

## Is Terrorism a Useful Term in Understanding the Middle East and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict?

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The Middle East is commonly considered a region especially vulnerable to terrorism and the chief exporter of terrorism to other parts of the world. Some have argued that Islam, unlike Christianity or Judaism, has a special propensity to violence against nonbelievers. Moreover, Israel, the United States, and “the West” are often portrayed as the primary victims of terrorism emanating from the Middle East. Former Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and several of the contributors to his edited volume, *Terrorism: How the West Can Win*—a text that captures the ethos of the first American “war on terrorism” proclaimed by Ronald Reagan—advance these propositions.

According to the “Jerusalem definition” espoused by Netanyahu, “terrorism is the deliberate and systematic murder, maiming, and menacing of the innocent to inspire fear for political ends.”<sup>1</sup> While this definition begs the questions of who is innocent and what constitutes innocence in conflictual situations, it is provisionally serviceable if applied to both states and nonstate actors, which Netanyahu does not do. This condition offers the only possibility of rescuing the term *terrorism* from its predominantly propagandistic usage in current political discourse. In that case, terrorism has been going on in the Middle East throughout the modern era.

Politically motivated violence directed against civilian populations in the Middle East can be classified into eight types. The first consists of atrocities com-

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mitted by European states in the course of imperial expeditions. For example, the French conquest of Algeria (1830–47) featured burning civilians alive in caves.<sup>2</sup> The adventures of the Egyptian pasha Mehmed Ali in Sudan and Syria also involved violent excesses against noncombatants. A second type comprises atrocities committed in the course of repressing anticolonial rebellions, such as the French torture of combatants of the National Liberation Front (NLF) during the Algerian war of independence (1954–62) and the British use of poison gas against Iraqi rebels in 1920.<sup>3</sup> A third type consists of riots against European settler populations, such as those against Europeans in Alexandria in 1882, which served as the pretext for a British occupation that lasted until 1956, and the clashes between Arabs and Zionists in Palestine during the period of British colonial rule (1917–48). Organized violence by nationalist politico-military organizations directed at either civilian settlers or civilians in the apparatus of colonial rule, such as the urban terror during the Battle of Algiers (1956–57) and of both Jewish and Arab groups in British-ruled Palestine, constitute a fourth category. A fifth type is composed of counterattacks by colonial settlers, such as the actions of the Algerian Secret Army Organization during the war of independence and attacks on Palestinians by Zionist militias before 1948 and by militant Israeli settlers in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, especially since the 1980s. A sixth type includes acts of states against foreign enemies, such as the bombing campaign in Egypt organized by Israeli military intelligence in 1954, or Israel's hijacking of a Syrian civilian airliner in 1954 in order to obtain hostages to trade for captured spies. A seventh category consists of acts of states against those perceived as internal enemies, such as the mass murder of Ottoman Armenians in 1915–16, Israel's massacre of forty-eight Arab citizens at the village Kafr Qasim on the eve of its attack against Egypt on October 29, 1956, Syria's devastation of Hama in 1982 in response to an Islamic insurgency, Iraq's gassing of its Kurdish citizens at Halabja in 1987, and Turkey's repression of its Kurdish minority during most of the twentieth century. Finally, in the last two or three decades, the United States and European states have been targeted by Arab nationalists or political Islamists opposed to the role of the United States and Europe in the Middle East. In the same period, Islamist radicals have assassinated political figures, civilians, and Europeans in Egypt, while the state apparatus has responded with massive violations of civil and human rights, including the torture of suspected militants.<sup>4</sup> In Algeria a civil war between Islamists and the state, in which both sides have committed many massacres of civilians, has been going on since 1992, when the regime cancelled a parliamentary election about to bring the Islamists to power.

Algeria and Palestine/Israel were the most prominent locales of politically motivated violence against civilians in the Middle East until relatively recently. This is linked to their histories as the sites of the most extensive European colonial settlement in the region. Despite the significant role of Islam in mobilizing resistance

to European settlement in both cases, the argument that this resulted from a general Islamic propensity for violence has emerged only recently. That contention is a product of postcolonial anxieties about U.S. global supremacy and the regional dominance of the U.S.-Israeli alliance in the Middle East.

