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# Spectacle, Sacrifice and the State: The Legacy of European Fascism and the Revival of Martyrdom in the Modern World

## Abstract

The rise of political martyrdom in the contemporary world is not a new phenomenon but can be traced back to at least the early Twentieth Century with the rise of European Fascist movements. Both they, and the fascist-like movements of today, share a cluster of characteristics that allow for fruitful comparisons of the ways in which martyrdom spectacles are used to communicate with constituent populations, facilitate a culture of violence, perpetuate their revolutionary zeal and demonstrate the characteristics of the ideal citizen. Examining four major movements; Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, the Palestinian Hamas and the modern Iran, this dissertation argues that 1) the use of martyrdom by today's fascist-like fundamentalists is not unique, but follows a well-known path taken by the earlier fascist movements of the twentieth century; 2) martyrdom spectacles can be used to build support within the population and present a narrative of the ideal citizen; 3) there are different uses of martyrdom spectacles between the regime phase and the movement phase for both fascist and fascist-like movements. By exploring the relationship between martyrdom spectacles and their disciplining nature, we can better understand the logic of contemporary fundamentalist movements and the techniques they used to achieve power and maintain control.

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By

Gerald Robert Pace

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Advisor: Micheline Ishay, Ph.D.

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## **Abstract**

The rise of political martyrdom in the contemporary world is not a new phenomenon but can be traced back to at least the early Twentieth Century with the rise of European Fascist movements. Both they, and the fascist-like movements of today, share a cluster of characteristics that allow for fruitful comparisons of the ways in which martyrdom spectacles are used to communicate with constituent populations, facilitate a culture of violence, perpetuate their revolutionary zeal and demonstrate the characteristics of the ideal citizen. Examining four major movements; Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, the Palestinian Hamas and the modern Iran, this dissertation argues that 1) the use of martyrdom by today's fascist-like fundamentalists is not unique, but follows a well-known path taken by the earlier fascist movements of the twentieth century; 2) martyrdom spectacles can be used to build support within the population and present a narrative of the ideal citizen; 3) there are different uses of martyrdom spectacles between the regime phase and the movement phase for both fascist and fascist-like movements. By exploring the relationship between martyrdom spectacles and their disciplining nature, we can

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## **Chapter One: The Spectacle of Martyrdom and the Politics of Radical Extremism**

The attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> dramatically reshaped the debate surrounding terrorism in the modern world. Belligerent religious fundamentalists, harboring an antipathy for democracy and liberal individualism, transformed the seemingly sacred concept of martyrdom into a weapon of war. Yet despite the shocking nature of the attacks, there is a resonance in this rhetoric of martyrdom and in the spectacles surrounding these events that is reminiscent of earlier illiberal movements. This dissertation argues that; 1) the use of martyrdom by today's fascist-like fundamentalists is not unique, but follows a well-known path taken by the earlier fascist movements of the twentieth century; 2) martyrdom spectacles can be used to build support within the population and present a narrative of the ideal citizen; 3) there are different uses of martyrdom spectacles between the regime phase and the movement phase for both fascist and fascist-like movements. By exploring the relationship between martyrdom spectacles and their disciplining nature, we can better understand the logic of contemporary fundamentalist movements and the techniques they used to achieve power and maintain control.

Mussolini defined fascism as a political synthesis of democracy and monarchy in the office of the *Duce*<sup>1</sup> who would represent the interests of the state rather than the individual (liberal democracy) or the royal family (monarchy). Economically, fascism serves as a synthesis of the prevailing economic systems of capitalism and socialism through the corporate syndicalist model.<sup>2</sup> Emilio Gentile goes on to define fascism as:

A modern political phenomenon, which is nationalistic and revolutionary, anti-liberal and anti-Marxist, organized in the form of a militia party, with a totalitarian conception of politics and the State, with an ideology based on myth; virile and anti-hedonistic, it is sacralized in a political religion affirming the absolute primacy of the nation understood as an ethnically homogeneous organic community, hierarchically organized into a corporative State, with a bellicose mission to achieve grandeur, power and conquest with the ultimate aim of creating a new order and a new civilization.<sup>3</sup>

Gentile's definition with a focus on illiberalism, a community and a revolutionary desire to create a new national order and a new civilization through a political religion are themes similarly observed within the fascist-like Islamic fundamentalist movements today.

