, the text further portrays disparity between the men and women, whereby the reward for women is not equal to that of men:

... [The Messenger of Allah] took women with him to participate in *Jihad*. He did take them to the battle and sometimes he fought along with them. They would treat the wounded and were given a reward from the booty, but he did not assign any regular share for them (19:4456, Yusuf Ali translation, CMJE Web site).

Hence, women are denoted as conducting militant and non-militant duties in time of war, yet their role is valued disparately to that of men.

The classic literature, therefore, conveys female militancy in *jihad*, albeit dissimilar to that of men, whereby it is valued differently in terms of reward and necessity. This dynamic, arguably, conveys women as being regarded as inferior, in terms of military participation, in Islamic history. Nonetheless, whether such militancy denotes a function of martyrdom remains ambivalent. Given the clear portrayal of female martyrs in modern discourse, it is vital to comprehend the classic approach to this role. The chapter now turns to insights into martyrdom, and in particular to women, in the classic text.

### 4.3 Classic Islamic Ideas on Martyrdom

Given the topic of this research, it is interesting to note that Islam's first martyr is recognised as the female figure, Sumayya bint Khayyat, who was stabbed to death by the leader of an anti-Muslim group, Abu Jahl, (Cook, 2007). During the time of revelations, martyrdom was prescribed certain attributes. The Islamic term, *shahid* (plural is *shuhada'*), in most instances, denotes the action of witnessing, seldomly martyrdom (Cook, 2007). In terms of witnessing, *Shuhada* is recognised in the following verses:

That is most suitable: that they may give the evidence in its true nature and shape, or else they would fear that other oaths would be taken after their oaths. But fear Allah, and listen (to His counsel): for Allah guideth not a rebellious people' (5:108, Yusuf Ali translation, CMJE Web site)

'And behold! I inspired the disciples to have faith in Me and Mine Messenger: they said, 'We have faith, and do thou bear witness that we bow to Allah as Muslims' (5:111, Yusuf Ali translation, CMJE Web site)

Bearing witness is recognised in both its active and passive form, whereby "the Muslims should be living testimony towards the rest of humanity, but can also be called upon to bear testimony against them at the time of the Day of Judgement, should there be the need" (Cook, 2007, 16). A definite understanding of Islamic forms of martyrdom is

inconspicuous, given that from the outset, there is a clear prohibition of suicide (*intihar*). This is evident in the following verse of the Qur'an:

And spend of your substance in the cause of Allah, and make not your own hands contribute to (your) destruction; but do good; for Allah loveth those who do good (2:195 Yusuf Ali translation, CMJE Web site)

The objection to committing one's own 'destruction' is instilled in the pursuit of Allah, as illustrated in the following verse:

Eat not up your property among yourselves in vanities: But let there be amongst you Traffic and trade by mutual good-will: Nor kill (or destroy) yourselves: for verily Allah hath been to you Most Merciful! (4.29, Yusuf Ali translation, CMJE Web site)

These relatively passive teachings, conveying restraint from destruction, contrast with other teachings concerning martyrdom. For instance, the following text presents a contrary position on martyrdom, to that previously illustrated.

Allah hath bought from the believers their lives and their wealth because the Garden will be theirs: they shall fight in the way of Allah and shall slay and be slain. It is a promise which is binding on Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Qur'an. Who fulfilleth His covenant better than Allah? Rejoice then in your bargain that ye have made, for that is the supreme triumph (9:111, Pickthall translation, CMJE Web site).

In this teaching, notions of death ("be slain") and the duty of *jihad* merge as a concept of martyrdom (*itishhad*). In this case, the value of the life of the Muslim martyr, who dies 'in the way of Allah', is significant. Self-sacrifice is portrayed as an act deeply interwoven into the act of faith, as a pursuit of *jihad*. Khosrokhavar affirms that the 'fight

in the way of Allah' as the main proponent of martyrdom and an assigned expression of Islam, resembling the religious pursuit of *jihad*.

The development towards an Islamic notion of martyrdom, as conceptualized as the *shahid*, is recognised in *surah* 3:140-43:

If a wound hath touched you, be sure a similar wound hath touched the others. Such days (of varying fortunes) We give to men and men by turns: that Allah may know those that believe, and that He may take to Himself from your ranks Martyr-witnesses (to Truth). And Allah loveth not those that do wrong. So lose not heart, nor fall into despair: For ye must gain mastery if ye are true in Faith. Allah's object also is to purge those that are true in Faith and to deprive of blessing Those that resist Faith. Did ye think that ye would enter Heaven without Allah testing those of you who fought hard (In His Cause) and remained steadfast? Ye did indeed wish for death before ye met him: Now ye have seen him with your own eyes, (And ye flinch!)" (3:140-43, Yusuf Ali translation, CMJE Web site)

The key sentence, "and that He may take to Himself from your ranks Martyr-witnesses (to Truth)" arguably confers to martyrdom. This text presents the cohesion of the actions to witness and to martyr into the single concept, the *shahid*. This idea is further reiterated in the following verse:

Think not of those, who are slain in the way of Allah, as dead. Nay, they are living. With their Lord they have provision. Jubilant (are they) because of that which Allah hath bestowed upon them of His bounty, rejoicing for the sake of those who have not joined them but are left behind: That there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve (3:169 – 70, Pickthall translation, CMJE Web site)

This verse presents the outcome for the martyr, as interpreted as having been granted with eternal life and celebrated by the living. In another case, In Sunan Abu-Dawud's *hadith* "Model Behavior of the Prophet, the actions of the martyr are described:

The Prophet (peace\_be\_upon\_him) said: He who is killed while protecting his property is a martyr, and he who is killed while defending his family, or his blood, or his religion is a martyr. (40:4754 translated by *Ahmad Hasan*, CMJE Web site).

The martyr, arguably, is considered a male figure, given that the individual is 'he' and their duty, to protect the family, can be viewed as a particularly 'masculine'. Hence, the classic text presents the action of martyrdom, in respect to the pursuit of *jihad*. However, such interpretations should be treated with caution, as alternative teachings do present a more passive approach, prohibiting self-destruction and active fighting. Again, these discrepancies arise, given the nature of the text and the overriding confusion that exists in its interpretation.

#### *Rewards of the Martyr*

Medieval texts pertaining to martyrdom often concern its rewards. Such teachings provide insight into how Islam values the role of martyrdom and how the individual martyr is conceived. Benefits bestowed to the Muslim believer, who transpires towards martyrdom in the name of Islam, is described in *sura* 4:74:

Let those fight in the cause of Allah Who sell the life of this world for the hereafter. To him who fighteth in the cause of Allah,- whether he is slain or gets victory - Soon shall We give him a reward of great (value) (4:74, Yusuf Ali translation, CMJE Web site)

In this instance, the life of the Muslim believer, killed as an outcome of *jihad*, is rewarded. The specific reward of martyrdom is described in *sura* 9:111, as previously mentioned, in which the martyr is promised entry into the garden (paradise). Other

references to rewards provide insight into the profiling of the martyr, as illustrated in *surat* 44:52 – 44:54:

Among Gardens and Springs; Dressed in fine silk and in rich brocade, they will face each other; So; and We shall join them to fair women with beautiful, big, and lustrous eyes (44:52, Yusuf Ali translation, CMJE Web site)<sup>14</sup>

This verse is an example of the recurring portrayal of the benefits the *houris* (women of paradise) in paradise for the martyr. In this case, the role of the martyr can be considered male, whereby that the rewards of martyrdom are tied to male preferences. This idea is also apparent in the traditions. Sahih Muslim *ahadith*, “The Book on Government”, the chapter *The Merit of Martyrdom* is entirely devoted to the rewards of martyrdom:

It has been narrated on the authority of Anas b. Malik that the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) said: “Nobody who dies and has something good for him with Allah will (ever like to) return to this world even though he were offered the whole world and all that is in its (as an inducement), except the martyr who desires to return and be killed in the world for the (great) merit of martyrdom that he has seen. (29: 4634 translated by Abdul Hamid Siddiqui, CMJE Web site)

... Do you make the giving of drinking water to the pilgrims and the maintenance of the Sacred Mosque equal to (the service of those) who believe in Allah and the Last Day and strive hard in the cause of Allah. They are not equal in the sight of God. And Allah guides not the wrongdoing people (20:4638, translated by Abdul Hamid Siddiqui, CMJE Web site)

This text presents the value of the martyr life’s as greater than others, and one that is rewarded the opportunity to ‘return to the world’. Such teachings present the weight of importance allocated to the role of the martyr in classic discourse.

