

# Israel Advocacy in the Academic Field: The Case of Terrorism Studies

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## Abstract

Research on the special relationship between the United States and Israel has usually been focused on strategic aspects, whilst fewer scholars have focused on non-material dimensions of the relationship. In addition, the existing research is mostly confined to the political and decision-making realms, with very few excursions into the academic arena. The current article aims to fill this lacuna through the study of pro-Israel academic discourse in America, focusing on the specific case of the field of terrorism studies. Critical discourse analysis of pro-Israel academic texts in this field is carried out to reveal the discourse, themes and arguments used to build this ideational pillar of the special relationship and move towards a common identity between the US and Israel. The common ingroup identity model (CIIM) is used to describe the process through which a common identity is constructed. The article concludes that defining the Self, defining the Other, and defining the norms are the three main strategies employed in the studied texts to achieve this goal.

**Keywords:** Academic discourse, Common identity, Israel, Israel advocates, Special relationship, Terrorism, United States.

## 1. Introduction

Among the many different ideational factors that could be considered as contributing to the US-Israeli special relationship, academic discourse is an important and significant one. Academic discourse has a potential role in shaping the minds and identity of the future generation, specifically that of future leaders, politicians, journalists and educators. As the current study will demonstrate, pro-Israel scholars who have long realized this importance, and also the risks that Israel faces in American universities, have been extremely active in the American academic sphere constructing a strong ideational pillar for American support for Israel. Meanwhile, most studies discuss and analyze popular discourse, and academic discourse is an understudied field.

The current article is based on the premise of viewing the US-Israel special relationship as a multi-dimensional phenomenon. Ideas and identity are considered as elements that contribute to the strength and longevity of the relationship, whilst the existence and importance of material and strategic factors is not denied. In fact, the existence of multi-dimensional pillars of the relationship, and the fact that Israel advocates<sup>1</sup> are active in promoting its various dimensions concurrently, is the main reason why the relationship has not only survived but also grown stronger.

The current study focuses on the concept of ‘common identity’ as one of the ideational concepts that the special relationship is built on. It claims that the construction of a common identity

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1. Mira Sucharov’s definition of “Israel advocacy” as “the collection of political and educational activities at the school, campus, community, and formal political levels designed to increase the support by Diaspora Jews, their co-citizens, and their governments for Israel, including support for most of Israel’s policies, and an opposition to outright critique of those policies” (2011, p. 362) is applied and used in this article.

between America and Israel is actively sought out by Israel advocates in different fields, specifically the academic field; pro-Israel scholars from different disciplines promote such commonality through their academic output. Research demonstrates that such pro-Israel scholars are actively present in the American academic sphere. The dual citizenship and identity of such scholars, along with their fluency in the English language and familiarity with American culture, has enabled them to express their viewpoints not just through their presence as instructors of university courses in American universities, but also through their prolific production of pro-Israel academic literature. This active presence in the academic field comes in a variety of forms, including both visiting Israeli professors and Israeli professors who stay permanently in America to pursue academic careers (Mousavi & Kadkhodae, 2016).

The main objective of this research is to identify and analyze the themes that are reflected in the work of pro-Israel terrorism experts, and to demonstrate how these themes contribute to the construction of a common identity between the United States and Israel. To answer this question, the article adopts the common ingroup identity model (CIIM), which is a variant of Social Identity Theory, and its central concept of “collective identity” as its main theoretical framework. CIIM details how a common identity can be formed between individuals in society, and how this can help improve intergroup relations (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2009). This study applies the CIIM model to the relationship between countries rather than individuals.

Social psychologists use the expressions *common identity* and *superordinate identity* interchangeably. Tuscisny defines a superordinate identity as follows: “Some identities are more

inclusive, shared by several, otherwise distinct groups. These are called superordinate identities. A superordinate identity can be defined as an identity held by the members of otherwise distinct subgroups, along with their particular subgroup (or subordinate) identities” (2008, p. 4).

CIIM’s value and application here is due to the fact that it goes one step further and elaborates on *how* a collective identity can be achieved as well as detailing the mechanism through which collective identity reduces prejudice and enmity. It puts forward the idea that certain techniques such as *deategorization* and *recategorization* can be used to create a common, overarching, superordinate identity between two previously distinct groups, thus making them feel as though they are one entity. As Tusicisny explains: “the key idea of the common ingroup identity model is that factors that induce members of different groups to recategorize themselves as members of the same more inclusive group can reduce intergroup bias through cognitive and motivational processes involving ingroup favoritism” (2008, p. 4). Recategorization enables members of different groups to switch from an “Us vs. Them” orientation to a more inclusive “we-feeling”.

## 2. Terrorism Studies

In today’s world where more and more people are encountering political violence in their everyday lives, its manifestations are widely reported in the media, and politicians are referring to it frequently in their statements, terrorism has become a concept which is used by many, in Perdue’s terms, as a “label of defamation” (Kandil, 2009a, p. 73). The academic study of

terrorism proliferated from the 1970s, and experienced a sharp increase in the aftermath of 9/11. Soviet-backed terrorism was considered a main threat in the Cold War era, and in those decades, as in more recent years, Israelis played a central role in defining the debate on terrorism. In relation to the post-9/11 era, Marusek points to the rise of Islamophobic and pro-Israel non-profit organisations after 9/11 which are funded by tax-deductible donations and whose members are “terrorism experts” connected to the Israeli and American security sectors (2017).

The defaming potential of terrorism has made it one of the most contested concepts in the field of political struggle, with opposing sides in a rising number of conflicts striving to label their rivals as terrorist and thus succeed in framing themselves as the forces of good. In other words, what is seen as a desperate struggle for self-defense in one culture can be portrayed as terrorism in another. The well-known phrase, “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter”, not only reflects the ambiguity of the term, but also its political nature.

