Constructing "Arab Terrorism"—The Slow Emergence of Terrorism Discourse in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s

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ABSTRACT: This article traces the beginnings of the discourse on "Arab terrorism" in the U.S. after World War II. I argue that the discourse emerged slowly in the early 1970s, growing out of political concerns in the aftermath of the 1972 "Munich Massacre" as well as previous work by scholars on political violence. Prominent cultural products like Leon Uris' *Exodus* and Thomas Harris' *Black Sunday* contributed to the vilification of Arab populations in the Middle East and merged with these political and academic discourses to construct Arab aggression in terms of terrorism.

KEYWORDS: Terrorism; Middle East; United States; Terrorism Studies

Welcome to the Middle East

In the dramatic finale of Leon Uris' 1958 bestselling novel *Exodus*, Israeli hero and protagonist Ari Ben Canaan finally comes to his senses and realizes that beautiful American nurse Katherine "Kitty" Fremont is the love of his life, and confesses his deep feelings to her. But this declaration of love is political in a crucial way. Ari certainly loves Kitty and has finally admitted to it after much flirting, arguing, and misunderstanding—but his duty is first and foremost to his country, the newly founded State of Israel, which he must defend at all cost against the "evil" Arab nations preparing to attack it. Ari's dedication to his nation means that, "it may be years… it may be forever before I can ever again say that my need for you [Kitty] comes first, before all other things… before the needs of this country" (599). His selfless and noble patriotism impressed generations of American readers and ensured the novel's enduring success over the next decades.

More than that, the novel also forged a discursive bond between the United States and Israel based on constructed cultural and societal similarities. *Exodus* tells the story of the foundation of the Jewish State of Israel as an ideal democratic nation-state modeled after the United States against the backdrop of the highly romanticized and idealized love story between Ari Ben Canaan and Kitty Fremont. The novel goes to great lengths to stress the similarities between the young Israeli nation and the United States. The deep, passionate

love between Ari Ben Canaan and Kitty Fremont is the most obvious example here as it personifies the bond between the two nations. Moreover, the depiction of Israelis in the novel as strong, focused, tough, smart, and attractive while selflessly dedicated to (re)building their country solely through hard work and perseverance also touched upon the central American myth of the Frontier and the American West with which American audiences were familiar.[1] It invited the American public to see parallels between the narrative of American independence and the emerging Israeli one and to understand the Israeli nation as a "natural" ally in the Cold War which was gradually encroaching on the Middle East as well. Thus, as many critics have asserted, *Exodus* proved instrumental in the construction of what John F. Kennedy later termed "the special relationship" between the United States and Israel.[2]

Most importantly, however, the novel presented an image of the Middle East which would impact American audiences in the decades to come. *Exodus* helped to shape American understandings of the region and its populations to considerable extents and because of this any analysis concerned with American relations to the Middle East in the post-war decades should consider Uris' text. This influence becomes evident when considering the heavy criticism the novel has garnered over the years for its biased, negative portrayal of Arab populations which has been seen as furthering stereotypes about, and even hatred for, Arab populations in American readers.[3]

Infamously, the Arabs in *Exodus* are depicted as inferior, brutal, and evil, yet also backward, dirty, illiterate, and driven by their base sexual desires. Given the novel's stereotyped representation of Arabs, modern readers might expect that the novel describes the Arab villains of *Exodus* as terrorists out to harass and kill unsuspecting, unequivocally "good" Israelis. In 2016, this is certainly how Arab violence is predominantly characterized and what contemporary readers have come to expect. But a closer look at Leon Uris' influential novel

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[1] Recent revisionist scholarship has severely questioned the historical accuracy of these popularized and romanticized accounts of the (re)building of Israel after independence in 1948. See the works by Flapan as well as Shlaim.

[2] See for instance the works by Kaplan, Mart, and Silver.

[3] See for instance the works by Orfalea, Salt as well as Silver.

actually reveals a remarkable difference: The terrorists in the novel are not Arabs, but Jewish—to be more precise, it is the Jewish resistance fighters, the Maccabees, and *not* the Arab villains, who are openly called "terrorists" in the text.

In *Exodus*, the Maccabees constitute a splinter group which left the quasi-legitimate Jewish militia in Palestine, the Haganah, in disagreement over the Haganah's restraint towards the British occupying forces and the adversary Palestinian Arab population. The Maccabees are repeatedly called "terrorists" throughout the text (e.g. 314, 387, 402, 413), their actions are referred to as "terror tactics" (e.g. 269, 290) or "terrorist raids" which "rocked the Holy Land from one end to another" (359). In a dramatic moment, the Maccabees blow up the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, which the British forces use as main headquarters (304).[4] The Maccabees also target the British oil refinery in Haifa and assassinate the British general Haven-Hurst in retaliation for his increasingly severe measures to counter and curb Maccabee terrorism. Similarly, the Maccabees attack Arab marauding and murdering gangs who kill Jewish settlers, but their main focus lies on defeating the British occupying forces through "terrorist raids" (402) in order to usher in the long-promised Jewish state.