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<sup>14</sup> See also *surat* 56 and 52 of the Qur’an and Sahih Bukhari *ahadith* 4, 54:476 and 4,55:544 (CMJE Web site).

Thus far, the analysis of the religious text concerns the Muslim believer and martyrdom. However, it is not yet clear whether this role concerns Muslim women. The classic discourse on Islam does convey a sense of female martyrdom, although somewhat limited and inconsistent. The section will now turn to such teachings, in order to present specific insight into the idea of female martyrdom in classic Islamic text.

### *Insights into Female Martyrdom*

The *hadith* provide insight into how Islam values the life of women in battle. In Sahih Muslim's *ahadith*, "The Book of Jihad and Exhibition", chapter 8, *Prohibition of Killing Women and Children in War* presents prohibition from killing (Muslim) women in battle:

It is narrated on the authority of 'Abdullah that a woman was found killed in one of the battles fought by the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him). He disapproved of the killing of women and children (19:4319, translated by Abdul Hamid Siddiqui, CMJE Web site)

This tradition can be directed towards as a prohibition for female martyring, given that the death of a female believer, as an outcome of battle, is condemned.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the disparate value placed on the life of women and children, versus those (men) fighting the battle, possibly convey a theme for the entire discussion, whereby men are only deemed suitable for fighting. However, there are several traditions that suggest a contrary stand. For instance, female martyrdom takes various forms in the medieval text, as specified in a *hadith* by Sunan Abu-Dawud,

The Apostle of Allah (peace\_be\_upon\_him) said: There are seven types of martyrdom in addition to being killed in Allah's cause: one who dies of plague is a martyr; one who is drowned is a martyr; one who dies of pleurisy is a martyr; one who dies of an internal complaint is a martyr; one who is burnt to death is a martyr; who one is killed by a building falling on him is a martyr; and a woman

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<sup>15</sup> The consecutive narrative presents a contrasting position, in the *hadith*, 'Permissibility of Killing Women and Children in the Night Raids, Provided it is Not Deliberate', presents the killing of polytheist women and children during night raids.

who dies while pregnant is a martyr (20: 3105, translated by Ahmad Hasan, CMJE Web site).

These examples of martyrdom are discussed as disparate to the martyring as an outcome of *jihad*. The last example, childrearing, is specific to the female instance of martyrdom. Given the alignment of a particular form of martyrdom to women, it can be conceived that such martyrdom is the *only* form for women. Alternatively, it can be argued that women may still be afforded consideration for other types of martyrdom, such as martyring in the pursuit of *jihad*, despite the fact it is not specifically outlined here. Nevertheless, this teaching provides insight into building the foundations towards consideration for female martyrdom in classic Islamic literature. Given such a diverse representation, it can be argued that the classic Islamic position on female martyrdom is complex and inconsistent, leaving tremendous capacity for varying interpretation.

The teachings, relating to women and martyrdom in classic Islam, have arguably been inconsistent and shifting. This discourse leaves great capacity for an independently defined presentation of female martyrdom. As described, the female role in battle during the time of Muhammad took various forms, including from active leadership to support on the battlefield. However, following the acceptance of Islam and the subsequent development in the traditions, female participation became more accurately tied to their assigned social position, as defined by Arabian 7th century culture. Women's roles in society shifted towards the private realm, under the directive of "a patriarchal past and by the male religious elites who were the interpreters of religion" (Esposito, 2002, 160). Interpretations of Allah's revelations continued to reflect this current, with the active female role in *jihad* dissipating (Cooke, 2002).

The social dynamic of Islamic society has, arguably, influenced modern reinterpretations of Islamic belief and values, such as that found with the framing of religious pursuits of *jihad* and martyrdom. The capacity for interpretation has, arguably, continued to be exploited today by modern radical groups, in an attempt to frame concepts of *jihad* and *shuhada*, with medieval references points as support. The unique

characteristic of the modern day Islamic martyr, or suicide bomber, is the active pursuit for martyrdom. This is recognised in David Cook's description of Islam's 'ideal' martyr:

The Muslim ideal for a martyr became that person – usually a man – who through his active choice sought out a violent situation (battle, siege, guarding an unstable frontier, etc.) with pure intentions and was killed as a result of that choice. Ideally his actions expressed courage and defiance of the enemy, loyalty towards Islam and the pure intention to please God, since the acceptable manner of *jihad* was to “lift the Word of Allah to the highest” (Cook citing the Qur'an, 2007, 30).

This representation conveys the early shift towards a modern interpretation of the active martyr. It is in the modern discourse that this female martyr becomes apparent. Medieval references to female martyrdom may not necessarily reflect that of the contemporary martyr, whose martyrdom is an active pursuit of self-immolation, rather than death as outcome of battle. The face of the female martyr established a shift in dynamics, particularly in the religious scene, whereby an understanding for this incidence required concise religious interpretation. The research now turns to the final chapter, in which modern radical Islamic discourse on the female martyr will be analysed, in order to appropriate the specific frames.

## **Chapter 5: Framing of the Female Martyr In Modern Discourse**

Religious discourse presents meanings and values on a Muslim's way of life, by bounding concepts in terms of a morality of the Islamic faith. Research on modern interpretations of classic Islamic teachings provides insight into how radical religious and secular groups impart religious values to their local audience by reasserting such teachings with religious reference and morality. This is apparent when considering ideas and concepts relayed by Palestinian groups as they discuss military activity, such as those manifested in their support for suicide terrorism.

Suicide bombings are not a marginal phenomenon in Palestinian society, but rather a reflection of a new social norm that has the encouragement and support of the general public (Shai, 2004, 11).

Such public discourse, in reaction to suicide attacks, will be analysed with reference to the female martyr. By understanding the representation of the female martyr, one can appreciate how the local audience interprets and understands the role of the martyr, and how this concept has been articulated in the modern era.

### **5.1 Background to Modern Interpretations of War and Martyrdom**

Modern-day discussions on Islamic concepts of war convey diverse approaches to *jihad* and martyrdom. The capacity for interpreting such critical concepts is described by Asma Afsaruddin (2006) as a 'semantic spectrum'. The working of this dynamic, particularly by radical groups, raises a disconcerting prospect for religious circles to ensure the integrity of Islamic discourse (Afsaruddin, 2006). Afsaruddin describes this prospect as follows:

The retrieval of this semantic spectrum challenges the notion (*jihad*) increasingly peddled today that these are monovalent terms and that they were, and are, intrinsically connected with armed combat and violence. Needless to say, those who make such assertion often have no scholarly training ... there are those who are able to consult works but still wilfully misrepresent or only selectively quote from them. They include both Muslim and non-Muslim extremists, who thereby do great intellectual violence to the ethical precepts of classical Islam on the critical issues of war and peace” (Afsaruddin, 2006, 29).

It will become apparent that the notions of *jihad* and *shuhada* have shifted within a ‘semantic spectrum’ during the Muslim people’s history. This development has, ultimately, shaped the Islamic ideological premise of war and terrorism. The semantic references to *jihad* have been transformed over time by various Islamic groups, particularly by radical *jihadi* movements, which stress the collective duty towards fighting against the global non-Muslim and secular populations. For instance, Sheikh Al-Azhar Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi developed the notion of martyrdom as an act ‘self-defence’ and ‘self-sacrifice’ (Shai, 2004). The background to the development of the modern concept of martyrdom will now be considered, in terms of the thinking of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

#### *Khomeini - Islam’s Radical Thinker*

Ideological transformation of *jihad* and *shuhada* by radical Islamic figures is apparent in modern Islamic discourse. One of the main propagators of Islamic radical thought is Iran’s prominent religious and political figure, Ruhollah Khomeini, whose revolutionary thesis on Islam dominated the Islamic Republic following the 1979 Revolution (BBC News, 2010). The cleric’s ideas centre on the reinstatement of justice in terms of “the moral, spiritual and political unity of the Islamic community” (Zonis and Brumberg, 1987, 60). Khomeini based his revolutionary ideology for martyrdom as a means of an offensive *jihad*. The main premise of his ideas was to legitimise human action as a way to amend man’s inherent obsession for material things. Extending from this thesis was, first, the idealization of death as an aim, rather than an outcome of war (Bar, 2004). The

coalescence of man's action towards justice, on the basis of a rejection of the 'material self', provided an innovative premise for martyrdom. Second, his ideas provided a theological premise for martyrdom, whereby by physically martyring oneself, the Muslim believer moves from a material to spiritual existence. The act of martyrdom would provide an impressive antithesis against the West's most poignant ideals of materialism and survival. Khomeini's ideology was not specifically based upon the ideas of violence, but rather, Khomeini's interpretation and emphasis of particular Shi'ite ideas could translate into individual acts of violence. References to historical cases of martyrdom, such as the martyring of Husain, discussed in Chapter 2, and daughter, Fatima, provided legitimisation for his radical ideas.<sup>16</sup>

Khomeini has not made this point unambiguously in his speeches, but in his incessant praise of the "martyrdom" of Shi'i youth, there is an implicit tendency to legitimate suicidal behaviour by tying it to the theme of humanity's evil nature and the extirpation of humanity's material being (Zonis and Brumberg, 1987, 54).