Nowhere is this contested meaning more apparent than in pro-Israel discourse. Terrorism is one of the main themes that has been resorted to by Israel advocates in order to construct a common identity encompassing Israel and the United States and simultaneously define another entity as the dangerous, threatening and irrational Other. Israel has claimed to be the only country that actually fell victim to terrorism during the Cold War era, and during that time terrorism for Americans remained a potential threat rather than a direct experience. But the transformation that 9/11 brought about was that from this point Israel advocates could speak of a *common* experience of victimhood, not just a possibility, not just a threat that may actualize and must be prevented, but

something that Americans had actually experienced on a real and devastating scale. In this discourse, Islam is portrayed as the common enemy of the two societies, the main threat to so-called “Judeo-Christian heritage” and to liberal democratic values, or more generally to Western civilization. In order to convince the audience of this essential enmity, the Orientalist toolbox is once again opened, and the same old stereotypes and arguments are recycled (see Aggarwal, 2011; Jackson, 2007; Morton, 2007).

Since the study and analysis of terrorism has entered the academic sphere, scholars and intellectuals have become influential in defining the term, and in presenting specific definitions and narratives as objective and non-biased knowledge. Pro-Israel terrorism experts not only strive to demonstrate the lethality and danger of terrorism, but to prove that Muslims are the main culprits (see Byman, 2013; Levitt & Policy, 2006; Pedahzur, 2006). Through their seemingly objective studies, they portray Arabs and Muslims as irrational, inhuman and backward people who are offered a chance for peace but reject it because on a fundamental level, peace has no place in their cultures. Through this narrative, Israel becomes the obvious victim, and its use of disproportional violence against its enemies is framed and subsequently justified as self-defense.

### **3. Pro-Israel Terrorism Studies Experts**

Perhaps one of the first manifestations of Israel’s efforts to define terrorism as the common threat faced by itself and the US comprises the activities of the Jonathan Institute, founded by Benjamin Netanyahu in 1979 in memory of his brother Yonatan who had died in the Entebbe raid (Herman & O’Sullivan, 1989).

The institute opened offices in Jerusalem, Washington DC and New York, thus bringing the terrorism faced by Israel to the forefront of American attention. It held a conference in Washington in 1984, which led to the publication of *Terrorism: How the West Can Win* (Netanyahu, 1987), a compilation of articles edited by Netanyahu, and established Netanyahu “as a leading international voice in the war against terrorism” (Herman & O’Sullivan, 1989, p. 106) in the eyes of many Americans.

The current Israeli experts and institutions focused on terrorism could be seen as the continuation of this strategy and of new versions of the Jonathan Institute, with the difference being that they are now more complex and present a more objective and academic image. Stating that “Almost all western counter-terrorist academic centres are closely linked to Israeli institutions” (Toolis, 2004), Toolis points to the fact that whilst Israel has become a model counter-terrorist state, the inherent Islamophobia in the Israeli approach has turned “academic counter-terrorism” into a tool for intimidating Arabs and excusing Israeli policies, reaching a point at which “The boundary between academic research and black propaganda is again blurred” (Toolis, 2004).

To analyze how Israel advocates aim to define the academic discourse on terrorism, the current study focuses on the works of Anat Berko, Boaz Ganor and Bruce Hoffman, who are three well-known experts in the field. Terrorism experts with pro-Israel bias are not few,<sup>1</sup> but for the purposes of this study only a small selection could be examined. These three scholars were chosen because they have worked extensively on the subject of terrorism, and publish books, academic articles and give speeches in

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1. Yonah Alexander, Ariel Merari, Daniel Byman, Arie Perliger, Ami Pedahzur, and Steven Emerson are other prominent examples.

academic environments in the US, while at the same time exemplifying the diversity of perspectives that exist among pro-Israel terrorism experts. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) of selected publications of these scholars was carried out in order to determine the prevalent themes in academic pro-Israel discourse in the US. Although some of the publications analyzed are quite old, they are significant because they are manifestations of the author's main viewpoints which are constantly repeated across all their various academic activities. Because of the importance that CDA attributes to analyzing the context as well as the text, a brief overview of the background of each individual and how it relates to their academic production is provided.

### **3.1. Anat Berko**

Anat Berko is an Israeli with experience in the military, academia and politics; she has served in the Israeli military for 25 years, earned a PhD in criminology, served as Research Fellow at the Institute for Counter-Terrorism at the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya (ICT), visits American universities both as visiting scholar and speaker ("Dr. Anta Berko", 2017), and writes extensively on terrorism. She was also a member of the Israeli Knesset. Berko has authored two books and co-authored a few academic articles, all of which are based on interviews with imprisoned Palestinian "terrorists". Even her election campaign for the Knesset featured a video which centers around her experience of interviewing Palestinian prisoners; in the video she is depicted as being kidnapped and interrogated by a Palestinian "terrorist", where she offers explanations (mostly rhetorical) of her policy positions (Berko, 2019).



Critical terrorism scholars believe that government-associated terrorism experts usually enjoy privileged access to sensitive information (Stampnitzky, 2013). In writing her books and articles, Berko has been granted exclusive access to Palestinians who were jailed for attempting suicide attacks. She also boasts of having had the chance to interview the late Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmad Yassin. Through this exclusive access, her fluency in Arabic, and her training in the field of criminology, Berko claims to provide the American reader with an accurate account of ‘The Inner World of Suicide Bombers and Their Dispatchers’. Moreover, she never appears obligated to provide credible sources for her claims, since everything she writes is supposedly taken from the interviews.