The heterodiegetic narrator's decision to characterize the Maccabees as terrorists is certainly unusual from our contemporary perspective and can even seem counterintuitive at first, given our familiarity with the notion of Arabs—and not Israelis—as terrorists. But this particular linguistic choice in *Exodus* does not constitute an aberration of any kind; rather, it mirrors the state of the American discourse on terrorism in the decades following World War II. In fact, the novel's usage of the term to describe Jewish violence suggests that "terrorism" did not yet have the fixed, rigid meaning to the extent it has today. In addition, the terrorism label still lacks the strong, negative moral condemnation it carries today. In the context of Jewish violence in Palestine, it even carries a decidedly positive connotation, suggesting that this kind of terrorism is acceptable because it is used to achieve a valuable, morally principled objective: Israeli statehood and freedom. This understanding of Jewish

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[4] This event echoes the real-life bombing of the King David Hotel by the Irgun on July 22, 1946 which killed 91 people and injured 46. For a discussion of the historical event, see Bell.

terrorism becomes apparent when taking a closer look at how the novel explains and justifies the Maccabees' actions.

The Maccabees form part of the Jewish community in Palestine/Israel and are thus, overall, positive figures in the text. Consequently, *Exodus* portrays them in an exceedingly favorable light. Maccabee actions against Arab gangs are depicted as brave and even honorable. Against their Arab nemesis, the Mufti of Jerusalem, for instance, "the Jewish terrorists fought with a fearsome conviction" (358), implying an awe-inspiring, almost religious dedication the cause. Similarly, the narrator reports that, "many of the Yishuv [the Jewish community in Palestine] were happy over the Maccabee actions" (274), which suggests that their "terror tactics" are accepted and supported by large segments of the Jewish community in the novel. It does not represent a fringe movement, giving the notion of Jewish terrorism a decidedly affirmative connotation.

In fact, Jewish terrorism is depicted as necessary means in the fight for Israeli freedom and statehood in the novel. Akiva, the leader of the Maccabees, is repeatedly allowed to explain his motivations in honorable phrases which stress his patriotism and masculine prowess: "We will achieve statehood the same way we redeemed this land… with our sweat and blood. I refuse to sit around and wait for British handouts" (270). The novel also references the Holocaust and familiar narratives of continued Jewish suffering in Europe, suggesting that the Jews have earned a *carte blanche* of sorts for their actions in Palestine since they have suffered unspeakably since the beginnings of history: "Nothing we do, right or wrong, can ever compare to what has been done to the Jewish people. Nothing the Maccabees do can even be considered an injustice in comparison to two thousand years of murder" (271). This kind of moralizing argument works to construct the Maccabees as brave fighters who finally stand up to and defend themselves against their oppressors. Calling them terrorists does not diminish their achievements, it rather enhances them, characterizing them as underdogs who challenge and fight the tyrannical British intruders to successfully claim their home-space.

Overall, *Exodus* makes use of the terrorism label in ways that show that the meaning of the term itself was neither fixed nor did it already carry the strong connotations of deprecation and defamation with which we are now so familiar. Likewise, any religious undertones are

absent from this conceptualization of "terrorism." Maccabee "terror tactics" are motivated out of political grievances; religion is not a factor. The notion of Jewish terrorism, then, remains a positive one, comprising bombings, sabotage, and targeted assassinations, against a clearly defined villain. Most important of all, however, as *Exodus* demonstrates, the discursive connection between Arab violence and terrorism did not yet exist, but was instead forged in the decades to come.

For the remainder of this article, I trace the origins of the American discourse on Arab terrorism. Taking *Exodus* as a starting point, I analyze how the discursive links between "the Arabs" and terrorism were constructed and why. To flesh out the connections between fictional representations and academic discourse, I juxtapose literary and academic texts. Focusing on the early beginnings of academic scholarship on terrorism I demonstrate that *Exodus*' conceptualization of terrorism as a necessary means for a just cause mirrors initial academic understandings of the phenomenon. I then take my argument one step further and include American political responses to Arab violence to show how literary, political, and academic discourses on the Middle East jointly relied on racist and stereotypical constructions of "the Arabs" to make sense of an unknown, foreign geographical region and its peoples. This Orientalist tradition in U.S. society would prepare the grounds for the discursive linking between notions of "evil Arabs" and terrorism. In a final step, I pinpoint this moment of change when Orientalist discourses about the Middle East merge with discourses on terrorism to construct the trope of "the Palestinian terrorist."