Islamism, or the entry of Islam into the political realm, has its modern ideological roots in the 1960's with the writings of Sayyed Qutb, Abu al-Ala

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<sup>1</sup> Leader.

<sup>2</sup> Corporate Syndicalism is a hierarchical economic system in which private property is allowed to exist but decisions about the direction of manufacturing, labor issues, etc. is left largely to the state. In Mussolini's words: "But brought within the orbit of the state, Fascism recognizes the real need which gave rise to socialism and trade-unionism, giving them due weight in the guild or corporative system in which divergent interests are coordinated and harmonized in the unity of the state." Benito Mussolini, *The doctrine of fascism* (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1935), 11.

<sup>3</sup> Emilio Gentile, "Fascism, totalitarianism and political religion: definitions and critical reflections on criticism of an interpretation," *Totalitarian Movements & Political Religions* 5, no. 3 (December 2004): 329.

Maududi and Ruhollah Khomeini. These three activists argue that a political form of Islam, informed through Islamic Sharia law, could address the failures of the Arab world by reawakening Muslims to the virtues of the faith and providing them with an ideological platform by which to counter the onslaught of neo-Western imperialism.<sup>4</sup> Political Islam became the answer to all of the economic and political ills of the community in much the same as fascism did for the Italians and Germans. Couple this with the illiberal, anti-Western, revolutionary character of Islamism and we can begin to treat belligerent Islamic fundamentalism as fascism-like.

In making the comparison between fascism and a fascist-like movement such as belligerent Islamic, I employ three broad themes. The first is *myth construction*, which explores the importance of what I label first martyrs and the subsequent narrative surrounding martyrdom. Second, the *disciplining nature of martyrdom* and how martyrdom serves a disciplining role in society by demonstrating both the characteristics of an ideal citizen but also a thinly veiled threat as to the implicit power of the movement to any who would challenge the regime. Third, *the institutionalization of spectacle* through exploring the mechanisms by which movements once in power have created permanent martyrdom shrines in order to symbolize the violence of the act and the power of its disciplining potential.

Guy Debord referred to spectacles as a social relationship between people that

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<sup>4</sup> Assaf Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 115–116.

is mediated by images.”<sup>5</sup> In the case of martyrdom, spectacle refers to the creation of a narrative of martyrdom that elevates an act of violence to a communal sacrifice for the good of the larger society. Narratives, however, are more than words; they are symbols, images, sights, sounds, and even smells that can all combine to create a transformational experience. The specific forms these spectacles may take can vary from movement to movement and country to country, but the intent of the spectacle is always the same: to provide a highly orchestrated outlet for political participation in which the individual is lost in the rhetoric of the movement.

For “when man is disdained for his rational idealism, ...he is reduced to a cellular element of the crowd, and as the crowd, becomes easy to influence not through appeal to rational, but solely by means of the instruments of psychological manipulation and moral violence imposed through the manipulation of conscience.”<sup>6</sup>

The spectacle of martyrdom becomes an agitational force, orchestrated in such a way as to spur the audience into action and instill a sense of holy sacrifice for the movement whereby symbolically providing a tangible example of the ideal member of the community.

Fascist Italy’s use of spectacle began early in Mussolini’s reign with his program known as the “Battle for Grain” (1925)<sup>7</sup> which intended to improve Italian agricultural output but also redesigned much of the Italian landscape around Rome by

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<sup>5</sup> Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1995), p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> Gentile, Emilio, “Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion: Definitions and Critical Reflections on Criticism of an Interpretation,” *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, vol. 5, no. 3, Winter 2004, pp. 339-340.