The remainder of this essay focuses on the case of Palestine/Israel because it is so vexatious, so commonly considered beyond understanding, and because support for Israel is among the motives of many of those who have targeted the United States in the most recent period. In Palestine/Israel, both Arabs and Jews have employed several types of violence against civilians. Passing from abstract categorization to actual historical events, it becomes difficult, and perhaps not very useful, to draw sharp distinctions among the categories. It is more meaningful to understand how the contending parties perceive specific instances and how they are historically linked.

The 1929 Wailing Wall episode is an example of violent riots, although the victims were not primarily European Jewish settlers. During the 1920s, Zionists tried to buy the Wailing Wall—the retaining wall of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, considered the most sacred site in the Jewish faith. Muslims asserted their traditional rights to the site, which also forms part of the plaza known as the Noble Sanctuary (the Temple Mount in the Jewish tradition) from which Muhammad ascended to heaven in the Muslim tradition. On Yom Kippur 1928, Jews erected a screen to separate male and female worshippers at the site—a violation of the religious status quo established during four hundred years of Ottoman rule. The British removed the screen, but Muslim leaders began to protest that Jews had designs on the site. The next year, on August 15, 1929, just before the Jewish high holidays, Betar—the youth organization of the Revisionist Zionist Organization (forerunner of today's Likud)—held a demonstration at the Wailing Wall, raised a Zionist flag, and sung Hatikvah (today the flag and national anthem of Israel). Believing that the Jews were trying to take over the Wailing Wall, Muslims began to attack Jews in Jerusalem on August 23. During the following week, rioting spread to other towns. The Jews of Hebron and Safed, most of them orthodox anti-Zionists indigenous to Palestine, suffered the greatest losses—about 100 dead out of a total of 133 killed and nearly 400 wounded. The Jewish community commonly described the riots as pogroms—the word used for state-sponsored anti-Semitic assaults in the Russian Empire.<sup>5</sup> The survivors of the Hebron massacre eventually fled to Jerusalem.

The 1929 riots formed the backdrop to the Jewish resettlement of Hebron after its occupation by Israel in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. In 1968, eighty Jews led by the militant religio-nationalist rabbi, Moshe Levinger, rented rooms in a hotel in Hebron to celebrate Passover and then decided to remain. The Israeli government eventually allowed them to establish a new all-Jewish suburb, Kiryat Arba (the biblical name of Hebron), now one of the largest settlements on the West Bank. In 1979,

women from Kiryat Arba led by Miriam Levinger, declaring that they were reclaiming Jewish property abandoned in 1929, moved into the former Hadassah clinic in the center of Hebron amidst an Arab population of about 100,000. The government allowed them to remain; today some four hundred Jews live in downtown Hebron.

The settlement of Jews in the midst of what was then an all-Arab town led to intensified clashes between the two communities. Palestinians shot six Jewish religious seminary students dead in 1980 and stabbed another to death in 1983. In retaliation, Rabbi Levinger's followers in Kiryat Arba formed what the Israeli media called an "underground" organization (the word *terrorist* was generally avoided). They plotted, with varying degrees of success, to blow up the Dome of the Rock, to assassinate three Palestinian mayors, to shoot up the Hebron Islamic College (their most successful operation, in which three students were killed), and to blow up several Arab-owned buses. In 1985, eighteen underground members were convicted for planning or participating in these acts. Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir called them "excellent people who made a mistake" and advocated clemency.<sup>6</sup> They were all released by the early 1990s, although some had received life sentences. From 1980 to 1984, the Israeli press reported over 380 armed attacks by Jewish settlers in which 23 Palestinians were killed, 191 wounded, and 38 abducted.<sup>7</sup> In 1983, Israel's assistant attorney general resigned to protest the government's failure to investigate this vigilante violence.<sup>8</sup>

Hebron and Kiryat Arba constitute centers for the most militant Jewish settlers advocating the expulsion ("transfer" in polite parlance) of the Palestinian Arab population from the West Bank. The Kach (meaning "thus") organization, founded by Rabbi Meir Kahane, has many supporters there. Among them was Barukh Goldstein, an orthodox Jew and physician from Brooklyn who settled in Kiryat Arba in 1983. On February 25, 1994, wearing his uniform identifying him as a captain in the Israeli army reserves, Goldstein entered the Cave of the Patriarchs/Ibrahimi Mosque (the burial site of Abraham in the Jewish and Muslim traditions, as well as the other biblical patriarchs and matriarchs in the Jewish tradition) and gunned down twenty-nine Muslim worshipers in the midst of Friday prayer. The surviving worshipers killed Goldstein after his shooting spree.