Khomeini's influence and deliverance of his radical ideas provided strong justification towards a movement of suicide bombers. His ideological premise provided the grounds for much of the developments from medieval to modern interpretation of war and martyrdom. Radical interpretations of *jihad* and *shuhada* continued into contemporary discourse, with the subsequent ideological development of the female martyr. The background to the framing of the female martyr will now be discussed.

#### *Development towards the 'Female Martyr'*

Prior to asserting the role of martyrdom, modern discourse on women and war often considered the legitimisation of women's participation in war, by reaffirming its importance. Such legitimisation has surfaced in discourse amongst radical Islamic figures. For instance, Hamas' Dr. Yunis Al-Astal asserts that a female believer is not required to obtain permission from her husband, in order to pursue *jihad*, with *jihad* being

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<sup>16</sup> Khomeini stresses the importance of Hussein surrendering his life for Islam, as this "provided successive generations of Shi'is with the major paradigm of their suffering and persecution" (Zonis and Brumberg, 1987, 55). Hussein's martyrdom is re-enacted every year on the day of his death.

the duty of every Muslim. Al-Astal purports the value of the female role in *jihad*, in contrast to other duties of Islam for the female believer. For instance, the cleric describes *jihad* as being like prayer:

*jihad* becomes like a prayer [and] a woman does not have to ask for permission to pray ... (Memri, no. 1631, 2007)

Al-Astal further stresses that the duty of *jihad* is ten-times more important than the duty of wearing a veil. Given that the latter duty can be considered an integral part of a Muslim woman's life, the assertion that *jihad* is that much greater, arguably, presents a significant weight for militancy amongst Muslim women.

With legitimacy in place for female militancy, Al-Astal affirmed the importance of female martyrdom with the support of the historical female figures, Safiyya, Prophet Muhammad's aunt and Umm Sulaym, who are presented as taking active roles in fighting in battle; and Al-Khansaa who sacrificed her four children at the Battle of Al-Qadisiyya, and he remarks:

She inflamed their emotions and she herself incited them to fight until they attained their martyrdom, and then she thanked Allah for honoring her with the killing of them all (Memri, no. 1631, 2007)

What is required of the men and women of these peoples - but especially the women - is that they take [an example] from Rim Al-Riyashi, from Fatima Al-Najjar, and from the long list of women, and especially from Umm Nidhal, the mother of Muhammad Farhat, who sacrificed three children as martyrs, and who threatens the enemy that her remaining children will become martyrdom-seekers, and will make the Jews taste the evil consequences of their deeds (Memri, no. 1631, 2007)

As identified with Khomeini's descriptions, such representations of historical figures provide legitimisation of such activity. The Muslim woman as a martyrdom-seeker is

conveyed as a significant figure, carrying historical precedence, honoured for sacrifice and her willingness towards martyrdom.

Radical religious interpretations of teachings concerning martyrdom and women were marked by the discourse that followed the Intifada's first female suicide bomber, Wafa Idris. Religious figures in the Palestinian and wider Muslim world were pressed to consider this public event, in terms of Islam. Idris' act received varied support, from outright disapproval to full-fledged respect (Chebab, 2007, 87).<sup>17</sup> For instance, Fatah's commander, Hussein's Al-Sheikh, described the 'positive' impact Idris has had in the Palestinian community, for having committed her life to Islam:

When Wafa Idris did this, she played a role, I think, in the shaping of a new culture among Palestinian girls. She has become a source of pride. Many girls, for various reasons, wanted to play the same role (Memri, no. 966, 2005)

This portrayal as a 'role model' conveys the value held of female martyrdom by this group. Support for Idris was expressed in media channels across the community. For instance, PA TV's airing of the following lyrics demonstrated a sense of glorify for the martyr (Memri, no. 20, 2003).

My sister Wafaa  
 Oh revival of pride  
 Oh flower that was on earth  
 and ascended to the heavens...  
 You chose Shahada  
 And in your death gave life to the power of will...  
 Oh spirit of a magnificent people  
 That desires self-sacrifice... [18]

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<sup>17</sup> A library in a children's hospital, located in Yemen, and two summer camps, in Qalqiliya and in the Al-Am'ari refugee camp, were built in Idris's honour (Memri, no. 20, 2003, citing Hayat Al-Jadida and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida; Memri, 2009, 2357).

The martyr is described as a ‘flower’, whereby beauty is tied to a militant figure. This discourse provides the initial representations of the female martyr.

Following this attack, other women followed suit, as charted in appendix A, and the ideological discourse soon followed. Arguably, the female martyr became described as a distinct and absolute concept for Islam. Such descriptions, particularly those given by prominent Islamic figures in the community, provide an understanding of the incidence of female martyrdom to the local audience. Analysing the religious messages presented by such figures provides insight into appreciating the value placed on the female martyr in public discourse.

## 5.2 Islamic Discourse on Female Martyrdom

Public discourse presented in statements, speeches and treaties provides insight into the values and ideas representing a group’s ideology and activity. The ideology of the Islamic fundamentalist group, Hamas, is presented in the group’s official discourse and public statements. The group’s charter highlights its objectives, within an official capacity, as bound by religious values:

Allah is its goal, the Prophet its model, the Qur’an its Constitution, *Jihad* its path and death for the case of Allah its most sublime belief (Section 1.a, article 8, Alexander, 2002, 52)

This text presents the religious foundation to the group identity and purpose, as located in Islam. Arising is an inextricable link between group activity and a religious objective. This dynamic is further illustrated in articles 17 and 18, in which the Qur’an (*sura* 33:35) is referenced as a means to frame Muslim lifestyle to a moral coding of ‘surrendering’ oneself to Islam:

Lo, men who surrender unto Allah, and women who surrender and men who believe and women who believe, and men who obey and women who obey, and men who speak the truth and women who speak the truth and men who persevere

(in righteousness) and women who persevere and men who are humble and women who are humble, and men who give alms and women who give alms, and men who fast and women who fast, and men who guard their modesty and women who guard [their modesty], and men who remember Allah much and women who remember Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a vast reward (Alexander, 2002, 59)

Hamas' charter, therefore provides the fusion of religion and social practice, by presenting its ideology and objectives within the structure of religion. The charter, therefore, can provide insight into gaining insight into how Hamas discusses women, war and martyrdom, in terms of religion.

From the outset, the Hamas' charter presents a value of *jihad*:

When our enemies usurp some Islamic lands, *Jihad* becomes a duty binding on all Muslims ... We must spread the spirit of Jihad among the [Islamic] Umma, clash with the enemies and join the ranks of the Jihad fighters ... We must imprint on the minds of generations of Muslims that the Palestinian problem is a religious one, to be dealt with on this premise (Alexander, 2002, 56)

It can be gathered from the phrase, "a duty binding on all Muslims", that the religious and militant role of *jihad* is viewed as the duty of all individual Muslims, rather than as a collective duty. Group alliance, therefore, becomes bound by the militant pursuit of *jihad*, as located in the word 'fighters'. It is arguably, therefore, that the charter assigns the duty of *jihad* as a militant responsibility of all Muslims, both men and women. This duty is further entrenched, given the common experience of all Palestinians, as located in the phrase "the Palestinian problem is a religious one". In this case, the ideology ties the Palestinian experience with Islam, creating an inextricable link between the social experience and religious duty of *jihad*.