For the purposes of this article, critical discourse analysis has been carried out on the introduction to *The Path to Paradise* (Berko, 2007). Since Berko uses the data from the same interviews in her books and articles, the analysis covers some of her articles as well. The next section presents the analysis and the themes derived from it.

### **3.1.1. Dehumanizing and Otherizing Palestinians**

Berko starts the book with a description of what she calls the most intense interview she had conducted in the course of her research thus far: the one carried out with a Muslim man accused of trying to detonate a bus in Jerusalem, described by Berko as being fanatic and aggressive. He rejects Berko’s courteousness by refusing to drink tea, and is anything but a normal, respectful human being: “I didn’t lower my eyes, despite the waves of hostility, suspicion, and hatred he sent in my direction. It was like being in a cage with a tiger: you have to keep looking the beast in the eye, and most

important, not show fear” (Berko, 2007, p. xiv). He is portrayed as representing Hamas, as Berko weaves into his description the story of Hamas: how it came to power and what it aims to achieve.

This encounter is used to clearly and boldly define the Self/Other binary: “...here I was, a Jewish mother, PhD candidate, and at the time, a career officer in the Israel Defense Forces, sitting across the table from a serial killer” (Berko, 2007, p. xiv). The author is boastfully describing herself by referring to features that make an individual successful from a Western-American perspective, whilst the Palestinian is described with only two words: “serial killer”. He might be a father, and have his own family and personal aspirations, but that does not seem to be relevant to the author, who is bent on introducing him as an animal-like creature.

By focusing on the motives of suicide bombers, and aiming to construct a specific discourse on describing and framing these motives, Berko aims to crush any slightest sympathy or respect that might exist for them, even potentially, amongst her American audience. In this endeavor, she uses standard Orientalist descriptions and characterizations of Palestinians. Their motives are neither rational nor holy, although they might be religious. Palestinians’ reasons for action are held to be based on mere sensationalism, adventure hunting, or envy. When the individual is citing religious motivations, Berko makes sure to demonstrate that these motivations are either fanatic or based on material lust, repeating an old Orientalist stereotype of Muslims (Marandi & Tari, 2012).

When classifying the motivations of female suicide bombers in her article, Berko does not mention a single objective that might seem even partially respectable: “the desire to revenge the death of

a relative or beloved or fiancé and the attempt to solve a personal problem” are the two main categories of motivations (Berko & Erez, 2006). Personal or social problems that can lead a female Palestinian to give up her life are cited as “pre- or extra-marital romantic relationships, forced marriages, financial exploitation (for example, excessive use of a cellular phone borrowed from a woman by a terrorist-operative), the desire to remove suspicion from the woman or a member of her family of collaborating with the enemy, and revenge against a father who refused to pay a dowry” (2006, p. 3). Interestingly, she makes such claims acceptable by arguing that the Palestinian/Muslim society is so different to ours, so much based on tribalism, devotion of the individual to the community, and violence, that these strange looking outcomes are natural to it, thereby completing another stage of dehumanization and Otherization. So because they are so different to us, and have such different and negative social values, they resort to irrational violence in the form of suicide terrorism. In another article, she does admit that ideological motivations count, but again in an equally humiliating language, like the previous article:

[Motivation to become a suicide bomber] ranges from ideological persuasion, through desire to avenge the death of a loved one or fellow Palestinians, to enhancement of one’s social status or augmenting one’s prospects of a gratifying afterlife. But whether the decision to commit suicide bombing emanates from an ideology of struggle, despair or hope for a better afterlife, it is often triggered by mundane reasons such as proving one’s manhood, retaliation at an uncompromising father, search for excitement or ways to relieve boredom (Berko & Erez, 2005, p. 616).

These, the reader is led to believe, are the reasons why young Palestinians choose death over life. Berko also includes a few stories about female suicide bombers in order to further denigrate the Palestinian cause. This demonization and downgrading of the motives of female Palestinian martyrs, and detaching these motives from their religious roots to ultimately delegitimize the act, is repeated in the works of other Western scholars and is a dominant theme in Western and Israeli media (Hamamra, 2018).

### **3.1.2. Commonality Between Israel and the West: Muslims as the Outgroup**

Whilst constructing Palestinians as strange and subhuman beings, Berko uses every occasion to demonstrate how similar America and the US are, and that both are victim to the same violence.

Referring to one of her interviews with jailed Palestinians, Berko states: “One of the female suicide bombers who was captured said, ‘Why should you have something and we should have nothing? Why should your children be happy and ours sad?’ The question, oversimplified and perhaps even childish is directed at every Israeli, and actually, at every citizen of a Western country, as the terrorist attacks in New York, Madrid and London have demonstrated” (Berko, 2007, p. xv). Apart from grouping the US and the whole Western world with Israel, this quote also dehumanizes the Palestinians by demonstrating their childlike irrationality, and simultaneously, denigrating the reason behind their enmity towards Israelis. Palestinians, we are told, hate and fight Israelis because of mere envy. Berko is being unfair to both her objects *and* readers by hiding an important segment of the causality chain here; the Israelis, their occupation of Palestinian

land, and their continuous racism in ruling that land is the reason why Palestinian children are unhappy, and this is the reason behind the anger of the Palestinian mother, not the happiness of Israeli children per se.

Not in one instance, in any of her writings, does Berko cite a rational, respectable reason for the Palestinian struggle. She is an adherent of the belief that anyone who opposes the Israeli Self is a lunatic, and enlarges her definition of this Self to include the West in general. She does not delve into the real causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, instead choosing to address only a symptom of it, and attribute this symptom to the internal shortcomings and essential malfunctions of the Palestinian/Muslim society.