Goldstein's supporters published a memorial volume with an intentionally ambiguous title: *Blessed is the Man/Barukh, the Man [Barukh ha-gever]*.<sup>9</sup> A first printing of 10,000 copies sold out quickly. A group of high school girls formed a fan club. Residents of Kiryat Arba established a memorial shrine to Goldstein in Meir Kahane Park at the entrance to the town. It became a pilgrimage site for militant settlers. The inscription on the tomb reads: "Here lies the saint, Dr. Barukh Kappel Goldstein, blessed be the memory of the righteous and holy man, may the Lord avenge his blood, who devoted his soul to the Jews, Jewish religion and Jewish land. His hands are innocent and his heart is pure. He was killed as a martyr of God on the

14th of Adar, Purim, in the year 5754.” In June 1998, the Knesset enacted legislation requiring removal of the shrine. Legal appeals delayed implementation until December 1999. The tomb and its inscription remain in place.

Goldstein had hoped to derail the Oslo peace process that had begun several months before. To avenge Goldstein’s act, the ’Izz al-Din al-Qassam brigades of Hamas launched the first suicide bombings in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This moment is a good place to search for the beginnings of the failure of the Oslo process. Thus, right-wing Zionists’ perceptions of the “pogrom” against the Jewish community of Hebron in 1929 have been used to justify renewed settlement, expropriation, and repeated provocative violent attacks on the Arab community of Hebron.

A similar trajectory begins with the 1936–39 Arab revolt. On April 15, 1936, surviving members of a short-lived guerilla movement led by Sheikh ’Izz al-Din al-Qassam ambushed a caravan of vehicles and killed two Jews in the course of a robbery to fund their activities. The next day, dissidents of the labor Zionist militia, the Haganah (defense), retaliated by killing two Arabs. Mourners at the funeral of one of the Jews in Tel Aviv called for revenge. Several Arabs were badly beaten by Jewish rioters that day and the next. On April 19, responding to false rumors that Arabs had been killed in Tel Aviv, Arabs assaulted and killed nine Jews in Jaffa. Several days later, the Arab Higher Committee was established under the leadership of urban elites, and an Arab general strike was proclaimed, aiming to bring an end to British rule and stop Zionist immigration and settlement. Simultaneously, bands of peasant guerillas attacked Jewish settlements and British policemen and civil administrators.

The assassination of Lewis Andrews, district commissioner of the Galilee, in July 1937, marked a new stage in the revolt. In addition to its anti-British and anti-Zionist aspects, the revolt adopted a strong antilandlord and antielite character. Peasant guerillas controlling much of the Galilee and the hill country around Nablus and Jenin imposed a moratorium on debts, canceled rents on urban apartments, and seized and redistributed the property of wealthy urbanites. The British high commissioner concluded that “something like a social revolution on a small scale is beginning.”<sup>10</sup>

The British enlisted the assistance of the Zionist settlers to defeat the Arab revolt. The labor Zionists welcomed the opportunity to gain access to arms and training. Officially, the Haganah advocated passive defense of Jewish settlements and nonretaliation (*havlagah*, or self-restraint). However, its commander, Yitzhak Sadeh, and Palestinian-born Jewish youth were anxious to adopt more aggressive, preemptive tactics. Captain Orde Wingate, a Bible-quoting, British counterinsurgency expert who became an enthusiastic partisan of the Zionist cause, provided the training and encouragement to implement the change. The Special Night Squads Wingate formed became the core of the kibbutz-based elite unit of the Haganah, the Palmah (strike force).

These new tactics proved still too moderate for some Haganah members who broke away in 1937 and established the National Military Organization (Irgun Tzva'i Le'umi-Etzel), which became the armed wing of revisionist Zionism. The Etzel practiced random retaliation for attacks on Jews, killing over three hundred Arab civilians between 1937 and 1939. It bombed and shot into Arab coffeehouses, restaurants, markets, and buses. In July 1938, Etzel members rolled an oil drum laden with explosives into the Arab marketplace in Haifa, killing thirty-five men, women, and children. The future first prime minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, considered this act so heinous that he thought it likely to have been committed by Nazi agents.<sup>11</sup> Menachem Begin commanded the Etzel from shortly after his arrival in Palestine in 1942 until it was disbanded during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. This made him a political pariah until he joined the Israeli cabinet on the eve of the 1967 war; ten years later he became prime minister.