Hamas' stand on Muslim women's role in *jihad* is specified in their charter. First, article 17 presents the value of Muslim women during war:

The Muslim women have no lesser role than that of men in the war of liberation; they manufacture men and play a great role in guiding and educating the [new] generation ... (article 17, Alexander, 2002, 58)

This extract describes the value of Muslim women equal to that of men during war. Yet, the duties concerning this role are disparate, as described by traditional female roles of child bearing and caring. This traditional role in war is reaffirmed in the subsequent article:

The women in the house and the family of Jihad fighters, whether they are mothers or sisters, carry out the most important duty of caring for the home and raising the children upon the moral concepts and values which derive from Islam; and of educating their sons to observe the religious injunctions in preparation for the duty of Jihad awaiting them ... (article 18, Alexander, 2002, 58)

Again, the group frame the role of Muslim women as to one associated with the private space of the home and family unit. This description was reaffirmed in public discourse by Hamas' commander of their women's unit, 'Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam'. In the Hamas newspaper, Al-Risala, Al-Qassam describes the role for Muslim women in *jihad*, with regards to their value and significance:

Their role is very important and is no less important than that of the man. The woman is the fighter's wife and sister. She carried the difficult burden of making a living and educating the children to *jihad* (Memri, no. 983, 2005).

The armed activities are not [limited to] guiding [bombers] or shooting. There are many kinds of *jihad* and resistance (Memri, no. 983, 2005).

The text installs the importance of female contributions to *jihad*, in the modern era.

Hamas' charter, which was published in 1988, prior to the inception of modern female suicide terrorism, does not provides specific insight into how value of the female

martyr. During the modern era of terrorism, radical Islamic groups have readdressed existing ideas, in order to place their own value on and moral support for female suicide bombing. Discourse concerning female martyrdom is found, instead, in ad hoc statements provided by the group's representatives. It is in this realm that we can begin to trace the framing of the female martyr. For instance, the ideological tone of Hamas towards female suicide bombers was affirmed, in response to the suicide attack by Idris. Furthermore, this ideological stand shifted from disapproval to acceptance. The day following her attack, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, Hamas' spiritual leader, imparted reservations over female martyrdom, asserting "A man who recruits a woman is breaking Islamic law" (Victor, translation of interview with Yassin, 2003, 30). Yassin describes his position on female martyring:

The Palestinian woman has an important role in society and in supporting the fighters ... In our Palestinian society, there is a flow of women towards Jihad and martyrdom, exactly like the young men. But the woman has uniqueness. Islam sets some restrictions for her, and if she goes out to wage Jihad and fight, she must be accompanied by a male chaperon. (Memri citing Al-Sharq Al-Awsat (London), no.83, 2002)

This position reflects upon the traditional role presented in Hamas' charter. However, several days following these interviews, Yassin's tone on female martyrdom arguably modified, which suggests that female martyrdom is actually accepted as long as the woman is accompanied by a male chaperoned. (Memri citing Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, no.83, 2002). Yassin considers the modern practice of martyrdom by Muslim women is 'unnecessary'. However, the Sheikh described the time in which this community enters into the paradigm of a 'new phase of history', in which the general practice of female martyrdom may become a possibility:

But the days of decisive conflict with the Israeli occupation will come, and then men, women, the elderly, and children will participate in Jihad, in the crucial battle for the liberation of Palestine, Allah willing. We have entered a new phase

of history, in which Palestinian women are willing to fight and to die a martyr's death as the men and youths do. This is from the grace of Allah. But, meanwhile, women have no military organization in the framework of the [Islamic] movement. When such an organization arises, it will be possible to discuss wide-scale recruitment of women. (Memri citing Al-Sharq Al-Awsat (London), no.83, 2002)

The Sheikh presents political circumstances for female martyrdom, as legitimised in religious grounds of the will of Allah. As highlighted, variation in the interpretation of such vital concepts for action presents the shadowy grounds of ideological semantics over Islamic concepts of war and martyrdom.

Hamas leader, Isma'il Abu Shanab presented a different value of female martyrdom in response to Idris' martyring:

Jihad against the enemy is an obligation that applies not only to men but also to women. Islam has never differentiated between men and women on the battlefield. (Memri citing Middle East News Online, no.83, 2002)

This discourse conveys an equal platform for Muslim men and women in the militant pursuit of *jihad*. This can be differentiated from the classic discourse on *jihad*, which does not fully assert a militant role for Muslim women, and the modern approach of Hamas' charter, which aligns non-militant duties in *jihad* for Muslim women. Hence, arguably, discourse consecutive to Idris' action conveyed a move towards an acceptance of female martyrdom by Hamas, as reflected in their modern framing of the female militant. Hamas leader, Sheikh Hassan Yussef, affirms the value of female militancy in *jihad*.

We do not act according to the opinion of the street or of society. We are men of principle... [and act] according to what our religion dictates. A Muslim woman is permitted to wage Jihad and struggle against the occupation. The Prophet [Muhammad] would draw lots among the women who wanted to go out to wage

Jihad with him. The Prophet always emphasized the woman's right to wage Jihad. (Memri citing Al-Sha'ab (Egypt), no.83, 2002)

The assertion of acting in accordance to “what our religion dictates” can imply that the Islamic standard that Yussef suggests is bound by a religious morality and beyond human interpretation. In this case, female militancy becomes framed in the value of religious duty. In addition, by drawing on Prophet Muhammad, Yussef further endorses legitimacy in his ideas, as he permeates the idea that the female instance of *jihad* is paved out in Islamic history. This text further conveys a disparity between “the opinion of the street or of society”, which is arguably the opinion of the media or opposing groups, and the ‘principles’ of Islam. In this sense, Yussef arguably draws a line between a ‘true’ morality of the Islamic standard that he is conveying, versus other ‘immoral’ opinion. This text, therefore, imbues a sense of legitimacy for female militancy in the public, by framing such action by moral, religious and historical codes. This dynamic will become evident throughout this chapter.

The previous data highlighted the assignment of Islamic belief with female militancy. Even though such discourse was raised in response to a female suicide attack, it did not provide a specific link between religious value and female martyrdom. An alignment of martyrdom with religious discourse can be drawn from the public statements of the Egyptian preacher, Sheikh Yusuf al-Qardawi, who fervently supported Palestinian suicide bombings. Al-Qardawi endorsed this trend as the “supreme expression of the *Jihad* in the name of Allah and a model of terror permitted by Sharia” (Shai, 2004, 9). Palestinian-Kuwaiti cleric Sheikh Ahmad Qattan further affirmed an Islamic acceptance of martyrdom, in a television interview on Iqra TV, with the description of the six rewards bestowed on the martyr:

... his sins are forgiven with the first drop of his blood, and he sees his place in heaven; he is spared the torments of the grave, and he is safe from the great horror; the crown of honor is placed on his head – with a jewel finer than this world and what is in it; he is married off to 72 black-eyed women, and he may plead for 70 of his relatives (Memritv, clip no. 463, 2005).

This text describes martyrdom in terms of the physical aspects of the act, as located in the phrase “the first drop of his blood”.<sup>18</sup> The act of devotion is, therefore, tied to the physical being of the believer, whereby fully sacrificing oneself comprises of one’s commitment. The value of martyrdom is defined in terms of rewards, which are characterised by the sexual undertones of the availability of women. Such a description, arguably, offers a sense of relief to the believer, as the horror of death is replaced by a sense of tranquillity and greatness. Yet, this description does not overtly concern the female martyr, especially given the nature of the rewards. Instead, Saudi Sheikh Dr. Saleh bin Ghanem Al-Sidlan details the rewards bestowed on the female martyr on Iqra TV:

About the black eyed (virgins) and the believing women – the believing women become more beautiful and younger than the black-eyed virgins. Besides, if a husband of a certain woman is a dweller of heaven, then he will be her husband (in heaven). If she was married to several husbands, she can choose the one with the best character. If she was married to several husbands, she can choose the one with the best character among them. If she was married to one husband, and he is on the same heavenly level as she is, then he will be her husband. If he is on a lower level and she is on a higher one, he is elevated to her and becomes her husband. If she is on a lower level than his, he is her husband and she is his wife (in heaven) and she is elevated to his level out of respect to her. (Memritv, clip no. 188, 2004)

The rewards of the female martyr are characterised by beauty, companionship and security. The rewards of the female martyr, arguably, satisfy the preconceived desires of women. In comparison, the appeal of the rewards for martyrdom, amongst male believers, arguably fulfil man’s innate sexual desires.