### **3.2. Boaz Ganor**

Ganor is an Israeli expert on terrorism, and Founder and Executive Director of the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), at IDC Herzliya. He is known to have been Netanyahu's advisor in writing the latter's book, *Fighting Terrorism*. One of Ganor's most recent publications, *Global Alert: The Rationality of Modern Islamist Terrorism* (Ganor, 2015), is analyzed here in order to demonstrate how this Israeli terrorism expert introduced the concept of "modern Islamist terrorism" to his American readers.

The sophistication of what Ganor calls "Islamist-jihadist terrorism" as the manifestation of "religious-ideological terrorism", which he labels the newest form of terrorism, and the challenges it generates for liberal democracies through its exploitation of liberal values, is the main focus of this book.

### 3.2.1. Islamic Terrorism as a Global Threat

*Global Alert* should be viewed as an example of a terrorism expert's focus on the study of religious terrorism, which differentiates this version from solely political terrorism. One reason behind this increased attention given to religion might be that through this typology, scholars want to essentialize and irrationalize "Islamic" terrorism; allegedly, terrorism is resorted to by Muslims not because their lands are occupied and that they are fighting aggression, but because they see Jews or Christians as infidels who ought to be killed because of their religion, ideas, thinking and lifestyles, not because of how they treat Muslims. In Ganor's words:

Recent years have seen an increase in the religious-ideological terrorism of Islamist-jihadists, whose manipulation of supportive civilian populations so as to wield violence against other civilians whom they regard as infidels represents a "perfecting" of modern terrorist strategies (Ganor, 2015, p. ix).

Another element that such scholars claim is that Islamic culture's "inherent" violence leads to manifestations like terrorism, and that violence is celebrated and glorified in such cultures:

The culture of shuhada (martyrdom) and incitement to terrorism in the Palestinian arena is one example of how terrorist organizations win their constituents' hearts and minds (Ganor, 2015, p. 76).

Academic books on religious terrorism try to appear objective, but their choice of cases and examples reveals their bias. In the case of *Global Alert*, the focus is in fact on "Islamist terrorism" not "religious terrorism". Ganor's chosen case for the study of state sponsored terrorism is, of course, Iran "which supports Hezbollah

and other Islamist terrorist organizations” (Ganor, 2015, p. xi) and Hamas and Hezbollah are cited as perfect examples of “hybrid terrorist organizations”:

Many local and global terrorist organizations, such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), have long relied heavily on state support (Ganor, 2015, p. 65).

Ganor does briefly mention the issue of Jewish terrorism. In his discussion of the difference between freedom fighters and terrorists, he refers to “the history of Jewish underground movements on the eve of Israeli independence” (Ganor, 2015, p. 7). According to Ganor, the Haganah which “comprised the overwhelming majority of organized Jewish fighting forces” (Ganor, 2015, p. 7), focused its attacks on British military installations and personnel and avoided attacking civilians, whilst the substantially smaller groups Irgun and Lehi, did attack Palestinian civilians. In other words, terrorism was the exception rather than the rule in the activities of Jewish movements.

### **3.2.2. Rational Terrorism**

Another theme identified in Ganor’s work, and also seen in other texts on terrorism, varies from the usual depiction of Muslims as irrational (as in Berko’s work) in suggesting that Muslim terrorists are in fact rational, calculating beings:

Far from being irrational or depraved, terrorists are rational actors who employ cost-benefit calculations in determining when and how to exert their influence. Though incongruous to the West, their considerations are sometimes marked by an internal logic that emanates from their ideology and goals (Ganor, 2015, p. xi).

This theme is so important that it is featured in the subtitle of Ganor's book: *Global Alert: The Rationality of Modern Islamist Terrorism*. Still, this characterization of rationality is not meant as a compliment. A closer look at this theme reveals that Islamic terrorists are portrayed as rational only in their choice of strategies and tactics, but when it comes to their more fundamental decisions, such as the one to take up arms, or to resort to violence, they are very irrational, choosing to fight others just because they disagree with them. Also, the terrorist's rationality is a mechanical one; human emotions, considerations and morality never enter his calculations. Also, depicting these "terrorists" as rational and not desperate obscures the fact that in many instances, their use of particular methods is a result of having no other choice available. Palestinians resort to suicide killings since they have no weapons to attack Zionist occupiers, not because they are eager to die, or love violence for the sake of violence.

### 3.2.3. Israel as an Example

Israel is presented as an example of a nation fighting terrorism: a warrior that can benefit others with its valuable and hard-earned experience:

While this book is founded on the extensive experience of the State of Israel in countering both nationalist and Islamist-jihadist terrorist organizations, its perspective is applicable [to countries facing similar challenges]. Israel is a laboratory in which counter-terrorism efforts have been honed through painful trial and error (Ganor, 2015, p. xiii).

This theme is exemplified in Ganor's other works, including an article in which he introduces Israel's experience with what he calls



extortionist terror attacks (Ganor, 2017), and especially in a course offered to Birthright Israel Study Abroad participants, entitled “Conflict Management and Counter-Terrorism in Israel and the Middle East”. The course, directed by Ganor, consists of lectures and field trips aimed to provide participants with the chance to learn “from the extensive Israeli experience” (Ganor, 2019, p. 1) in fighting terrorism.

#### 3.2.4. Liberal Democracy

Many pro-Israel scholars are determined to solve the contradiction between Israel’s claim to be a Western-type liberal democracy and its actual policies which in effect are at odds with liberal and democratic values. In this book, Ganor not only attempts to prove that Israeli violence is not in contradiction with its supposed liberal democratic identity, but goes one step further in mounting a forceful argument that Islamic groups’ application of democratic procedures does not remove the Other label from them.