While nearly all Zionists supported the British war effort against Nazi Germany, one small group, Fighters for the Freedom of Israel (Lohamei Herut Yisra'el-Lehi), continued to fight to drive the British from Palestine and went so far as to propose an alliance with fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.<sup>12</sup> From 1943 to 1948, Lehi was led by a triumvirate whose best-known member was its operations chief, future Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir. Lehi's more notorious operations included the assassination of the British minister resident in the Middle East, Lord Moyne, in Cairo in November 1944, and the assassination of the UN mediator dispatched to Palestine during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Count Folke Bernadotte, in September 1948.

After World War II, both the Etzel and Lehi turned their guns against the British, assassinating soldiers and policemen and sabotaging British installations. The British, most labor Zionists, and much of international opinion regarded these groups as terrorists. Ben-Gurion and other labor Zionists referred to the Etzel as Jewish Nazis and compared Begin to Hitler.<sup>13</sup>

Nonetheless, under pressure from the Palmah, Ben-Gurion agreed to form a united Hebrew Resistance Movement, consisting of the Haganah, Etzel, and Lehi, in October 1945. The best-known exploit of the Hebrew Resistance was the bombing of the King David Hotel, the seat of the British civil administration, in Jerusalem in July 1946, killing 91 Arabs, Jews, and British. Etzel carried out the operation, though the Haganah had approved it in advance. But the labor Zionist leadership could not tolerate this level of innocent casualties and condemned the operation after its execution. The united resistance came to an end, while the Etzel and Lehi continued to attack the British.

The latter two groups carried out the most infamous atrocity of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War—the massacre at the village of Dir Yasin near Jerusalem on April 9–10, 1948. Although the village honored its truce pact with the Zionists, the

Haganah commander of Jerusalem gave the Etzel and Lehi permission to attack it. After the battle, the Jewish victors shot men, women, children, and the elderly at point-blank inside their homes or as they fled. Twenty-five Arab survivors were paraded through Jerusalem and then executed in a quarry outside Dir Yasin. Altogether about 120 residents of Dir Yasin were killed. Dir Yasin stands as the best-known war crime by Zionist forces during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, in part because it was committed by opponents of the labor Zionists, who publicized it to politically discredit the perpetrators. Yet labor Zionist militias and the Israeli army committed several less-known massacres.<sup>14</sup>

Were the Wailing Wall riots of 1929 pogroms? Were the attacks on Jews in 1929 and during the Arab Revolt of 1936–39 acts of terror? Do civilian deaths discredit the nationalist, anticolonial, and antilandlord aspects of the movements? Is it important to determine “who fired the first shot”? Can colonial settlement be peaceful? Traditional Zionist historiography answers these questions in the affirmative, whereas Palestinian nationalist historiography answers in the negative, arguing that colonial settlement is inherently an act of aggression.

As prime ministers of Israel, Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir vociferously condemned attacks on the country by armed groups of the Palestine Liberation Organization as terrorism. Comparing those condemnations with definitions of terrorism Begin and Shamir offered in relation to Jewish actions demonstrates that they regarded terrorism as a political and moral evaluation rather than an analytical classification. Begin’s memoir of the struggle to expel the British from Palestine after World War II explains:

Our enemies called us terrorists. . . . And yet we were not terrorists. The original Latin word “terror” means fear. If I am not mistaken the term “terror” became current in political terminology during the French Revolution. The revolutionaries began cutting off heads with the guillotine in order to instill fear. Thenceforward the word “terror” came to define acts of revolutionaries or counter-revolutionaries, of fighters for freedom and oppressors. It all depends on who uses the term. It frequently happens that it is used by both sides in their mutual exchange of compliments.

The historical and linguistic origins of the political term “terror” prove it cannot be applied to a revolutionary war of liberation. A revolution may give birth to what we call “terror” as happened in France. Terror may sometimes be its herald, as what happened in Russia. But the revolution itself is not terror, and terror is not the revolution. A revolution, or a revolutionary war, does not aim at instilling fear. Its object is to overthrow a regime and to set up a new regime in its place. In a revolutionary war both sides use force. Tyranny is armed. Otherwise it would be liquidated overnight. Fighters for freedom must arm; otherwise they would be crushed overnight. Certainly the use of force also awakens fear.