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<sup>18</sup> The description of the physical aspects of suicide bombing, as a presentation of the value of martyrdom, will be particularly evident in the framing of the female martyr.

The public statements of dominant Palestinian leaders shed light on the framing of martyrdom. However, such framing becomes more dominant in the legal sphere of *fatwas*, in which Islamic teachings are entrenched into legal decree. In this premise, religious ideology becomes a major proponent towards action, especially in cases where individuals are motivated by an alternative morality located in radical Islamic ideology. The chapter now analyses such legal discourse that sheds light into the framing of female martyrs.

### *Fatwas*

Radical Islamic public figures frame concepts of war and martyrdom with authoritative Islamic rulings (*fatwas*), as defined by religious teachings and authority. *Fatwas* provide a legal framework for *jihad*, in which the tone of the ruling determines the value and form of *jihad* for the Muslim believer. In this case, human action is inextricably linked to religion. It is within this realm of discussion that the public discourse previously noted is endorsed with a sense of legality, whereby Muslim values are often interpreted as moral justification in the mind of the audience. It is argued that such legal interpretations provide the justification for action, whilst acting as a ‘lever’ to motivate others (Bar, 2004). Shmuel Bar asserts that motivation towards action, as arising from a *fatwa*, is determined by the ‘approbation’, or approval, given in the ‘social environment’, and the ‘moral and legal sanction’ for action given in the ‘religious environment’ (Bar, 2004: 28). Resulting is increased support amongst a population propelled towards the radical interpretation of *jihad*, in which ideology becomes a major proponent towards military action. Subsequently, Bar notes that the political currency of *fatwas* induces violent action amongst its community:

The *fatwas* promulgated by sheikhs and *ulama* who stipulate that *jihad* is a “personal duty” play, therefore, a pivotal role in encouraging radicalism and in building the support infrastructure for radicals within the traditional Islamic community (Bar, 2004: 32).

The outcome for the believer is paradise for those who perform all religious duties, particularly *jihad*, otherwise hell for those who omit any duties or commit any sins (Bar, 2004). Discourse on legal *fatwas*, therefore, provides clear insight into the framing of the female martyr. Furthermore, given that *fatwas* coin religious values with social action, such discourse helps us understand why an audience may be motivated towards such actions.

Abdullah Azzam, a prominent advocator of radical Islam, presented the Islamic world with innovative work on martyrdom and *jihad*. In *Join the Caravan*, Azzam supports a particular military approach to *jihad* with the Qur'an, citing the following:

...Allah has favoured the Mujahideen over those who sit at home by a tremendous reward, by higher grades for Him, and with the Forgiveness and Mercy (Azzam citing the Qur'an, 2001, preface to the second edition).

In the *fatwa*, "Defence of the Muslim Lands - The First Obligation After Iman" (1979), Azzam defines the duty of *jihad* as becoming a responsibility of every individual (*fard 'ain*) when they are attacked by the enemy. In this instance, the responsibility concerns 'women, slaves, and children', so much so, that "they march out even if their guardians, husbands and creditors forbid them to" (Azzam, *Relioscope Website*).<sup>19</sup> The Sheikh describes the instance when the responsibility of militancy involves women as well:

If they approach one of our lands and the distance between them and us becomes less than the distance permitting the shortening of prayers, then the people of that territory must defend it and it becomes Fard Ayn even upon the people for whom there is usually no *jihad*; the poor, the children, the slaves, the debtor and the women" (Azzam, *Relioscope Website*).

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<sup>19</sup> See chapter 1, *Defence of the Muslim Lands*, which refers to the Islamic jurisprudence, Mathhabs, and the jurist, Hashiyat ad Dussuqi, from the Maliki Fiqh school of law: "Jihad becomes Fard Ayn upon a surprise attack by the enemy. Dussuqi said: "Wherever this happens, *jihad* immediately becomes Fard Ayn upon everybody, even women, slaves, and children, and they march out even if their guardians, husbands and creditors forbid them to" (Azzam, *Relioscope Website*).

Here, the framing of the female martyr is defined in reference to a specific event, in which Muslims believe they are under attack. During the Afghanistan war, Azzam further endorsed female militancy with a *fatwa* declaring women no longer required their husbands' permission to participate in *jihad*.<sup>20</sup> Azzam's *fatwa* provide the legal sanctioning of female martyrdom. In such cases, female martyrdom is considered not only of value to the Muslim community, but further, a necessity in their pursuit of *jihad*, in which all women are required to fully participate in fighting.

The radical Sunni Islamist scholar, Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawa, has been highly influential in the development of radical Islamic thought. The cleric presented a varied position on war and martyrdom. In response to the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on the New York Trade Centre, the Sheikh affirmed on al-Jazeera television that martyrdom by Muslim fighters against "women, old persons, children, or even a monk in his religious seclusion ... is a heinous crime in Islam" (Haleem citing al-Qaradawa, 2006, 59). However, al-Qaradawa's contrasting thoughts concerning Palestinian suicide operations in Israel were developed in his *fatwa*, in which he considered such acts of martyrdom as 'heroic martyrdom operations'. Al-Qaradawi's *fatwa* largely endorsed Palestinian suicide bombings, describing this trend as "an indication of the justice of Allah Almighty ... (having) given the weak what the strong do not possess and that is the ability to turn their bodies into bombs like the Palestinians do ..." (Haleem citing al-Qaradawi, 2006, 59). Such descriptions convey a sense of heroism in the act of martyrdom.<sup>21</sup> Al-Qaradawi's approach to suicide bombing is, arguably, varying, whereby he considers the *jihad* against Israel as different to that against other Western countries, and a case requiring religious legitimisation with the endorsement of a *fatwa*.

Al-Qaradawi's *fatwa* features on various Islamic websites and, in particular, features on the radical website, IslamOnline.net. The following extracts of the translated *fatwa* provide detailed insight into how the value of female martyrdom is presented in public forums.

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<sup>20</sup> This point is also asserted in chapter 3, *Fard Ayn and Fard Kifaya*, "The situation of the permission from parents and husband not being required is sustained until the enemy is expelled from the Muslim land, or when there is the accumulation of sufficient numbers to expel the enemy even if all the Muslims in the earth are assembled" (Azzam, *Relioscope* Website).

<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that the notion of heroism is a dominant theme in the framing of martyrdom, and will be seen to reverberate in the research findings.

When jihad becomes an individual duty, as when the enemy seizes the Muslim territory, a woman becomes entitled to take part in it alongside men. Jurists maintained that when the enemy assaults a given Muslim territory, it becomes incumbent upon all its residents to fight against them to the extent that a woman should go out even without the consent of her husband, a son can go too without the permission of his parent, a slave without the approval of his master, and the employee without the leave of his employer. This is a case where obedience should not be given to anyone in something that involves disobedience to Allah, according to a famous juristic rule.

... I believe a woman can participate in this form of jihad according to her own means and condition. Also, the organizers of these martyr operations can benefit from some, believing women as they may do, in some cases, what is impossible for men to do.

... woman can travel to perform Hajj [pilgrimage to Mecca] in the company of other trustworthy women and without the presence of any *mahram* as long as the road is safe and secured. ...

... when necessary, she may take off her *hijab* in order to carry out the operation, for she is going to die in the cause of Allah and not to show off her beauty or uncover her hair ...

To conclude, I think the committed Muslim women in Palestine have the right to participate and have their own role in jihad and to attain martyrdom (Middle East Quarterly, 2004, vol.11/3).

First, it can be observed that the organisation of duties amongst Muslim men and women shift during the time of battle, whereby women become 'entitled' to the militant pursuit of *jihad* 'alongside' men. In this instance, the power structure between the genders

dissolve, whereby women are no longer required to gain approval from their husband to partake in *jihad*. It can be inferred that the pursuit of *jihad* overrides any existing duty binding the female believer. The transformation towards the empowered female martyr on a new equal platform continues in the second paragraph, whereby a female believer can act “according to her own means and condition”. The traditional power structure, however, is reinstated in the instance when the relationship between women and men is likened to that of the slave and master. Hence, the developed role of women in *jihad*, although now appropriate in the time of battle, remains shadowed by a position of subordination.