Early Beginnings—The Academic Terrorism Discourse in the 1950s and 1960s

Leon Uris' novel *Exodus* is not the only prominent text of the postwar decades to approach the topic of terrorism in an affirmative fashion. In the academic realm, Brian Crozier's seminal 1960 study *The Rebels* addresses the issue of terrorism from a similar angle. Crozier, an outspoken anticommunist journalist and intelligence expert with ties to British and American secret services, situates the concept of terrorism in the larger, superordinate fields of political violence and insurgency—respected and established areas of academic enquiry in the 1950s and 1960s. He defines terrorism as "the threat or the use of violence for political ends" (159) and he is also quick to stress that "[t]errorism is the natural weapon of men with small resources" and as such usually used in the first phase of what he understands as a

three-step process leading towards insurrection (127). According to Crozier, terrorism is usually followed by guerrilla warfare and full scale war and its main purpose is "to make life unendurable for the enemy" (160). What becomes apparent already is that the notion of terrorism is still rather vague in the early postwar decades and only broadly defined as a form of political violence. Crozier's and other early definitions[5] conceptualize terrorism as a strategy used by politically weaker groups whose overall activities belong in the realm of insurgency. As Crozier's approach showcases, terrorism is understood as only one tactic among many in the guerrilla handbook. Similarly, the term is used freely and frequently throughout his study and often employed synonymously with "rebellion" and "insurrection," further obscuring any definitional boundaries between all three concepts. Crozier only defines "terrorism" properly in the fourth part of his study, suggesting that the concept does not yet constitute a central aspect in investigations of political violence. The term clearly did not have the same ominous significance it has for readers today. Moreover, as the title of the study already indicates—*The Rebels* carries a noticeably romantic, favorable connotation—Crozier does not condemn terrorism per se. For him it is rather a means through which rebels can succeed in their goals, implying that rebels, much like the Maccabees in *Exodus*, fight for a just cause against oppressive forces, usually foreign colonial powers. Terrorism in *The Rebels* becomes a recognized, acknowledged tactic in the anti-colonial struggle, thus raising and enhancing its merit.

Crozier's approach to terrorism is best exemplified in the section containing more detailed case studies of historical rebellions. There, he discusses the actions of the Haganah, the Irgun Zvai Leumi, and the Stern Gang in Palestine/Israel as an example of "Terrorist Successes" where terrorism proved to be "a decisive instrument of rebellion" (182). He stresses that these Zionist groups enjoyed wide public support for their agenda: "Thus for nearly half the terrorist period, the terrorists enjoyed an alliance with the militant mass

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[5] Other early definitions include Roger Trinquier's study *Modern Warfare* (1964). Trinquier, a French officer who served in Algiers during the Algerian War for Independence (1954-1962), understands terrorism as a form of modern warfare on which clandestine guerrilla groups rely in order to overthrow the government and establish their own regime (6). For a discussion of Thomas P. Thornton's seminal article on terrorism, see below.

organisation [the Haganah], and therefore the active support of the Jewish population; for the remainder of that time they enjoyed at least a measure of passive support and immunity from betrayal" (185). In this passage, the terrorism label is not condemning; rather, it characterizes the Irgun and the Stern Gang as militant parts of a large social and political movement. Their fictional counterparts, the Maccabees in Leon Uris' bestselling novel, are portrayed along the same lines. In other words, texts across cultural, political, and academic spheres constructed Jewish terrorism as acceptable means to further what was perceived as a just cause. Despite its romanticizing attitude towards rebels and terrorists, *The Rebels*' overall conceptualization of terrorism as part of insurrections and political violence proved to be extremely persuasive in the academic realm, heavily influencing later scholars in their approaches to the topic. But, and this is important to stress again, academic consensus on the meaning of terrorism had not yet been reached.

Harry Eckstein's edited volume *Internal War* (1964), collecting the results and insights from a government-funded study into internal war, illustrates the persisting confusion rather well. In his introduction, Eckstein complains that internal war (and not terrorism) "is practically the essence of contemporary political life" and that its research has been dangerously neglected so far (3). Eckstein then proceeds to define internal war as social groups using force to achieve political changes advantageous to them (12), a definition which echoes Crozier's understanding of terrorism and another sign that definitional and conceptual boundaries remained blurry and imprecise at the time. Moreover, Eckstein's discussion of internal war does not consider terror or terrorism at all, underlining once more that the term "terrorism" was not yet a central element in theories of political violence.

This is also reflected in *Internal War* as the entire volume contains only one article which concerns itself with terrorism at all. The notable exception is Thomas P. Thornton's contribution "Terror as Weapon of Political Agitation" which attempts a definition of terror placing it in the context of internal war: "in an internal war situation, *terror is a symbolic act designed to influence political behavior by extranormal means, entailing the use or threat of violence*" (73; emphasis original). Thornton understands terrorism as "a weapon in the insurgent arsenal" (88), once again an echo of Crozier's conceptualizations. He imbues the act of terrorism with symbolic power and takes the concept to a new level of abstraction,

although its exact relation to notions of internal war remains unclear. Equally noteworthy is Thornton's explanation that terrorism relies on "extranormal means," a phrasing that entails a normative value judgment—what exactly counts as "normal" in warfare and who decides this?—which relegates terrorism to the realm of the anomalous and potentially criminal. Thornton's definition, still anthologized as "the single most seminal article on terrorism" (Schmid and Jongman 50), constitutes a marked turn away from Crozier's more positive take on the subject.