<sup>7</sup> This was the same year that Mussolini’s dictatorship was proclaimed—and three years after he assumed power in 1922.

transforming cropland that had not been tillable into fertile production areas. The transformation of the Italian countryside was a permanent demonstration to the Italian people of the power of fascist ideology and billed as proof of the power of fascism's ideological and technological superiority. Nevertheless, the remaking of the soil was not the same as the remaking of the individual Italian into a fascist ideal. A prolific use of spectacle came in Mussolini's marriage of a martyrdom narrative with Italian Catholic traditions. In 1932, Mussolini consecrated the Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista whose centerpiece was a museum to the martyrs that was designed around Catholic architecture while using all the lighting, sounds and visual aids of the modern era to connect the idea of personal sacrifice to what Mussolini argued was the sacredness of the regime.

Nothing, however, came close to Mussolini's grandest display of spectacle and martyrdom: the epic play *18BL*. *18BL* was one of the largest theatrical productions ever created. Throughout the 1920's and 1930's, Mussolini sought to build upon cultural affinities for opera and stage productions as a way to connect his regime with traditional outlets for entertainment. The idea was to create patriotic narratives about the regime and package them in ways that would be inspiring to the masses. The Nazis would borrow from this same logic by creating an entire class of theatrical performances known as *Thingspiel* or theater for the masses. These productions, much like their Italian counterparts, focused on the national community and unity among the citizens. In the Nazi case, the government went so far as to

construct over sixty-six *Thingspiel* theaters, which were dedicated venues for just such productions.<sup>8</sup>

18BL has, as its hero, a truck to epitomize the ultimate sacrifice of the self into a mechanized modern ideal form geared towards the fascist youth. 18BL was the model number of the story's protagonist, a truck. There is a tremendous significance in the hero being not a man, or even something identifiable with a name, rather they act as part of a greater whole. In being identified solely with a serial number, 18BL would serve as the representation of the mass man who finds themselves not in their pursuit of individuality but through the glories and emotions of the community. The production was so expensive (18BL is "martyred" at the end of the play and actually destroyed) and over such an expansive amount of territory that it was produced only once.<sup>9</sup> However, it integrated three themes within the spectacle of martyrdom that will remerge in the contemporary world; the grand displays to monumentalize specific martyrdom events, the institutionalization of ritualized practices to allow opportunities of communal participation and the celebration of individual sacrifice as witness to the greater good of the cause.

These same themes have spread from their European Fascist roots to fundamentalist movements in the modern world. Nearly fifty years after the fascist Martyr Museum constructed in 1932 in Rome, Italy, Iran constructed its own

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<sup>8</sup> H. Eichberg and R. A Jones, "The Nazi Thingspiel: Theater for the Masses in Fascism and Proletarian Culture," *New German Critique* (1977): 133–136.

<sup>9</sup> Not coincidentally, the play was staged in a large swath of land that had been reclaimed with the "Battle for Grain."

Martyr's Museum in Tehran. Unlike Mussolini's centralized museum in Rome, the Tehran Martyr's Museum was just one link in a long chain of such memorials that spread throughout the Iranian countryside to bring the narrative of martyrdom to the people and to connect the revolutionary fervor to post-revolutionary generations.<sup>10</sup> The Iranian network of martyrdom memorials includes museums, cemeteries and fountains spouting blood red water and an array of propaganda posters officially sanctioned by the Martyrdom Foundation (Bonyad-e shahid) which was established by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1980 to develop an iconography of martyrdom and officially sanctions and celebrates those deemed as martyrs. Would-be martyrs are literally given a "seal" of approval in the form of a dove drinking from a tulip along with a certificate to the family acknowledging that their death was that of a martyr.<sup>11</sup>

This dissertation asks three main questions. First, under what conditions can a culture of violence that embraces martyrdom be cultivated? Second, how is the spectacle of martyrdom used to consolidate a larger audience or nation? Third, what historical lessons can be drawn and then applied to fascist-like movements of today to better understand the motivations behind martyrdom spectacles and how to lessen their impact? This is not intended to be an exhaustive account of all fascist and fascist-like movements. Nor is it intended to imply that martyrdom spectacles are the sole territory of fascist movements (memorial cemeteries of national heroes can be