Tyrannous rulers begin to fear for their positions or their lives, or both. And consequently they begin to try to sow fear among those they rule. But the instilling of fear is not an aim in itself. The sole aim on the one side is the overthrow of armed tyranny; on the other it is the perpetuation of that tyranny.<sup>15</sup>

Shamir similarly argues that Lehi's assassinations of British officials, policemen, and soldiers were legitimate.

There are those who say that to kill Martin [a British sergeant] is terrorism, but to attack an army camp is guerrilla warfare and to bomb civilians is professional warfare. But I think it is the same from the moral point of view. Is it better to drop an atomic bomb on a city than to kill a handful of persons? I don't think so. But nobody says that President Truman was a terrorist. All the men we went for individually—Wilkin, Martin, MacMichael and others—were personally interested in succeeding in the fight against us.

So it was more efficient and more moral to go for selected targets. In any case, it was the only way we could operate, because we were so small. For us it was not a question of the professional honour [*sic*] of a soldier, it was the question of an idea, an aim that had to be achieved. We were aiming at a political goal. There are many examples of what we did to be found in the Bible—Gideon and Samson, for instance. This had an influence on our thinking. And we also learned from the history of other peoples who fought for their freedom—the Russian and Irish revolutionaries, Garibaldi and Tito.<sup>16</sup>

Begin and Shamir deemed actions the British and the labor Zionists considered terrorism as legitimate because their goal was to establish a Jewish state in Palestine. It would seem to follow logically that no armed actions of the indigenous Arab population to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state or to establish a Palestinian state should be designated as terrorism. However, in an interview on the fiftieth anniversary of Lehi, Shamir argued that Jews could employ terrorism because “stateless and persecuted [they] had no choice.” But it was impermissible for the Palestinians because they “are fighting for a land that is not theirs. This is the land of the people of Israel.”<sup>17</sup>

Aren't Begin and Shamir arguing, after all, that “one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter”? Benjamin Netanyahu employed the same logic as he sought to insinuate Israel into privileged position in Ronald Reagan's “war on terrorism.” President Reagan came into office repudiating the commitment to a human rights-focused foreign policy previously proclaimed by Jimmy Carter. Public opinion was ripe for this shift because following the 1979 Iranian revolution and Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, radical Islamic forces targeted U.S. citizens. The American propensity for historical amnesia led many to believe that there was no reason for these attacks.



In November 1979, the U.S. embassy in Tehran was seized, and a protracted hostage crisis ensued. President Carter was asked in a press conference if the CIA's 1953 coup in Iran, restoring the shah of Iran to power after he had fled the country, might have something to do with arousing the anti-American sentiment that led to these events. Carter replied that this was "ancient history" and that it was not "appropriate or helpful" to discuss it.<sup>18</sup>

In Lebanon, Israel's invasion led to active U.S. intervention in the civil war that had been underway since 1975, supporting Israel and its Maronite allies. Consequently, the American embassy in Beirut was car-bombed in April 1983, killing sixty-three, including seventeen Americans. Another car bomb at the marine barracks in Beirut in October killed 241 marines, the largest number of casualties suffered by U.S. armed forces since the Vietnam War. These attacks were carried out by Hezbollah, whose formation Iranian revolutionary guards arriving in Lebanon after Israel's invasion encouraged. Thus, Israel's invasion of Lebanon spurred the radicalization of the Shia community.

One purpose of Netanyahu's *Terrorism: How the West Can Win* and the conference from which it emanated was to align the United States more closely with Israel's war against Palestinian nationalism by demonizing Arabs and Muslims and arguing that the two principal sources of terrorism in the twentieth century—"communist totalitarianism and Islamic (and Arab) radicalism" were linked. Hence the struggle against terrorism constituted an aspect of the global cold war.<sup>19</sup> Political figures, scholars, and pundits embracing this perspective and committed to maintaining Israel as the principal U.S. ally in the Middle East attended the conference and contributed to the volume.

Given the thinly disguised political purpose of Netanyahu's book, it is not surprising that it never mentions the single largest massacre of noncombatant civilians perpetrated in the Middle East during the 1980s—a spree of rape, torture, and murder of Palestinians at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps near Beirut, carried out by Maronite Christian Phalangists commanded by Elie Hobeika under the eyes of Israeli troops on September 16–18, 1982.