However, it is also important to note that these understandings of terrorism as part of internal war, insurrection, and political violence were not the only one circulating in academia at the time. Another approach had already discerned a connection between terrorism and nihilism. Robert Payne's 1950 study *Zero* is representative for this school of thought. Payne ascribes the roots of nihilistic thought to Sergei Gennadiyevich Nechayev, a 19th century Russian revolutionary, and traces the influence of his ideas from the Russian revolution well into the 1950s, arguing that Nechayev influenced not only Lenin, Stalin, and Trotzky, but also Hitler. In his book, Payne evokes the discursive connections between anarchism and terrorism of the 19th century. Similarly, his construction of Hitler as terrorist who uses spiritual and physical terror to achieve "the complete destruction of the human will of the German people" echoes discourses which circulated during World War II (111). Payne's approach to terrorism proved convincing enough and was taken up again in scholarly debates on terrorism and political violence. Take for instance Joseph S. Roucek, who in his 1962 article "Sociological Elements of a Theory of Terror and Violence" references Payne's work when he distinguishes between individual and mass terror (168-69). Thus, the approach to terrorism as related to nihilism enjoyed serious academic standing in the 1950s and early 1960s as well.

Another example for this is *The Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* which since the 1930s included an entry on terrorism written by J. B. S. Hardman. Much like Payne's approach to the topic, Hardman's entry links terrorism to the Russian revolution: "Terrorism was revived in 1901 when the Socialist Revolutionary party came into existence and proceeded to carry on the tradition of the older movement" (579). Terrorism is here distinguished and disconnected from mob violence, state violence, and mass insurrection and instead tied to

anarchism and revolution. It is noteworthy that in the 1953 edition the list of reference works for further consultation at the end of the entry includes works in different languages such as French and German and memoirs of Russian terrorists, but hardly any texts in English. This indicates that, even in the 1950s and 1960s the study of terrorism in the United States was indeed still in its infancy, and the meaning of the term "terrorism" had not yet been fixed.

The beginnings of the academic engagement with terrorism are thus rather sparse and far from coherent and unified. Two schools of thought emerged and while both understand terrorism as a strategy and tactic embedded in larger, superordinate fields, they differ significantly in the analysis and evaluation of the phenomenon. Even within one school, the approaches and attitudes of the scholars involved were still evolving and the lack of a precise definition was not yet perceived as a problem, pointing to the marginalized status of terrorism research. It is only in the early 1970s that the academic discourse on terrorism emerged from its niche and developed a consensus on how to approach the topic. Edna O. F. Reid's analysis of the field of terrorism research therefore fittingly calls the period from 1960 to 1969 "a sprinkling of terrorism studies" ("Terrorism Research" 22), a phrase which highlights the fact that terrorism was not the main focus of scholars of internal war and political violence—or any other field of research for that matter.[6]

American Orientalism and the Middle East

But while the issue of terrorism had not yet become a decisive factor in American discourses on the Middle East, general sympathies and antipathies regarding the region and its peoples were already firmly established. When it came to the Middle East, the American perspective on issues and conflicts was heavily tinted in favor of Israel.[7] The strong political and cultural ties between Israel and the United States began with President Truman's controversial decision to recognize the newly declared State of Israel immediately on May 14, 1948 and

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[6] See also her 1997 article "Evolution of a Body of Knowledge" which rehashes many of her previous findings.

[7] For a thorough discussion of American engagement in the Middle East see the works by Lenczowski, Little as well as McAlister.

are a matter of historical record.[8] The close connection between the two nations was largely based on cultural constructions of Israel as similar to the U.S. and was also reflected in the foreign policy of the time. Congress and the White House both saw Israel as a vital partner in the Cold War and it soon became conventional wisdom that Israel had the same political interests and stakes in the region as the U.S. and that, in fact, Israel could serve as America's proxy in the Middle East (Mart, "Tough Guys" 378). More importantly, however, these discourses provided the frame through which the United States engaged in the Middle East and how it treated Arab and Muslim nations in the region.

Leon Uris' novel *Exodus* serves again as a prominent example for a representation of these biased views. In the text, Arabs may not (yet) be termed "terrorists," but they are nevertheless depicted as unequivocally "evil," out to destroy the young, innocent Israeli nation and its people. For instance, the Mufti of Jerusalem is the most dangerous nemesis of the Jewish community in Palestine. He is described as ruthless and exceptionally power hungry, regularly assassinating his opponents during anti-Jewish riots (274). During World War II, he even met Hitler who "greeted him personally as a brother" (296), suggesting that the Mufti of Jerusalem is at least as malicious as Hitler, the epitome of malevolence.[9] The Mufti's evilness is truly exceptional because it surpasses the Maccabees' capabilities by far: "Akiva's followers tried to trade terror for terror but they were not large or effective enough to keep pace with the Mufti's thugs" (274). This description not only relativizes the Maccabees' reliance on terrorism, but also casts Arab aggression in unequivocal terms as "worse" than anything the Maccabees could ever do. This framing is not surprising since at the time of the novel's publication the notion of terrorism was, as I have argued above, not yet fixed in its negative, deprecating connotation we are familiar with today. Consequently, the terrorism label does not work to enhance the already prevalent Orientalist and racist discourses on "the Arabs" circulating in American society, but, given the positive

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[8] For a thorough discussion of American-Israeli relations since 1945 see Flapan and the study by Mearsheimer and Walt. For a history of the foundation of Israel see for instance the works by Cohen as well as Heller. The de jure recognition followed on January 31, 1949.