A second observation found in this *fatwa* is that the female believer is given unique powers to do “what is impossible for men to do”. Such powers, arguably, concern the female *mujahida* (fighter), who avoid the level of scrutiny by security as their male counterparts face. This description endorses value in the participation of the female believer, denoting a particular importance in their involvement. A third observation concerns the text “she is going to die in the cause of Allah and not to show off her beauty or uncover her hair”. In this case, the female martyr, in her pursuit of *jihad*, is described as being stripped of femininity. Arguably, female *mujahida* not only move to an equal platform alongside their male counterparts, but they are further transformed into androgynous fighters, as part of the Muslim army in battle against the enemy. The *fatwa* presents the female occasion for militancy and the dynamics surrounding such involvement, vis-à-vis their traditional role in society. This discourse provides an innovative presentation of martyrdom, in which the female martyr is framed in terms of equality and militancy within the realms of her traditional existence in society. Hence, Sheikh al-Qaradawa’s *fatwa* provides the legal definition for those female suicide attacks perpetrated by Palestinian terrorist groups, as coined in the description of a ‘right’, and hence, a legitimate framework for future pursuits.

Public discourse, as presented in *fatwas*, provide insight into how Palestinians may consider the interpretation and value of martyrdom, given its legal justification and, hence, moral capacity. However, such discourse has not yet provided a complete presentation of the framing of the female martyr. The following section of the chapter includes specific data concerning particular themes of the framing of the female martyr.

This chapter presents the data, in relation to certain frames: ‘The Devout Muslim,’ ‘Islam’s Hero’ and ‘Female Warriors’. Each theme will be discussed in turn, in order to convey the various frames used to describe the actions of female suicide bomber, as recognised as the female martyr.

### 5.3 Framing of the Female Martyr

Modern discourse on female martyrdom conveys the emphases of particular themes. This section will first consider female martyrdom in terms of devotion and a conscientious believer, who performs all the necessary duties of a Muslim.

#### *Devout Muslim*

As presented in the earlier chapter, classic Islam asserts that all Muslim believers shoulder the responsibility to defend Islam, as found in *sura* 4:95: “Those of the believers who sit still, other than those who have a (disabling) hurt, are not on an equality with those who strive in the way of Allah with their wealth and lives ...” (4:95, Pickthall translation, CMJE Web site). It remained unclear as to whether such a believer is considered both male and female and, so, whether there is a definite link between the female believer and the duties of this believer. This research will now describe an affirmation over the role of female believers in defending Islam, as prescribed amongst Islamic leaders in the frame of the ‘Devout Muslim’.

In a television interview on Al-Rafidein, Cleric al-Astal described the role of women in *jihad*. His description can be equated to the presentation conveyed previously by al-Qaradawa, whereby militancy becomes a responsibility of both men and women in a new era of Islamic history. In this occasion, the collective transforms into the duty of every individual Muslim, comprising of both men and women, in the pursuit of *jihad*.

The most exalted form of *jihad* is fighting for the sake of Allah, which means sacrificing one’s soul by fighting the enemies head-on, even if it leads to martyrdom. Martyrdom means life next to Allah ... [Women] prepare food, they bring water, they tend to the wounded and convey them from the battlefield, they

protect the [soldiers'] possessions, and so on. But in many cases, women participated in combat, especially if the Islamic army was weakening, and you could see that the enemy was about to gain the upper hand. In such cases, a woman would draw out her sword, or pull out a pole from her tent, and would resist to the best of her ability... When *jihad* becomes an individual duty, it applies to women too, because women do not differ from men when it comes to individual duties (Memri, no. 1631, 2007).

This description presents the traditional duties of women in battle and the shift towards militancy for both men and women. The case for the female role of *jihad* arises as the 'Islamic army' weakens, in which case, women transcend to the platform of men, bound by their individual duty to fight.

The Devout Muslim is recognised in the public response to 72-year-old Fatima al-Najjar, who detonated herself on November 23, 2006, in the Gaza Strip in proximity to Israeli soldiers. Hamas' spokesman 'Abd Al-Latif Al-Qanu' praises al-Najjar's actions in the group's newspaper, al-Risala.

In her heroic act, (Fatima Al-Najjar) Umm Muhammad sent a clear message to all those who call to recognize Israel: that we, as a subjugated and oppressed people - the elderly, women, youth, children, and even fetuses in their mother's wombs - cannot recognize [Israel]... We will all be human time bombs, that will explode in the heart of the criminal Zionist entity. She sent a message to everyone who claims that the resistance and its missiles are ineffective and hold back the resistance: that the entire Palestinian people, and all its constituent parts, and groups, and generations, rally around the resistance and cheer on the resistance and the *jihad* fighters. We cannot give up the resistance" (Memri, citing Al-Risala (Gaza), no. 1383, 2006)

This text raises certain dynamics in the framing of the female martyr. First, this Muslim acts in her devotion to the community, transcending her worth above all others to the level of heroism. In this sense, devotion is recognised and valued in the act of martyrdom.

Further, the act of martyrdom represents a specific message, or value, as coined in the term ‘resistance’. Hence, it can be considered that resistance entails martyrdom.

A second observation concerns the reference to a grouping, or ‘we’, as part of the framing of the Devout Muslim, as located in the phrases “we, as a subjugated and oppressed people - the elderly, women, youth, children, and even fetuses in their mother’s wombs”, “We will all be human time bombs” and “the entire Palestinian people, and all its constituent parts”. In the collective reference, every Muslim, even the unborn, are responsible to support and participate in *jihad*. This language not only affirms who should participate in *jihad*, by removing any preconceived ideas of the ideal Muslim (male) fighter; but further, this permeates the sense that every physical being, born or unborn, are devoted to *jihad*. This collective can be considered in Sheikh Ahmad Qattan’s discussion on the Palestinian *jihad*.

... This reminds me of the mujahideen and martyrdom seekers who stand in line in Palestine: men and women, adults and children awaiting their turn to sign, with their blood and broken bones, their pledge of faith in Allah (Memritv, clip no. 463, 2005).

The Sheikh conceives of the notion of female martyrdom, whereby physical aspects of ‘blood and broken bones’ tie into the religious devotion of the Muslim. The physical portrayal in this discourse will be recognised further in the framing of the female martyr.

A third observation on al-Qanu’s article concerns the repetition of the word ‘resistance’, as used five times in the text. This repetition, arguably, signifies an affirmation of the sense of commitment expected of a devout Muslim in the pursuit of *jihad*. The word ‘resistance’ is used in reference to both the Palestinian people and *jihad* fighter, aligning both the political and religious goals into a cohesive mission of all devout Muslim men and women. This reaction to al-Najjar’s suicide attack provides an understanding of the value of the female martyr, as framed in terms of the ‘Devout Muslim’. The female martyr is understood as the individual Muslim who transforms into a hero, given her actions. Such actions unify in the duty of all other Muslims to *jihad*, as achieved in the act of martyrdom. Such interpretation provides an understanding of

female martyrdom in the local audience. This interpretation supports a frame in which to understand future suicide attacks.

The Devout Muslim continues to reverberate in public discourse to female suicide attacks, such as the following exert by Dr. Muhammad Shihab, “Imagine What Would Happen if Millions of Believers Did as Fatima Al-Najjar Did”, in Al-Risala:

Imagine, together with me, what could happen in another few years, if millions of believers, men and women, decided to break through [their] fears and lunge forward to resistance, *jihad*, and martyrdom in Palestine - just like 'the mother of the self-sacrificing women', Umm Muhammad ...(Memri, citing Al-Risala (Gaza), no. 1383, 2006)

This text presents a joint sense of purpose amongst individuals, whereby the goals of both men and women in *jihad* come together in the resistance, as represented by martyrdom. The phrase, ‘together with me’, permeates a sense of unity, whilst “just like ‘the mother of the self-sacrificing women’” exudes a sense that martyrdom is a possibility for every Muslim. Hence, devotion is represented in the act of martyrdom. In another example, the framing of the martyr as a Devout Muslim can be recognised in the television interview with Hamas’ spokesman, Sami Abu Zuhri, who described the movement of female suicide bombers:

There are hundreds of female martyrdom bombers, who stream en masse and insist on participating in martyrdom operations. This is a unique phenomenon, reflecting the live spirit of *Jihad* among this people (Memri, translation of Sami Abu Zuhri, no. 741, 2004)

In this case, the devotion of Muslim women is celebrated in terms of their pursuit of martyrdom. Describing the trend as ‘unique’ possibly suggests that female martyrdom was considered by Hamas as a modern development, whilst providing acknowledgment and acceptance for the act.