In February 1983, an Israeli commission of inquiry investigated the massacre. Among its more disturbing findings was that on the evening of September 16, an Israeli officer at the forward command post heard a Phalangist receive a radio request for orders on what to do with fifty women and children under detention in the camps. "This is the last time you're going to ask me a question like that, you know exactly what to do," replied Hobeika. The Israeli officer who overheard this exchange "understood that what was involved was the murder of the women and children."<sup>20</sup> The commission found eight Israeli political and military leaders guilty of "indirect responsibility" for the Sabra and Shatila massacre. Minister of Defense Ariel Sharon was determined to bear "personal responsibility . . . it is fitting that [he] draw the

appropriate personal conclusions . . . and if necessary that the Prime Minister consider whether he should exercise his authority . . . according to which the Prime Minister may . . . remove a minister from office.” Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir was reprimanded for failing to pass on information given to him that a massacre was going on, but the commission did not call for his resignation. The commission harshly condemned the chief of staff Rafael Eitan, but did not call for his resignation either, as he was about to retire. It called for the immediate dismissal of the director of military intelligence, Yehoshua Saguy, and criticized Amir Drori, the head of the Northern Command, for his lack of resolve in preventing the massacres. General Amos Yaron, the Israeli commander in Beirut, was censured for failing to act immediately when he first heard of the atrocity reports. The commission recommended relieving him of field duty for three years. The head of civilian intelligence, the Mossad, was criticized for not emphasizing his awareness of the unreliability of the Phalangists, but no action was recommended.<sup>21</sup>

Despite these findings, most of the men named continued to have successful careers. Begin remained as prime minister until he voluntarily resigned. In 1983, Shamir replaced him—and remained in power until 1992. Sharon lost his ministry but became minister of infrastructure under prime minister Netanyahu in 2001. Eitan founded a political party that openly advocated “transferring” the Palestinians, then became minister of agriculture and environment in Netanyahu’s government. Yaron became commander of the army’s manpower branch and was promoted to major general; in 1986 he was appointed military attaché to the United States. He served as director-general of the ministry of defense under prime minister Ehud Barak. *New York Times* correspondent Thomas Friedman, who visited the scene after the massacre, commented, “The Israelis knew just what they were doing when they let the Phalangists into those camps. . . . An investigation which results in such ‘punishments’ is not an investigation that can be taken seriously.”<sup>22</sup>

On June 18, 2001, twenty-three survivors of the Sabra and Shatila massacre brought charges against Ariel Sharon in a Belgian court for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. Elie Hobeika agreed to testify in the case, claiming that his testimony would clear his own name while establishing Sharon’s guilt. Hobeika was assassinated in Beirut on January 24, 2002, two days after he met with Belgian senators and reconfirmed his willingness to testify. His assailants have not been identified.

Since becoming prime minister in January 2001, Sharon has spoken relentlessly about Israel’s need to stamp out Palestinian terror. The military actions launched to accomplish this purpose have taken the lives of over 1,600 Palestinians, the great majority of them unarmed civilians. After September 11, 2001, Sharon fully embraced the rhetoric of President Bush, seeking to become a full partner in the “second war on terrorism”—a reprise of Netanyahu’s strategy in the 1980s.

Can the term *terrorism* be rescued from its imbrication in such a web of propaganda? Is it worth doing so? While I am not absolutely opposed to using the term, it does not seem very useful in furthering understanding of the events discussed here.

The Bush administration's adoption of Ariel Sharon's specious argument that Yāsir 'Arafāt and Osama bin Laden are equivalents demonstrates how easily the term can be abused to obscure the disparate histories of events that appear superficially similar. Palestinian extremists have indeed carried out horrific attacks on Israeli civilians. But that is the only similarity between the Palestinian intifada that has been going on since September 2000 and al-Qaeda's attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001.