[9] For a discussion of the representation of Hitler in American fiction, see Butter.

associations raised by it, actually serves to contrast "good" Jewish political activism with inherently "evil" Arab violence.

The Arabs in *Exodus* pose an even bigger threat to the Jewish community than the British occupying forces because they ruthlessly terrorize, attack, and kill their Jewish neighbors. Arab violence in the novel is always directed against the Jewish community and unlike the Maccabees who constitute only a fraction of a heterogeneous community, the Mufti's actions are representative for the *entire* Arab population. Likewise, the Iraqi army officer Kawukji, recruited to organize an attack force against the Jewish population in Israel, "got together a band of thieves, dope runners, white slavers, and the like with the lure of the many Jewish women they could rape and the 'Hebrew gold' they could loot. They were as vicious, degenerate, and brutal a gang as had ever been assembled" (275). These men represent the degenerate nature of Arab society; they are "the dregs of humanity" (467). As can be seen from these examples, in its representation of Arabs, *Exodus* relies on familiar Orientalist discourses to stigmatize and Other Arab and Muslim populations in the Middle East.

This means that long before terrorism became a widespread term and a prominent political issue, the Middle East and its Arab and Muslim populations were already systematically stigmatized and Othered in American culture.[10] Douglas Little has discussed the political consequences of such a tradition: Every administration since Truman has held the Arab nations in the Middle East in low esteem; U.S. presidents tended to think of Arab peoples as inferior to the Israelis and were instead mostly focused on securing oil resources for the American economy (26-30). According to Michelle Mart, Americans also had considerable difficulties in comprehending the manifestations of Arab nationalism since the 1950s (*Eye on Israel* 156). The movement of pan-Arabism was perceived as diametrically opposed to Western individualism and gave the impression to the American public that these nations were less developed politically and culturally. Moreover, the brooding Arab-Israeli conflict

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[10]The classic study here is of course Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978). For a response to and criticism of Said's theory, see Mills as well as Young. See also Little for an account of U.S. engagement in and with the Middle East within the framework of 'American Orientalism.'

became a conflict where one nation was threatened by many, further aligning American sympathies with the Israeli state instead of the Arab nations. Overall, then, the binary between a "good," America-like Israel against "evil" Arabs was mutually constitutive.

This reciprocity became considerably more pronounced after the 1967 war. The Arab loss confirmed to the wider American public that these nations and its people were indeed inferior (Little 32). It also led to the emergence of a new phenomenon: Palestinian violent resistance, slowly developing in an organized form in the 1960s since it had become evident that the other Arab nations in the region would neither be interested in nor capable of advancing Palestinian claims over land against Israel (Kapitan 180).[11] In the hopes of getting world attention—and also out of desperation since Israel could not be defeated in open battle (Weissbrod 47)—the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and its different armed resistance groups (among them Yasser Arafat's Fatah) employed violent guerrilla tactics against Israel. These raids and attacks became increasingly more daring and violent, meaning that the plans for world sympathy and support backfired, at least with regard to the United States and Europe. In the U.S., the Palestinian claims to land, originally guaranteed in the UN resolution that recommended partition in 1947, were universally dismissed—the pro-Israel framework did not permit a different view on the conflict. The Palestinian fighters were universally delegitimized and dismissed, much like the rest of the Arab factions in the Middle East.

Academic scholarship provided and enhanced the notion of "the Arabs" as Others and radically different from Americans. Raphael Patai's *The Arab Mind*, first published in 1973, and in many ways building on the Orientalist work of previous scholars, is the classic example here since it uncritically collects and catalogues stereotypes about "the Arabs." For instance, in chapter ten of the study, entitled "Extremes and Emotions, Fantasy and Reality," Patai confirms "the pronounced Arab tendency to take a polarized view of man and the world" since he himself has "ma[de] the same observation repeatedly" (156). He then

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[11] For a thorough history on the Palestinian conflict from the angle of U.S. foreign policy, see Christison.

continues to comment on "the frequency with which self-control gives way to temper, the ease with which the flood of anger, violence, or other intense emotions sweeps over the dam of self-control and in an astonishingly short time transforms the entire personality" of the Arab in question (160).

Such essentializing Orientalist postulations about the innate nature of "the Arabs" were already widespread in many different sectors of American society. In the context of academic scholarship, however, they are given an air of scientific objectivity which empowers these constructions further. When Patai writes about "the conflict proneness of the Arabs" and argues that "the West was the prime mover in bringing about the Arab awakening, in introducing sanitation, general education and other mass benefits into the Arab world" (312, 313), these biased, negative views about the Middle East and its populations are valorized, institutionalized, and perpetuated in official discourses.

The Construction of "Palestinian Terrorism"

These Orientalist, discriminatory discourses gained in prominence in the aftermath of the 1972 Black September attack on the Israeli team during the Olympic Games in Munich. In her recent study *Disciplining Terror*, Lisa Stampnitzky argues that 1972 constitutes "a definite turning point" for how people talked and wrote about terrorism (22). I agree with Stampnitzky in that the larger American public experienced and *constructed* the events at Munich as a decisive moment at the time and reacted accordingly.