As located in the framing of the actions of female suicide attacks in public discourse, martyrdom is represented as a defining feature of a devout Muslim, who is committed to fight to defend Islam. A further dimension is raised in this analysis, whereby the act of martyrdom can be seen to transform the regular believer to the status of ‘Islam’s hero’. The research will now consider this second theme of the framing of the female martyr.

### *Islam’s Hero*

The framing of the female martyr as a hero was identified in the research. For having committed the greatest sacrifice, surrendering one’s life in the pursuit to defend Islam, the Devout female Muslim transforms in an iconic figure. Islam’s Hero presents the female martyr as a selfless woman, who has surrendered her life in the name of Islam. For instance, Hamas’ spokesman, Al-Qanu’ conveyed the frame of Islam’s hero in a response to al-Najjar’s attack, in the previously cited article.

How magnificent is she when she joins in the ranks of the resistance and easily surrenders her life for the sake of Allah ... Fatima Al-Najjar .... wrote out, in her pure and untainted blood, [her] loyalty to the resistance, the martyrs, the prisoners and the wounded, and [her] devotion to [Palestinian] principles and rights ... This Palestinian woman, ‘mother of self-sacrificing women’ ... succeeding in tracing, with her blood and her body, the path and glory and honor. This self-sacrificing woman, this grandmother, Umm Muhammad, had an impressive record of *jihad* and sacrifice in the first Intifada ...” (Memri, no. 1383, 2006)

Several ideas concerning the framing of al-Najjar can be raised from this text. First, al-Najjar is valued as ‘magnificent’ for having surrendered her life to Islam. Thus, the act of martyrdom is interpreted as transforming the regular Muslim into an iconic figure, as in by the act, the individual moves to a level of greatness in the community. This representation portrays martyrdom as a momentous occasion in Islamic history, as defined by the act of a hero. This tone is recognised in later discussions of Al-Najjar’s suicide attack, as it was later described as “an historic day in the life of the Palestinian

people and a true turning point in the Palestinian people's *jihad*" (Memri, no. 1383, 2006).

Second, the notions of commitment to Islam and physical being coupled on two occasions in the text. In the first instance, 'pure and untainted blood' is tied to 'loyalty' and 'devotion'; and, in the second instance, 'her blood and her body' precedes 'the path and glory and honor'. This observation arguably represents the bracketing of one's whole being, physical and spiritual with the duty of Islam. In this sense, the female martyr's sacrifice is not only an upshot of her devotion, whereby her martyring embodies the 'glory' and 'honor', but further, her devotion *is* to surrender herself fully to *jihad*. Hence, the Muslim being, in all essence, is part of the fight for Islam.

The framing of the female martyr, with respect to Islam's Hero, is apparent in the responses to Hamas's female suicide bomber, Reem Al-Riyashi, who denoted herself at an Israeli security checkpoint, as a joint operation for Hamas and Fatah's al-Aqsa Martyrs' brigade (BBC News, 2004a). In the previously cited article interviewing Hamas' commander of their women unit, Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam, he described Al-Riyashi as follows:

The martyr Reem Al-Riyashi is like a crown on our heads and a pioneer of the resistance. Nobody can fathom the magnitude of her sacrifice ... By the name of Allah, we hope to become like her at once (Memri, 983, 2005)

The description of Al-Riyashi as 'a crown on our heads' and 'pioneer' denotes a value of the Muslim martyr being far greater than of any other believer, again whereby the individual rises to a position of greatness amongst the community. The greatness in the act of martyrdom is conceived in the sentence "Nobody can fathom the magnitude of her sacrifice" as inferring the scale of greatness of martyrdom being beyond belief. Despite the unique position the martyr is given, the consecutive sentence, "... we hope to become like her at once", evokes the idea that martyrdom as a possibility for all. Hence the act is framed as a one of greatness, yet achievable by all.

Throughout the discourse, one frame is particularly resonant, the militant characteristic of the female martyr. This frame, as described as the Female Warrior, not

only denotes a religious affiliation to the actions of martyrdom, but also a sense of social change for the local community, in their involvement in Islamic pursuits. This frame will now be discussed.

### *Female Warriors*

An evident concept running through the public discourse is the female warrior, and it is within this last frame that the female martyr fully develops. Pictures of militant female figures of radical groups often accompanied public discourse of the female martyr (see for example, appendix B). The theme offers a unique presentation of the female Muslim: one who commits her life fully to Islam through militancy. Often, this discourse was communicated and presented by female representatives of the group. However, given the context of Palestinian groups and the nature of the development Islamic fundamentalism, the authenticity of the figure's dialogue is questionable.<sup>22</sup> Such discourse is, arguably, directed by a (male) group initiative and not inherently the genuine voice and opinion of the female speaker. This reflects the persistence of framing of values and ideas within the organisation, surfacing in public discourse. Given this dynamic, public discourse communicated by Muslim women, ultimately, represents the interpretation of martyrdom in modern discourse by Palestinian radical Islamic groups, rather than the independent mindset of a female militant.

The female warrior is apparent in public discourse by Hamas. An Al-Aqsa television clip, entitled "Hamas female martyrdom-seekers in Gaza" presents masked female militants, dressed in explosive belts. The female figures, speaking from the personal perspective, conjure up the idea that this is a genuine plea for martyrdom. One of the masked women declares the following:

There are thousands of martyrdom-seeking women like me, waiting for the occupier, in order to avenge these massacres ... My people on the front-line, do not wait for any Arab president or king, but direct your appeal to Allah, the King

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<sup>22</sup> On online forums for women in Islamic websites, Memri found that more than two-thirds of the participants were men; their purpose was for "indoctrination"; and the website content largely dealt with the subjects including "encouraging women to carry out suicide operations" (Hazan, 2008).

of Kings. We are loyal to our oath, and will meet, Allah willing, in the paradise of eternity” (Memri, no.2167, 2008).

The previous chapter ascertained that the role of the *shahida* in classic Islam is uncertain. This modern discourse affirms the link between the female believer and martyrdom, as located in the two assertions of the large supply of ‘martyrdom-seeking women’ and ‘loyalty’ to Allah. This description, therefore, presents a clear directive towards female martyrdom, and a command that surpasses any other source of power, i.e. ‘Arab president or king’. Hence, the duty becomes bound by Islam and removed from any realm of scrutiny.

A second observation of the text presents the framing of female martyrs as a single female army, whereby the ‘thousands’ of women can be interpreted as the massing of women strengthening the appeal of martyrdom. This theme is reinforced by the presence of a second masked woman, who grips the rifle as if she is ready for battle, stating the following:

I will sacrifice myself as a martyr, Allah willing. I will turn my blood into bombs that will burn them ... My honorable people, have more forbearance and steadfastness. Your daughters march by your side on the path of *Jihad* and martyrdom” (Memri, no.2167, 2008).

First, it can be noted of the phrase, “I will turn my blood into bombs that will burn them”, denotes the physical element of martyrdom, whereby the act transforms the physical self into aggressive substance of bombs. This description conveys a sense of *jihad* being an integral part of the martyr’s existence, equating with Hamas’ description of al-Najjar. Second, it can be noted that the role of the *shahida* is reaffirmed in the phrase ‘your daughters march by your side’, whereby the military pursuit of *jihad* is confirmed as the duty of all women of all ages. In particular to the Female Warrior, the word ‘march’ resonates of soldiers or warriors advancing together as a single entity.

The female warrior was further portrayed by the image of ‘Lover of Al-Quds’, a female militant concealed by a mask and dressed in weaponry (appendix c). The female

militant appeared on Al Jadid television, on a report on female Palestinian suicide bombers. ‘Lover of Al-Quds’ described the ammunition strapped to her body:

This is the belt we wear around our waists, so that we can detonate ourselves at the push of a button. This is a safety button, and so is this. We won’t explode unless we press this button. When God instils the will in our hearts... Our strength lies not in the body, but in the heart. If the heart so desires and we are inspired by God to set out ... Every female martyrdom-seeker is inspired by Allah (Memri, no. 2034, 2008).