To make this argument, Ganor insists that it is liberal democratic *values* that are important, rather than democratic *procedures*, since, he alleges, the latter have been abused by radical Islamists to reach their own objectives, whilst:

The process of exporting democracy to populations that have not had the necessary education in liberal democratic values may therefore prove to be dangerous. Free democratic elections are meant to occur at the end, not at the beginning, of what should be an evolutionary—not a revolutionary—process (Ganor, 2015, p. 20).

The author is implying that Middle Easterners are backward and dangerous people who do not deserve or cannot handle self-rule and democracy, and thus need to be educated in order to learn “our

values”, so that elections bring to power leaders who will work to our benefit. He mentions the downfall of the Shah in Iran and the toppling of some “pro-Western and pro-American” leaders during the Arab Spring, as well as the 2006 elections in Gaza and the West Bank as negative outcomes of democracy promotion in the Middle East.

Such arguments are also used to explain, excuse and legitimate Israel’s response to terrorism. According to pro-Israel terrorism literature, “Islamist” terrorism is the antithesis to liberal democracy. He insists that terrorism is designed to exert maximum damage to democratic states:

Because terrorism’s strategy wields the mediating elements present in any liberal democratic regime against it, the very core of modern terrorism is linked to the democratic form of government (Ganor, 2015, p. 29).

The terrorists are so evil that “By using civilians as human shields, by fighting from behind or within protected facilities such as places of worship, schools, hospitals, refugee camps, and aid facilities, the terrorist organization perverts the liberal democratic state’s self-imposed restrictions” (Ganor, 2015, p. 4). The liberal democracies have, and are expected to have, a restrained response that does not undermine their *values*, which makes their work harder. He continues: “[Terrorism]thereby maximizes the effect of its violent activities, catches its adversary by surprise, and pushes it to unwittingly, unjustifiably contravene the norms and values to which it is (also) bound by international humanitarian law” (Ganor, 2015, p. 4). Therefore agency for every bad outcome in this fight is attributed to the Other, who is even responsible for the contradiction that exists between liberal democratic values, and liberal democracy’s violent response to terrorism. This concept of

contradiction is an important one, since one of the main challenges that Israel has been facing in the West in general, and specifically in American universities, is its disproportionate response to Palestinian violence. Placing the agency and the blame on the victim, and claiming that Israel is forced to act as it does, as a stute way of confronting this challenge.

The constant framing of liberal democracy and Islamic terrorism as two ends of a pole implies that the former is attacked because of its essence and identity rather than because of its behaviour and policies, as if terrorists fight just because they are opposed to liberal democracy. This assertion contradicts with the author's claims that terrorists are rational actors:

In other words, brutality and a perceived willingness for self-sacrifice—both of which contradict Western logic—have an exponential effect on the generation of dread among Western audiences (Ganor, 2015, p. 24).

On tackling the contradiction:

In reality, it would be more accurate to describe the struggle of a democratic state against a terrorist organization as one of reverse asymmetry, in which Goliath is chained and bound by liberal democratic values, a commitment to civil liberties, and national and international laws that preclude the use of effective action against terrorism while permitting the use of only a fraction of the state's military, intelligence, and operational capabilities (Ganor, 2015, p. 4).

The author also addresses the “proportionality dilemma”, which he concludes to be “particularly problematic and flawed, since it is

essentially unenforceable and relies on ill-defined categories” (Ganor, 2015, p. 38). As a solution, he proposes an equation which helps calculate whether the use of force in a given situation is proportional or not, stating that this equation: “...also offers a concrete example of how liberal democracies that contend with terrorism may balance efficient counter-terrorism efforts with liberal democratic values” (Ganor, 2015, p. 63).

The author insists on presenting “hybrid terrorist organizations” as the new, evolved form of terrorism. From a critical perspective, this is a clever way of defaming political organizations that are forced to resort to violence to defend themselves. Instead of seeing Hamas and Hezbollah as political entities that also have military activity because they are faced by an entity that is occupying or threatening their lands, Ganor frames them as essentially terrorist by inventing a new category for them: “hybrid terrorist organizations”, which he defines as having “at least two parts: a military arm and a political arm”, and in some cases a third part which provides “social welfare services and free or subsidized religious and education services” (Ganor, 2015, p. 2).

### **3.2.5. The Issue of State-Sponsorship of Terrorism**

As critical terrorism scholars have complained, in terrorism studies literature, non-Western states are always the ones accused of adopting terrorism:

...the use of terrorist organizations became a relatively attractive and cheap alternative for various states that became involved in terrorism, including the Soviet Union, Libya, Iran, and Syria. As former KGB spy General Aleksandr Sakharovsky noted... (Ganor, 2015, p. 64).

However, its [al-Qaeda] continuing evolution has largely been dependent on the operational, financial, and ideological support of states such as Sudan, Afghanistan, and Iran (Ganor, 2015, p. 65).

What makes these baseless claims significant is that they are expressed by someone who is known as an international terrorism expert. Ganor certainly knows that al-Qaeda and Iran have nothing in common, but nevertheless publishes such lies because the linking of different villains together is an effective strategy in constructing a certain polar definition of Self vs. Other. His statement is what critics of Orientalism have called “constructed ignorance” (Sardar, 1999), “wilful misunderstanding and knowledgeable ignorance” (Sardar, 1999, p. 19).