The principal issue in Israel and Palestine is not terrorism in the abstract, but the struggle of the Palestinian people against Israeli occupation and Israel's refusal to permit the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state.<sup>23</sup> Sharon, with his record of war crimes and atrocities stretching back to 1953, visited the Temple Mount in Jerusalem on September 28 "to show the Temple Mount is ours"—a provocation echoing the Betar demonstration near the same spot in 1929.<sup>24</sup> Sharon's visit and the Israeli security forces' firing on Palestinian stone-throwers and other protestors the next day, killing four and wounding two hundred, sparked the Palestinian uprising, which has continued since.<sup>25</sup>

Attacking civilians in any conflict is morally indefensible and politically counterproductive, but the case of settler colonialism proves more complex than most. Settlers typically claim that they only desire to live in peace. Colonial settlement involves the dispossession and disenfranchisement of indigenous populations, even when it does not entail direct violence. Hence attacks on civilians are a common feature of struggles against settler colonialism—in North America, Northern Ireland, Algeria, Kenya, and even South Africa. Ben-Gurion did not think that the acts of those he considered "Jewish Nazis" invalidated the political claims of Zionism. The reprehensible attacks on civilians by Palestinian extremists should not annul the national rights of the Palestinian people.

### Notes

1. Quoted in Benjamin Netanyahu, ed., *Terrorism: How the West Can Win* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1986), 9.
2. Mahfoud Bennoune, *The Making of Contemporary Algeria, 1830–1987* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 41.
3. Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. 4 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), 810, and Gilbert, *Companion to Volume IV, Part 2* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), 1190; Charles Townshend, *Britain's Civil Wars: Counterinsurgency in the Twentieth Century* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), 98.

4. Amnesty International, *Egypt: Violations of Human Rights* (London: Amnesty International, 1983); Middle East Watch, *Behind Closed Doors: Torture and Detention in Egypt* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1992); Eberhard Kienle, "More Than a Response to Islamism: The Political Deliberalization of Egypt in the 1990s," *Middle East Journal* 52.2 (1998): 219–35.
5. Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881–1948* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 176–77; Yehoshua Porath, a leading Israeli historian of this period, uses the same word to describe them in *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1918–1929* (London: Cass, 1974), 269.
6. Robert I. Friedman, *Zealots for Zion: Inside Israel's West Bank Settlement Movement* (New York: Random House, 1992), 23–32.
7. Ian S. Lustick, *For the Land and the Lord* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1988), 66.
8. Yehudit Karp, *The Karp Report: Investigation of Suspicions against Israelis in Judea and Samaria* (Jerusalem: Israeli Government, 1984).
9. Mikha'el Ben Horin, ed., *Barukh ha-gever: Sefer zikaron la-kadosh Dr. Barukh Goldshtain H.y.d.* (Jerusalem: Shalom 'al Yisra'el, 5755 [1995]).
10. Quoted in Yehoshua Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement: From Riots to Rebellion, 1929–1939* (London: Cass, 1977), 269.
11. Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs under the British Mandate* (New York: Metropolitan, 2000), 386.
12. Lenni Brenner, *The Iron Wall: Zionist Revisionism from Jabotinsky to Shamir* (London: Zed, 1984), 194–97.
13. Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*, 471–72.
14. Many of them are discussed in Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Morris has announced that a revised edition will contain evidence of even more massacres.
15. Menachem Begin, *The Revolt* (New York: Dell, 1977), 100–101.
16. Quoted in Nicholas Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle: The Struggle between the British, the Jews, and the Arabs, 1935–48* (London: Deutsch, 1979), 277–78.
17. Associated Press dispatch, *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 5, 1991.
18. *New York Times*, February 14, 1980.
19. Benjamin Netanyahu, "Defining Terrorism," in Netanyahu, *Terrorism*, 11–12.
20. *The Beirut Massacre: The Complete Kahan Commission Report* (New York: Karz-Cohl, 1983), 22.
21. *Ibid.*, 66–96, 104–5.
22. Thomas L. Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1989), 164–65.
23. This contention can be verified by reference to the maps found at [www.gush-shalom.org](http://www.gush-shalom.org) and [www.fmep.org](http://www.fmep.org).
24. The quote is from an Agence France Presse dispatch, Jerusalem, September 30, 2000. For a summary of Sharon's career with bibliographical references, see [www.electronicintifada.net/forreference/keyfigures/sharon.html](http://www.electronicintifada.net/forreference/keyfigures/sharon.html).
25. For a report of the events of September 29, 2000, see B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, *Events on the Temple Mount—29 September 2000*, available at [www.btselem.org/English/Publications/Full\\_Text/Temple\\_Mount\\_2000/Temple\\_Mount\\_2000\\_eng.asp](http://www.btselem.org/English/Publications/Full_Text/Temple_Mount_2000/Temple_Mount_2000_eng.asp).