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<sup>10</sup> Scott Peterson, "In Tehran's Martyrs' Museum, Iran courts new believers," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 6, 2007, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0606/p16s01-wome.html>, (accessed June 30, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> Marine Fromanger, "Variations in the Martyrs' Representations in South Tehran's Private and Public Spaces," *Visual Anthropology* 25, no. 1-2 (January 2012): 50.

found in arguably every nation). Rather, the focus is on the use of the myth of martyrdom for political gains both in terms of popular support and strategic military goals by fascist and fascist-like movements by elevating it from an act to a spectacle through the construction of narratives of sacrifice and disseminating them through the use of monuments, plays, media, cultural norms, parades and memorials.

Contemporary manifestations of the spectacle of martyrdom in the Islamic World are similar, though not identical, to historical manifestations within fascist movements. In both instances the social spectacle surrounding martyrdom and the symbolism of myth, such as self-sacrifice, served as catalysts to galvanize people within disenfranchised civil societies. The spectacle of martyrdom stems from a similar reaction to modernity thus leading to its intricate ideological justifications and dissemination strategies. Understanding the recurrence of this social phenomenon in greater depth enables us to comprehend the use of martyrdom for political strategies.

1) *Under what conditions can a culture of violence that embraces martyrdom be cultivated?*

The appeal of martyrdom is most prevalent within gelatinous societies that lack autonomous institutions within civil societies—societies which have no real democratic traditions and whose political institutions suffer from a crisis of legitimacy. These same conditions provide a fertile ground for the rhetoric of totalitarian movements, which have historically used an economic or political crisis to highlight the system's vulnerabilities and to offer radicalized political alternatives. Without robust civil society institutions, totalitarian movements can offer a credible



challenge to the existing weak political systems; they promote the idea of sacrifice and shared glory as a way to consolidate the population behind them. Martyrdom can then become one tool in the pursuit for social cohesion and the assumption of political power.

The term martyr comes from the Greek *μάρτυς* or “witness.”<sup>12</sup> Expanding on this original definition, I treat martyrdom as a sacrificial death show cased to a broader audience, with witness and society being paramount. Witnessing is an act that assumes at least three reference points: the witness, the oppositional force (whom the witnessing is directed against), and the society/audience interpreting the act as a sacrifice in their name. Society’s perception of the act as indeed a sacrifice is what distinguishes a martyr from a murderer or a self-martyr from a suicide. The spectacle of martyrdom, thus, can be understood in the context of the religion, history, and cultural dynamics and of the audience that perceives it.

The *act* of martyrdom may be a single moment and isolated incident. Yet, the *spectacle of martyrdom* is the collective celebration and glorification of the act disseminated to or witnessed by the masses. In tracing the process of martyrdom within fundamentalist movements I have uncovered the following pattern: In stage one, the movements themselves are products of the unique political and cultural environments in which they emerge. In each case, there is an inherent myth about martyrdom. These particular cultural myths form the original foundation of the

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<sup>12</sup> Brettler, Marc. “Is there Martyrdom in the Hebrew Bible?” in Margaret Cormack’s *Sacrificing the Self: Perspective on Martyrdom and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford, 2002), 2.

concept and inform the society/audience as to how to interpret an act of martyrdom. Stage two of the process occurs when the movement integrates the myth of martyrdom into its ideology. It is at this stage that the movement reinterprets<sup>13</sup> the myth of martyrdom and imbues it with political resonance. Stage three occurs when the movement publicly recognizes a particular act as martyrdom and then performs acts of celebration to both revere the act and the movement's ties to its sacrifice. The important point is not *if* an act of martyrdom has occurred but rather that the movement *publically claims* that an act has occurred and presents that act as a means for societal celebration. Finally, the society witnesses directly or indirectly the spectacle and interprets its value. In this way the societal audience is not a passive observer but an actual actor within this process, and society's response (whether positive, negative or neutral) will impact both the way the movement celebrates future acts of martyrdom and the degree to which these acts will be publically recognized.