From this constructionist perspective, then, the attack on the Israeli team during the 1972 Olympics takes on great importance and influenced the discourse on terrorism in the U.S. lastingly.[12] Melani McAlister asserts that "[t]he massacre at Munich had an extraordinary impact in the United States" since the news media covered the events live (180). Seeing the threat and violence unfold on their television sets while sitting comfortably at home had a disconcerting effect on American audiences; McAlister even concludes that "[l]ive terrorist TV was born at the Munich Olympics" (180). Because of its increased visibility, Black

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[12] For a history and analysis of the events at Munich see, for instance, the works by Reeve and Klein.

September violence was perceived to have reached unprecedented heights. Seeing the shocking images on TV certainly gave American audiences the impression that not only was Israel under attack, but, given the aforementioned "special relationship" between the two nations, the United States might easily become a target in the future as well.

In response to these anxieties, the Nixon administration established the Cabinet Committee to Combat Terrorism (CCCT). In a presidential memorandum, Richard Nixon tasked the CCCT to "consider the most effective means by which to prevent terrorism here and abroad, and it will also take the lead in establishing procedures to ensure that our government can take appropriate action in response to acts of terrorism swiftly and effectively" (Nixon). In practice its function was "largely symbolic," as Lisa Stampnitzky maintains (27). Nevertheless, it signaled to the American public that the president had identified terrorism as a "worldwide problem" endangering the U.S., and decided to confront and combat the threat with the help of the distinguished members of the CCCT (Nixon).

But if Palestinian terrorism had become a central concern in American politics, it also followed that its solution required experts—"regular" professionals were clearly not capable of handling the problem anymore. Nixon's CCCT comprised the first group of politicians and scholars interested in tackling the issue of terrorism. The group met regularly between 1972 and 1977 and was "one of the first institutional locations from which a demand for terrorism expertise originated" (Stampnitzky 2728). Similarly, the Departments of Defense, State, and Justice sponsored research initiatives and even commissioned the RAND Corporation to investigate the issue of terrorism (Weissbrod 46). Government data became more accessible to scholars as well. For instance, the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) was established in 1972 and, sponsored by the Department of Justice, collects in its database material and information on issues such as crime and public safety. The U.S. government thus actively worked towards the creation of knowledge about terrorism by investing in the

field of terrorism research in the hopes of receiving policy suggestions and practical advice on how to respond to the terrorism threat.[13]

In the wake of the events at Munich, terrorism in the 1970s predominantly comes to describe Palestinian violence against supposedly innocent victims, mostly Israelis. It also includes airplane hijacking and airport attacks, given the sharp increase of these incidents and the disproportionate involvement of militant Palestinian groups in them.[14] Nevertheless, while these acts are clearly condemned and viewed in negative terms, terrorism continues to be understood as political strategy, albeit now with a more prominent discursive position. Hence, articles in newspapers keep the practice of quoting Palestinian leaders on their positions and their criticism of what they understand as Western indifference to the plight of Palestinian refugees in the Middle East. This practice ensures at least a marginal presence of the Palestinian point of view in American discourses on the Middle East and Palestinian terrorism and keeps it in the realm of the political.

Not only did terrorism become linked to a specific ethnic group, i.e. Palestinians, but established Orientalist discourses about the Middle East influenced how this phenomenon of Palestinian terrorism was now represented and evaluated. Thomas Harris' novel *Black Sunday* (1975) is a good example to illustrate this new discursive approach. *Black Sunday*, a thriller about a group of Black September terrorists who collaborate with deranged Vietnam vet Michael Lander to blow up the stadium in New Orleans during the Super Bowl, merges notions of terrorism and Orientalist views of Palestinians in the antagonists who are represented as depraved, brutal, and evil terrorists, but in the end nevertheless defeated, although narrowly, by the Israeli hero Major David Kabakov.

In its portrayal of the Palestinian terrorist villains, *Black Sunday* relies heavily on Orientalist stereotyping. For instance, Hafez Najeer, the commander of Black September, is nicknamed "The Praying Mantis" and the heterodiegetic narrator is quick to assert that "[t]o hold his attention was to feel sick and frightened" (10). The nickname is subsequently explained

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[13] See also Reid for a similar argument.
[14] See Mickolus for chronologies of terrorist events in the 1970s and 1980s.

through the description of his misshapen body: "He was a tall man with a small head" (9-10). Taken together, these statements about Najeer can be regarded as a classic inventory of (racial) Othering: likened to a praying mantis, he is dehumanized and feminized at the same time, since it is the female praying mantis which is known to be the dangerous and cold-blooded insect that even cannibalistically devours the males of its own species. The explicit mentioning of his small head furthermore suggests a lack of intelligence, thereby rendering the comparison with a brainless insect more complete. This lack of intelligence is eventually confirmed, when Najeer is easily killed by an Israeli assassination squad lead by Kabakov, while sleeping in his bed in what he must have erroneously considered the secret and well-guarded Black September headquarters in Beirut (19). Along the same lines, the novel portrays Muhammad Fasil, Najeer's fellow Black September militant introduced as the "architect of the attack on the Olympic Village at Munich" (10), as a vicious and animalistic terrorist—"a monster" in the narrator's words (181). Fasil is said to have a "quick, savage mind" (121) and Major Kabakov describes him as "a psychopath and a killer, a political fanatic" (272).