Her dialogue, first, conveys a sense of ease over the operation of the suicide belt. This, arguably, presents control and self-determination of the female warrior. Second, the discourse arguably romanticizes the mission of the female warrior, laying out the religious duty to God as an inspiration “in the heart” of the believer. Hence, this discourse conveys a complex representation of the female warrior, as defined by both militant characteristics and a woman driven by the romantic aspects of her pursuit. Third, the reference by ‘Lover of Al-Quds’ to her mission in terms of ‘we’ denotes the sense of martyrdom being the joint responsibility of every Muslim. In this sense, the militant pursuit of self-immolation is portrayed as an inclusive movement for every woman.

The militant representation of the female warrior is purported, such as Hamas’ description of al-Najjar, by Abd Al-Latif Al-Qanu:

The woman revolutionary acted like a man, put an explosive belt around her waist, and advanced towards a group of soldiers ... (Memri, no. 1383, 2006)

This framing arguably dissolves traditional gender disparities, whereby the female martyr is likened to her male counterpart. Here, the female martyr is de-gendered, like an androgynous warrior of the Muslim army in battle. The movement of the Muslim army, comprised of both male and female Muslims, striving in a Militant pursuit of *jihad*, conveys an innovative development.

This chapter has presented the main findings of the research on modern religious discourse on female suicide terrorism. The data indicates the framing of the female martyr in modern radical discourse as a legitimate fighter of *jihad* and a Muslim of high regard. This research will now conclude with a discussion on these findings and suggestions for future research.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

This research analysed classic and modern references to women and their role in war and martyrdom, in accordance with Islam. It can be concluded the ideas and values on female martyrdom vary between medieval and modern discourse. Medieval definitions of Muslim women's duties in war are inconsistent and do not align with a specific role of female martyrdom. Modern interpretations of women's involvement in fighting and martyrdom also convey incoherence in their presentation, specific to the framing of the female martyr in radical Islamic discourse. Framing of the female martyr, in terms of devotion, heroism and militancy, was evident in the public discourse following the outset of Palestinian female suicide bomb attacks, by the second Intifada. This modern conception of female martyrdom, which incorporates historical, legal and religious representations of women in war and fighting, provides a particular interpretation of the cultural value of Muslim woman's role in Islamic war. Modern discourse on Muslim women, in terms of fighting and martyrdom, presented a distinct gendered discussion, whereby clear references to women and men, vis-à-vis their roles in war, were clear. Such clear gendered affirmations, in terms of duties to Islam, were not as apparent in the classic discussion on fighting and martyrdom.

This research provides a case study of how ideas are transformed into religious dialogue and, in doing so, offers the cultural context for appreciating how female martyrdom may be considered by certain individuals. Such research enables one to gain insight into cultural discussions on female martyrdom, as defined by Islamic notions, which in turn can assist our understanding of the dynamics behind the trend in female suicide terrorism in societies largely charged by radical belief systems. Furthermore, the research presents the dialogue and legitimatisation associated with such terrorism, as considered in the public realm. Given the departure from the classic position on war and martyrdom, the pursuit of innovative theoretical positions should be considered. The reason for the existence of modern affirmations on female martyrdom by radical figures is, arguably, located in their need to justify the practice of certain military tactics, i.e.

suicide bomb attacks. This dynamic needs further consideration in research. In circumstances when legitimisation for self-immolation is successfully denoted as inherently Islamic in nature, discussions on religious discourse, along with alternate factors, such as public awareness, political support, become particularly crucial. Appreciation for the linguistic tones shaping radical Islamic concepts plays a crucial role in the broader attempt to understanding the dynamics driving the modern trend of female suicide bomb attacks. The prevalence of public discourse, which evokes a sense of morality with violence and terror, raises both security and social discussion points for anti-terrorism circles. These policy implications of this research will now be discussed.

*Policy Implications: Recommendations*

Based on the present research findings and general observations, I propose the following social and security policy recommendations so as to enlighten future anti-terrorism research.

- Social policy units should consider the influence of the circulation of religious dialogue, as pertaining to militant activity, in television, radio and on the internet. Such research requires appreciation for the degree that such information influences public perceptions of terrorism. Appreciation for this dynamic is especially crucial in regions where terrorist recruitment is evident and freedom of information is highly restricted.
- In light of this research, anti-terrorist circles are required, arguably, to further consider the role of religious discourse in the dynamics of female suicide terrorism. Such research should consider the shaping and influence of religious legitimisation towards military action.

- Anti-terrorist research can apply this research towards understanding other cases of religious terrorism, such as those more recent cases of Islamic terrorism, in which female suicide terrorism has become particularly prevalent.<sup>23</sup>

To end, given the ever rising fears over terrorism activity, the prevalence and nature of religious discourse in Palestinian territory increasingly raises concern. Ziyad Abu Al-Hijaa, in the Gaza-published Fatah Supreme Council's Information and Cultural Bureau paper 'Al-Karama', considers the necessary attention required of Palestinian culture, especially those facets that provide groups for religiously-inspired terrorist discourse. Such cultural aspects include the nature of Islamic poetry, which romanticize the practice of martyrdom that exists in Palestinian society:

The sages of Islam and particularly the sages of Palestine must clarify to all Islam's position regarding the martyrdom operations and the most recent operation in particular...

The Palestinian intellectuals, particularly the shapers of public opinion among them, must note the flaw in Palestinian popular culture... Who has forgotten the poems published decades ago, such as: 'Whet my bones, whet them like swords;' 'Bring the Shahid to his mother's and father's rejoicing;' 'Oh mother, ululate with joy [at your son's death as a Shahid],' and dozens of similar odes and poems. Who can believe that a father or mother rejoices at the martyrdom of their son? Allah's Messenger wept over the death of his son Ibrahim, and did not rejoice over the martyrdom of his cousin Ja'far but ordered his family comforted...

May Allah have mercy on the heroine Shahida, the victim of the Zionist occupation and the victim of a political ideology that excessively despises the humanity and the supreme cultural values of the Palestinian people, headed by the

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<sup>23</sup> The modern trend in female suicide terrorism is more recently influenced by the notable presence of female suicide bombers in Iraq and the involvement by Muslims and Muslim-converts from western countries (see BBC News, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c; Dickey, 2005). These new instances continue to influence the face of terrorism and readdress existing theories on suicide terrorism

values of Islamic Shari'a [law] that requires the woman to breastfeed her little children. Oh sages, raise your voices! Oh intellectual writers, raise your voices! There can be no more silence. These people must be prevented from tunneling under their own feet on the deck of a ship struck by waves.

In order that anti and counter-terrorist circles fully appreciate and effectively deal with the threat of suicide terrorism, the intricate dynamics influencing the cultivation of ideas and values, which influence cultural acceptance of martyrdom, requires further attention.

## Appendices

### Appendix A

The following is a list of known Palestinian female suicide bomb attacks since 2002.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Date of Attack</i>	<i>Group Affiliation</i>
Wafa Idris	January 27, 2002	Fatah, Tanzim
Darin Abu-Aisha	February 27, 2002	
Ayat Muhammad al-'Akhras	March 29, 2002	Fatah, Tanzim
Andalib Suleiman	April 12, 2002	Fatah, Tanzim
Hanadi Jaradat	October 4, 2003	'Jerusalem Battalions', Islamic Jihad
Reem Raiyshi	January 14, 2004	Hamas and Fatah's al-Aqsa Martyrs' brigade
Mirfat Amin Mas'oud	November 6, 2006	Palestinian Islamic Jihad
Fatma Omar al-Najar	November 23, 2006	Hamas

(Sources: Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2002; Figchel, 2003; Levy-Barzilai, 2003; Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2003a, 2003b; Victor, 2003; BBC News, 2004a; Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005; Schweitzer, 2006; Associated Press, 2006; Katz, 2007; Intelligence & Information Center, 2008).

### Appendix B



(Source: Intelligence & Information Center, 2008)

**Appendix C**



(Source: Memri, no. 2034, 2008)

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