As the analysis of his works demonstrates, the distinguishing characteristic of Boaz Ganor as a terrorism expert is his innovative approach to the subject, reflected in his constant invention of concepts and expressions. The idea of terrorists as rational actors rather than irrational, sensual beings, the concepts of “hybrid terrorist organizations”, and the “proportionality dilemma”, where he presents a formula for calculating whether the use of force in a given situation is proportional or not, are some examples. Ganor discusses the issue of proportionality in detail in the third chapter entitled *The Proportionality Dilemma in Countering Terrorism*, in which he suggests that the regulations imposed on armed conflict by the Geneva and Hague Conventions and other international protocols are not applicable to today’s conflicts between states and non-state actors, and thus should be changed to fit the new circumstances. The definition of civilian and combatant, and the principle of proportionality are, according to Ganor, especially

problematic, so he sets out to provide new definitions. “[A] new model of proportionality” (Ganor, 2015, p. 50) is suggested in the shape of a formula which allows one to decide whether the use of force in a given situation is proportional or not. What makes all these suggestions significant is that scholars like Ganor are in effect defining what is acceptable in military conflict for America, and the world. Since Israel is often criticized for its disproportionate use of force, the definition of what is acceptable in warfare is changed. Ganor even suggests changing the way important concepts such as civilians and non-state actors are defined. All this innovation in the field of terrorism studies has the effect of justifying Israeli violence and establishing the Israeli perspective as the norm.

### **3.3. Bruce Hoffman**

Bruce Hoffman is one of the most prominent sources on terrorism. A prolific writer on the subject, widely cited, and affiliated with academic institutions throughout the world, Hoffman is Director of the Center for Security Studies, Director of the Security Studies Program, and a tenured professor at Georgetown University’s Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, as well as a visiting professor at the Institute for Counter-Terrorism, Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya, Israel (Hoffman, n.d.). Whilst describing Hoffman as having “a virtually unrivalled international profile in the field of terrorology and is regularly described as one of the world’s leading experts on terrorism”, Burnett and Whyte also point out his high profile government positions, such as membership of the U.S. Department of Defense Counterterrorism Advisory Board, and regard him as an example of the embeddedness of terrorism experts with government (2005, p. 8).

He is also on the board of directors of a number of journals related to “terrorism”.

Hoffman’s studies and research on the subject of terrorism are extensive, and his language appears more or less objective and unbiased. This has led him to be established as a fair and reliable academic expert on the topic, and his writings used as standard texts. His book *Inside Terrorism* (2006) is an extensively used textbook in courses related to terrorism studies (Gunaratna, 2008). Here, two of his reports published by RAND, entitled *Holy Terror: The Implications of Terrorism Motivated by a Religious Imperative*, and *The Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, are analyzed.

### 3.3.1. Islamic Terrorism as the Epitome of Religious Terrorism

In a report published by RAND (*Holy Terror*) Hoffman addresses the relationship between religion and terrorism. Comparing religious terror with its secular version, he asserts that since the two have “different values systems, mechanisms of legitimization and justification, concepts of morality, and worldview”, the religious terrorist does not recognize any moral or practical constraints, and unlike secular terrorists, engages in indiscriminate violence (Hoffman, 1993). Beginning the report with examples of Jewish (the zealots), Islamic (assassins) and Hindu (the thugs) groups, it uses fair and objective prose, but as the report proceeds, more and more of the examples, especially the contemporary ones, are ones related to Islam. Gradually the report becomes a discussion of Shia terrorist groups, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Ayatollah Khomeini. Hoffman increasingly aims to present Shia groups as the embodiment of religious terrorism, which, as he implied earlier, is much more dangerous than secular terrorism.

The following quote has the effect of simultaneously appearing objective towards all religions, while presenting Shia Islam as the main threat: "...terrorism motivated by religion is by no means a phenomenon restricted to radical Islamic terrorist groups in the already violent Middle East. Many of the same characteristics of Shi'a terrorist groups...are also apparent among militant Christian white supremacists in the United States and at least some radical Jewish messianic terrorist movements in Israel" (Hoffman, 1993, pp. 5-6).

In his discussion of the aforementioned "Christian white supremacists", Jews are highlighted as the group's main targets, viewed as "imposters" and "children of Satan who must be exterminated" (Hoffman, 1993, p. 7). Hoffman also resorts to the familiar tool of equating the villains: "There are, in fact, striking parallels between these groups and religiously motivated Islamic Shia fanatics in the Middle East" (Hoffman, 1993, p. 8). The difference lies in the fact that the Shia groups have been more successful in causing death and pain: "Although the white supremacists have thus far caused far less death and destruction bloodshed than the Islamic Shia terrorists, evidence has come to light that at least some white supremacists had laid plans to engage in indiscriminate, mass killing" (Hoffman, 1993, p. 8).

Hoffman does devote some space to the discussion of Jewish terrorism, albeit about half a page, compared to nearly three and a half pages on white Christian supremacists, and about two pages on Islamic terrorism with a focus on Shia groups. He also briefly discusses Sikh terrorism, in slightly over half a page. The Jewish terrorists are described as "Jewish fanatics" who have a "millenarian and apocalyptic vision" (Hoffman, 1993, p. 9), meaning that they are not mainstream, only a small minority who do not possess the ability to inflict much danger. From the three



Jewish terrorist plans discussed by Hoffman, one led to the killing of three people, whilst the other two were discovered by the Israeli security forces. Hoffman does not refer at all to the other types of political violence carried out against Israel's non-Jewish citizens, and presents the Israeli regime as opposed to and in battle with Jewish terrorism. Including this brief discussion of a marginal Jewish terrorist group in his study of religious terrorism is effective in convincing the reader of Hoffman's unbiased stance towards the issue. A more detailed discussion of the issue of Jewish terrorism is provided in the section on Hoffman's *Anonymous Soldiers* (2015).