Yet another striking example for Orientalist stereotyping in *Black Sunday* is Dahlia Iyad, the Black September militant sent to the U.S. to help Michael Lander succeed in his plans. Dahlia is an unscrupulous and effective killer, as demonstrated by her quick murder of the blimp pilot before breakfast so that Lander can take his place during the Super Bowl (301). When Lander is drunk and becomes violent, she simply knocks him unconscious (90). She is delineated as an animalistic predator with eyes "wide-set as a puma's" and has "the steady, cool gaze of a cat" (34, 161). This suggests a certain aloofness in her character and she emanates an eroticized danger. Fittingly, then, she controls the men around her through the skilled use of her sexuality and femininity. For instance, Dahlia is the one to "cure" Lander's impotence, thus giving him the strength to continue his plans for an attack on the United States (e.g. 64). During the Israeli raid on the Black September compound, it is her beautiful naked body which makes Major Kabakov hesitant to shoot her: "The killer pointed his machine gun at her wet breast. His finger tightened on the trigger. It was a beautiful breast. The muzzle of the machine gun wavered" (19). Kabakov is initially blinded by Dahlia's Oriental, sexualized body. As the wavering gun implies, his masculine potency is weakened, and he does not recognize that she is the most menacing terrorist of the group.

The novel makes it clear that her sexuality, and the power that comes with it, are extremely dangerous. Violence is sexually arousing to Dahlia. When she records the confessional tape in preparation for the attack on the Super Bowl in Beirut, she "bec[a]me visibly aroused as she talked into the microphone" and her "face was flushed and her nipples were erect as she continued" (16, 17). Similarly, the heterodiegetic narrator describes her pubic hair as "a black explosion" (34), out to destroy the men who come close to it, especially Michael Lander. In this context, Philip L. Simpson has argued that Dahlia fuses "sexuality with the politics of terrorism" (54). I rather think that Dahlia's representation in the novel follows well known Orientalist stereotypes about eroticized, sexually available, and therefore also dangerous, female bodies. In my view, *Black Sunday* fuses Orientalist discourses about the Middle East with notions of terrorism to create Dahlia as an enemy who proves to be more dangerous to the Israeli hero than previous ones. After all, protagonist Major Kabakov dies in the attempt to steer the explosive-laden blimp away from the Super Bowl Stadium. The fact that she is a *Palestinian* terrorist enhances her danger.

In this regard, the language used in *Black Sunday* is interesting. Noticeably, the terms "terrorist" or "terrorism" are used only sparingly in the novel. This may seem surprising at first, but does by no means represent an "error" on part of the author. Rather, the terrorism context of the novel is established firmly from the outset and in subtle ways. For instance, references to Black September in the novel are considerably more frequent than direct ones to the protagonists as terrorists. Ever since the "Munich Massacre" in 1972, Black September had become notorious as a "terrorist organization" (e.g. 248) and *Black Sunday* repeatedly alludes to the attack on the Olympics. For instance, Muhammad Fasil, a high-ranking Black September member in the novel, is introduced in the beginning as "architect of the attack on the Olympic Village at Munich" (10). This explanation occurs at the very outset of the novel (the second page of text in my edition) and thus clearly establishes that Fasil, Dahlia, and the rest of the Palestinians are to be understood as terrorists. Hence, the plot does not require direct language to mark their plans as "terroristic"—readers were already familiar with a discursive practice that equates Palestinian resistance with terrorism and, given previous spectacular Black September operations, are expected to interpret the events in the novel in that same fashion. Thus, by 1975, when the novel was published, the discursive connection between Palestinian and terrorism was strong enough to be mutually evocative.

When it comes to explaining the terrorists' motivations, *Black Sunday* openly relies on Orientalist representational practices to explain the antagonists' reliance on terrorism. Following traditions of Orientalist stereotyping, the novel attributes the Palestinians' behavior to mindless hatred: "He [Najeer, the commander of Black September] did not believe in the concept of a 'Middle East situation.' The restoration of Palestine to the Arabs would not have elated him. He believed in holocaust, the fire that purifies. So did Dahlia Iyad" (10). The reference to the holocaust a few pages into the novel is, of course, not accidental and evokes American discourses on Israel and Jewish persecution, thus clearly judging the Palestinians as evil and discrediting their cause from the onset. In addition, the terrorists are depicted as addicted to violence. Their hatred for Israel and the United States is "conditioned" (131) and as such not rational, as evidenced by Fasil's bizarre behavior: "Although Fasil was an atheist, he thought of Lander as an infidel, and he spat as he muttered the name" (238). The Black September terrorists are depicted as violent, irrational, and depraved—stereotypical characteristics we already encountered in the "evil" Palestinians of Leon Uris' *Exodus*. *Black Sunday* takes these vilifications up again, but develops them further by casting its enemies as terrorists, thus merging the two discursive traditions successfully.