Within this process of politicization, two broad figures of martyrdom emerge—the heroic and the transformational. Heroic forms of martyrdom apply to movements like Fascists Italy or Nazis Germany. Here the martyr is presented as someone to venerate, as an icon or a heroic ideal. Transformational visions of martyrdom are different in that they ask the masses not to simply venerate but actually to become martyrs. Here the act of martyrdom becomes a purification

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<sup>13</sup> By reinterpret I mean integrates the original inherent myth into their political narrative/rhetoric. Generally they do this in such a way that they modify the original interpretation to suit their own political purposes.

process, a mechanism by which individuals sacrifice their individuality to become part of—and witness to—the cleansing vision the movement promotes. That sacrifice can also serve as a conduit to promote and strengthen linkages between the movement and the friends and family the martyr left behind. The utilization of these two forms of martyrdom seems to coincide directly with the political position of the movement. I argue that we can think of the parties as being in one of two positions: there is the movement stage and the regime stage. In the movement stage, groups use heroic images of martyrdom and actually call for “blood” martyrs that are deemed as useful in justifying the political legitimacy of the movement. In the regime phase, the transformational use of martyrdom is prioritized as a way of solidifying the party’s grasp on power and to perpetuate the revolutionary fervor for future generations.

2). *On the Role of Myth Construction: How is the spectacle of martyrdom used to consolidate a larger community or nation?*

Martyrdom and myth making are endogenous to the investigated movements I explore. The relationship between movements and martyrdom hinges on the power of myth. A myth is:

“not a false explanation by means of images and fables, but a traditional narration which relates to events that happened at the beginning of time and with the purpose of providing grounds for the ritual actions of men today, and, in a general manner, establishing all the forms of action and thought by which man understands himself in his world.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Paul Ricoeur. *The Symbolism of Evil*. Translated by Emerson Buchamas. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967) p. 5.

Myth is essentially the construction of political identity construction, providing at varying times something worthy of life or death. The characteristic attributes of martyrdom such as sacrifice, witness, selflessness, courage, determination, all done in the name of society, is right in line with a fundamentalist conception of a revolutionary new civilization. The very image of the martyr is a transitional figure that *bridges the gap* between the old, imperfect conception of man and the idealized. Symbolically, as the martyr is separated from their body they simultaneously cast away their old self and are reborn. This rebirth through spilt blood is seen as part of the foundational narratives for both the Iranian and the Nazi regimes. The Ayatollah Khomeini referred to the essential nature of the Black Friday Martyrs<sup>15</sup> to the success of the revolution. “Our movement is but a fragile plant. It needs the blood of martyrs to help it grow into a towering tree.”<sup>16</sup> Hitler viewed the deaths at the Beer Hall Putsch<sup>17</sup> of sixteen Nazis as essential in the rise of Nazism so much so that in the *Nazi Heilgeseschichte* literally translated as “Nazi salvation history,” a song was sung annually to remember the fallen and to connect their blood as possessing a redemptive quality for Germany. “We feel enriched / By the blood of those who fell /

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<sup>15</sup> The Black Friday Martyrs are the approximately 88 civilians who were killed on September 8, 1978 when they refused to leave Jeleh Square and were fired upon by the Shah’s forces. Heather Lehr Wagner, *The Iranian Revolution* (Infobase Publishing, 2010), 62–63. This is discussed in more depth in chapter three.

<sup>16</sup> Elaine Sciolino, *Persian Mirrors: The Elusive Face of Iran* (New York: Free Press, 2000), 174.

<sup>17</sup> The Beer Hall Putsch was Hitler’s unsuccessful 1923 attempt to replicate Mussolini’s March on Rome. For two days (November 8-9, 1923) Hitler and around 600 fellow Nazis attempted to take over the Bavarian government by holding the Governor hostage in a Beer Hall but unlike Mussolini, the reaction from the state was swift and Hitler was quickly arrested and imprisoned. Richard J. Evans. *The Coming of the Third Reich*. (New York: Penguin, 2003) pp. 177-206.