In another report published by RAND (*The Logic of Suicide Terrorism*), Hoffman addresses the issue of suicide terrorism, where the commonality with Israel is constructed in a more forceful and manifest manner. In fact, the overall goal of the text is to demonstrate that post-9/11 America has had to learn to cope with what Israel has been coping with for decades, and that the use of excessive force, in some cases, is inevitable. The main themes prevalent in this report are listed below:

### **3.3.2. Commonality between Israel and America**

As in many pro-Israel texts, 9/11 is presented as a turning point that placed the US in the same victim category as Israel, enabling Americans to feel firsthand the woes of Israel. Hoffman talks about how, after 9/11, Americans have had to face the same security measures that Israelis have lived with for decades: "In the United States in the twenty months since 9/11 we, too, have had to become accustomed to an array of new, often previously inconceivable security measures" (Hoffman, 2003, p. 1). He also places al-Qaeda and Palestinians in the same category: "This is what al Qaeda hoped to achieve on 9/11 in one stunning blow—and what the

Palestinians seek as well, on a more sustained, if piecemeal, basis” (Hoffman, 2003, p. 4). Such approximations are prevalent throughout the report. Constructing a commonality between America and Israel is not limited to the case of 9/11 and continues throughout the report in sentences like: “With every new threat, that is, our everyday life becomes more like Israel's” (Hoffman, 2003, p. 1). The use of the expression “our daily life” makes this sentence powerful and personal for American readers.

### **3.3.3. Israel as an Example**

The theme of commonality between America and Israel concludes in the assertion that because Israel has been experiencing terrorism longer than “us”, it can provide its valuable counter-terrorism experience to America and the rest of the Western world. This theme is introduced in the first sentences of Hoffman’s report and is repeated throughout:

To understand the power that suicide terrorism can have over a populace—and what a populace can do to counter it—one naturally goes to the society that has been most deeply affected. As a researcher who has studied the strategies of terrorism for more than twenty-five years, I recently visited Israel to review the steps the military, the police, and the intelligence and security services have taken against a threat more pervasive and personal than ever before (Hoffman, 2003, p. 1).

### **3.3.4. Dehumanizing Palestinians**

A prevalent theme in pro-Israel literature, the dehumanization of Palestinians is achieved by Hoffman by citing the irrational nature

of Palestinian resistance against Israeli occupation, and the Palestinians' disrespect for human lives: both their own and their enemies. Whilst a Palestinian's willingness to give up his or her life for the sake of their cause can be viewed as a sacrifice, the author claims that this is because human life is not valuable for them. They reach the ultimate decision to give up their lives not because Israeli occupation has made things unbearable for them, their families and their communities, or they have no way of obtaining weapons and fighting equipment that does not endanger their lives, but because in contrast to Israelis, they just dislike life. Hoffman refers to the concept of "the joy of death":

This is what is known in the Shia Islamic tradition as the *bassamat al-farah*, or "smile of joy"—prompted by one's impending martyrdom (Hoffman, 2003, p. 5).

### **3.3.5. Excusing Israeli Policies and the Occupation**

After describing the threats that Israel faces, threats that America has begun to share in the post-9/11 era, Hoffman rationalizes and justifies Israel's policies, the way it deals with terrorism, and even its occupation of Palestinian land. Following a statement by a senior IDF commander stating that they do not want to appear as though they have "no military answers" (Hoffman, 2003, p. 6), Hoffman continues: "Thus security in Israel means to the IDF an almost indefinite deployment in the West Bank—a state of ongoing low-level war" (Hoffman, 2003, p. 6). Still, Israelis have chosen such a path out of necessity; they do not celebrate violence or death, but have made a rational choice to ensure their security. In other words, here and in similar texts, Israel is portrayed as the 'reluctant warrior' who is forced to use force: "Many Israelis do not relish involvement in this protracted war of attrition, but even

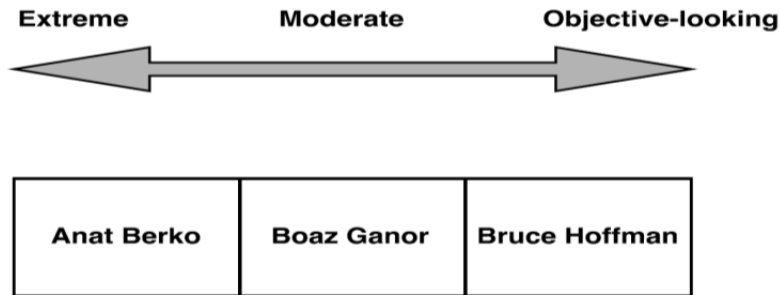
more of them accept that there is no alternative” (Hoffman, 2003, p. 7). The author’s insistence that Israeli counterterrorism policies have actually been effective supports his argument that they are rational. He cites individual experiences and sources to prove his point. Referring to a South African couple who had recently immigrated to Israel, he states: ““Just the other day," the husband told me, "even my wife said, 'Thank God we have Sharon. Otherwise I wouldn't feel safe going out'"” (Hoffman, 2003, pp. 7-8).

What distinguishes Hoffman from more overt pro-Israel scholars is that he is a prominent academic expert who takes every measure to preserve his objective and neutral image. In this report, he does mention in passing that although Israeli counter-terrorism measures have been effective, they might not be the real solution to the problem but a temporary remedy. Another feature of Hoffman’s work is that he insists on highlighting Shia terrorists: distinguishing between them and Sunni groups whilst simultaneously stating that they have the same beliefs and use more or less the same tactics. Hoffman refers to Shia thinkers and leaders such as Ayatollah Khomeini, Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah, Mostafa Chamran and Ayatollah Bagher al-Sadr.