But in keeping with contemporary conceptualizations of terrorism as political strategy and tactic, the ultimate goal behind the Black September plan in *Black Sunday* remains political, not religious or cultural: The terrorists want to rupture American-Israeli relations to the point that Israel will no longer receive American weapons to defend itself against future Palestinian attacks. Moreover, the novel provides backstories for Dahlia and Najeer, the commander of Black September, which to a certain extent weaken the dehumanizing forces at work in the representation of the Orientalized characters in the novel. These backstories allow readers to comprehend why these two figures joined Black September, thus providing nuance to the plot. Najeer lost his family in an Israeli attack and still "remembered carrying his brother's body out of a shattered apartment in Bhandoum, then going back inside to look for the legs" (11). Dahlia, in turn, is a survivor of a Palestinian refugee camp at Tyre and had to regularly see her mother prostitute herself for food (13). Her mother died when she was ten "and she could do nothing but keep the flies off her mother's face. […] There were so many suffering" in the camps (297-98). *Black Sunday* fuses Orientalist ideas about the

Middle East and Palestinians with notions about terrorism. It is precisely *because* Dahlia and the rest have tangible political grievances that their form of terrorism is so dangerous.

From "Palestinian Terrorism" to "Arab Terrorism"

As we have seen, in the 1970s, the discourse on terrorism merged with Orientalist ideas about the Middle East in general and Palestinian militants in particular to construct the trope of the Palestinian terrorist, out to destroy Israel and threaten its allies, including the United States. These discursive patterns evolved primarily in response to headline-grabbing, televised attacks executed by various Palestinian groups, the most notorious being the attack on the Israeli Olympic team during the Olympic Games at Munich in the summer of 1972. The discursive construction of "the Palestinian terrorist" could function as successfully as it did because it could easily be applied to all different Palestinian factions, regardless of whether they actually relied on violence in their political engagement or not.

Palestinian terrorism was a major concern for American foreign policy in the Middle East. However, this particular distrust of Palestinians soon widened to generically include all other non-Jewish nations in the region under the title of "Arabs." To complain about and even vilify "the Arabs" instead of just "the Palestinians" had a few distinctive discursive advantages: The universalizing signifier "Arab" erases all ethnic, cultural, and religious differences between the various nations and their peoples, and instead lumps them all together as one homogeneous entity. It also assumes that "the Arabs" will act as unified belligerents against an "us," in this case the United States. American and European Orientalist discourses of the past had already established this practice of Othering, but the political turmoil of 1973/1974 caused by the oil crisis reenergized these discursive patterns and effectively led to an "Arabizing" of the Middle East which erased any distinction between different factions and their political objectives and procedures for attaining them. This "Arabizing" of the Middle East in the U.S. indeed reverberated through all layers of society. It even went so far is to include Iran, which is technically Persian and not Arab, in these discursive constructions of "evil Arabs."

The power of this new discourse becomes visible if we look a few years ahead to the late 1970s. On November 4, 1979, a group of Iranian students, with the Ayatollah's silent

approval, stormed the U.S. embassy in Tehran and held 52 embassy employees as hostages for 444 days. The hostages were only released on January 20, 1981—the day of Ronald Reagan's inauguration. In order to explain events, as well as American powerlessness, to the public at home, the Carter administration relied on the discourse of "Arab terrorism" and applied it to the crisis in Iran.[15] On a regular basis, the Iranian population, the hostage takers, and the Iranian government were vilified as "kidnappers and terrorists" directly targeting the innocent United States (Carter, "International Economic Sanctions"). The Carter administration relied on the terrorism terminology from the very beginning, consciously framing the events in Iran as "acts of terrorism against innocent people" (Carter, "American Hostages in Iran"). This discursivization of the Iranian hostage crisis as first act of "Arab terrorism" against the U.S. brought the issue of terrorism to the political forefront.

The political rhetoric of the time cast the entire American public as involved in the fight against terrorism and posited a need for constant vigilance against an irrational, dangerous Arab enemy who could strike at any time and who did not honor the supposedly superior rules of Western civilization. The 1980s under Reagan's presidency did indeed experience an escalation of violence and political conflicts which, following the discursive tradition established during the Iranian hostage crisis, were narrativized as "Arab terrorism" against the United States. This becomes particularly evident with regard to the Reagan administration's policy towards Libya. Tensions mounted and violence finally escalated when a bomb detonated in a popular discotheque in Berlin in 1986, frequented by American GIs stationed in the city, killing three and injuring more than 230 people. The U.S accused the Libyan regime of organizing the bombing and retaliated by flying raids over Tripoli and Benghazi a few days later. Reagan justified the counterattack, arguing that

> [t]his necessary and appropriate action was a pre-emptive strike, directed against the Libyan terrorist infrastructure and designed to deter acts of terrorism by Libya, such as the Libyan-ordered bombing of a discotheque in West Berlin on April 5. […]. This was the latest in a long series of terrorist attacks against United States installations, diplomats and citizens carried out or attempted with the support and direction of Muammar Qadhafi. (Reagan)

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[15] See also Winkler for a similar argument.

So by the beginning of the 1980s, terrorism discourse had firmly established itself in the American political and cultural landscape—and it was clearly there to stay.

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