#### **4. Discussion**

Analysis of the themes reflected in pro-Israel terrorism studies reveals a spectrum of pro-Israel terrorism experts, those overtly portraying Muslims as the sole enemy, and dehumanizing them in an extreme manner at one end, and those only vaguely and indirectly make the same claim, putting more emphasis on appearing unbiased and authoritative on the subject, at the other (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1- The Spectrum of Pro-Israel Terrorism Experts**



Despite such differences between the analyzed texts, there are central ideas and themes that are agreed upon by all scholars, which in spite of their differences, ultimately facilitates the construction of a common identity. There are experts who believe Muslim terrorists to be irrational, sensual creatures, and those who see them as rational, calculating beings. But they all agree that they are dangerous, not only for Israel but for the entire globe, and especially for the US.

This research also demonstrates that pro-Israel scholars feel entitled to objectify, study, and introduce Muslims/Palestinians to Americans. In the work of Berko, for example, Palestinian prisoners are reduced to the status of wild, caged animals, in conflict with themselves and others, while the clever, educated, normal Israeli scholar possesses the ability and intellect to study and analyze them. Israelis also have the right to study and introduce themselves, in the form of Israel studies courses and publications (see Mousavi and Kadkhodae, 2016), but not in quite the same way they study and objectify their adversaries. And this rarely

happens the other way round, meaning that Palestinians/Muslims usually do not have the opportunity to introduce either themselves or Israelis to Americans, something that might partially be attributed to the asymmetry between the two groups in terms of *power* (Palestinians, for example, never have the opportunity to interview and analyze the psychology of Israelis, because they do not possess the material infrastructure to imprison them) as well as silencing strategies used by Israel advocates.

Themes identified through the critical discourse analysis of pro-Israel academic discourse on terrorism that contribute to the construction of a common identity between America and Israel, can be divided into two broad categories: those that advance a specific definition of the *Self*, and those that determine the characteristics of the *Other*. In most cases, the characteristics attributed to the two groups are in polar opposition to each other, such as moral vs. immoral, normal vs. strange, etc. The analyzed data also indicate the existence of a third category, which consists of themes that aim to define what normality and legality actually mean, or in other words, reconstruct norms and reinterpret laws.

Themes falling into the first category (defining the Self) define what Israel is. Traits are carefully selected as those considered virtuous or at least normal by Americans. According to these themes, Israel is certainly a liberal democracy, although terrorists are making it difficult for it to stand by its liberal democratic values. It has to find a middle line between upholding such values and providing security to its citizens. This is a dilemma that other Western countries face, or will face in the future, since Islamic terrorism is a global threat. In other words, Israel is reluctant but compelled to use force to preserve its security: a reluctant, moral warrior. This also means that Israel, along with the West in general and America in particular, is a victim, albeit not a helpless one.

Like America, Israel uses force to overcome the threat of terrorism; it is powerful.

Personal stories or accounts of individuals in the texts also portray Israelis as people with normal familial relationships and social structure: the sort of relations that are considered normal and understandable by Americans. This strengthens the commonality dimensions, allowing Americans to consider Israelis as similar to themselves and members of the ingroup.

On the other hand, the second set of themes (defining the Other) portray the Palestinians/Muslims as possessing the opposite, unfavorable characteristics. Their governments are either autocratic, or if they adhere to any form of democracy, the result is usually devastating and results in the abuse of liberal democratic values. Palestinians enjoy killing, and violence and death has a special place in their culture. They smile when they see the faces of their victims, are happy to kill as many Jews as possible, and are eager to die themselves; they adhere to “a cult of death and killing” (Berko, 2007, p. 171). Depending on whether the author considers them rational or irrational, this violent and dangerous Other either chooses terrorism to inflict as much material and psychological damage, and media attention, as possible, or is incapable of understanding that terrorism does not bring success to anyone and so damages him/herself as much as the enemy. According to this narrative, Israel and America are the real, true victims, whilst Palestinians falsely present themselves as victims to sooth their own consciences. Israel possesses power, and the morality and responsibility to use it, whilst Palestinians resort to cowardly tactics like using civilians as human shields. And finally, Palestinians live in patriarchal, polygamous families in which women are discriminated against, the individual is forced to give up everything for the community, and people’s emotions and energies are

violently expressed: traits that are despised by Americans and catalyze their Otherization of Palestinians.

As well as constructing the Self and Other in overtly Orientalist style, pro-Israel scholars attempt to define international laws and regulations in such a way as that Israeli policies and actions are deemed acceptable and legal. They invent and popularize concepts, such as “defending democracy” (see Pedahzur, 2002, for a discussion of the concept), which enable them to excuse and normalize Israel in American academic discourse and make its actions appear reasonable, and to demonstrate that its choice of policies is in harmony with American identity. Pro-Israel scholars’ pursuit of establishing themselves as objective, unbiased academicians guarantees that their discourse is well-accepted in academic circles and that they are successful in this redefinition of norms.

## 5. Conclusion

The current paper argues that forming a common identity between Israel and the US rests on three main pillars: defining the Other, which in most cases consists of Palestinians and/or Muslims, defining the Self, which is America and Israel, entities that are located in the West and conform to Western values, according to Israel advocates, and defining norms, which contribute to normalizing Israel’s otherwise unacceptable and illegal policies and behavior. The vast scholarship on terrorism, what has been termed as terrorology, terrorism industry etc. has, over time, served mainly to build and maintain the first pillar, although it does contribute to constructing the second pillar to some extent. Terrorism has been used to defame those who have been considered as America’s enemies: communists during the Cold War, and Islamic



fundamentalists more recently, and in both instances Israel advocates have seized the opportunity to carve out a common identity through a highlighted and exaggerated common sense of victimhood. The current article thus concludes that through the aforementioned three broad categories of themes, active use of discursive strategies, and prolific production of academic discourse, pro-Israel terrorism experts contribute to the formation of a common identity between Israel and the United States.

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