So that their banner pure and bright / Shall give us revelation of the Reich / (...) /  
With your flame our life begins.”<sup>18</sup>

In *Reflections on Violence*, Georges Sorel argues that myths serve as a means for articulating how one should act in the present. Though they are connected to past events and may have a predictive view of the future, their real usefulness lies solely in their ability to regulate present behavior. He further argues that these myths are not divisible: “It is the myth in its entirety which is alone important: its parts are only of interest in so far as they bring out the main idea.”<sup>19</sup> Sorel’s particular interest revolves around the myth of the general strike for socialism. His concern is that by focusing on the feasibility of the general strike one loses the essence of what the representation of the general strike means for the proletariat.

...[T]he myth in which socialism is wholly comprised, i.e. a body of images capable of evoking instinctively all the sentiments which correspond to the different manifestations of the war undertaken by socialism against modern society. Strikes have engendered in the proletariat the noblest, the deepest and the most moving sentiments that they possess; the general strike groups them all in coordinated picture and, by bringing them together, gives to each one of them its maximum intensity; appealing to their painful memories of particular conflicts, it colours with an intense life in the details of the composition presented to consciousness. We thus obtain that intuition of socialism which language cannot give us with perfect clearness—and we obtain it as a whole, perceived instantaneously.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Herbert Boehme, ‘Kantate zum 9 November,’ in H Boeme, *Gesaenge unter der Fahne: Vier Kantaten*, Munich, 1935, pp. 38, 44. Quoted in Guenter Berghaus’s, ‘The Ritual Core of Fascist Theatre: An Anthropological Perspective,’ in Roger Griffin and Matthew Feldman, eds. *Fascism: Critical Concepts in Political Science*, Routledge, London, 2004. P. 93.

<sup>19</sup> Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*. (Cambridge, New York: 1999) pp. 116-117.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 118.

In that sense, the martyr is for fundamentalists what the general strike is for socialist anarchism, a highly orchestrated act that would at once capture the imagination, inspire the nation and be a symbolic expression for all that was good about the revolution.

Part of what makes Sorel's argument attractive is the idea that we cannot dissect part of the myth from the meaning of the myth to the broader population. One of his examples is the early Christian myth of the imminent second coming of Jesus. If we argue against the myth because Christ failed to materialize within an 'imminent' period of time (assuming that 2000 years stretches at least slightly beyond the limits of imminence) we fail to grasp how the myth not only played out for First Century Christians, but also for Christians today. The reality of the myth is less important than the impact the narrative has on the lives of believers.

Similar to Sorel, Ernst Cassirer argues that myths are best understood not as isolated phenomenon but within a larger context, and in particular, with the language we use to construct the narratives. This distinction is not one of object versus form but of object *fusing* with form.<sup>21</sup> Here, martyrdom may be the object, but the very concept is inextricably linked to the process of its construction and how the population experiences it. While the idea of martyrdom may have existed in some raw form within each culture (we see this most profoundly in the Italian and Iranian cases just in different ways), the myth of martyrdom is not an organic evolution; it is an

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<sup>21</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State* (Yale, New Haven: 1971) pp. 277-296. See also Ernst Cassirer *Language and Myth* (Dover: New York, 1953).

artificial creation linked to previous cultural norms. Drawing from this, I explore the construction process by focusing on the socio-economic and ideological context of fundamentalist movements, on various mechanisms of dissemination (ritual, symbol, theatre, art, etc.), and the mass response to these spectacles as a means for gathering political support and creating a new man.

The dissemination presents one of the ironies of political propaganda: images are generally read backwards by the viewers (or put differently, reinterpreted for political purposes after the fact).<sup>22</sup> The perceiver is confronted with the image—in this case martyrdom—and then reads the image backwards based on their past knowledge. If the image of martyrdom is presented in a way that effectively ties in with the inherent cultural myths about martyrdom, then the viewer is more likely to respond in a way that is accepting of the act. If, however, the presentation is too far removed from the general myth, it will likely be rejected. This is one reason why religious fundamentalist groups are limited in their use of martyrdom operations because every major world religion argues for the value of life as a core tenet. And thus while the destruction of life may be permissible under certain given conditions, it cannot be too widespread and will still be limited in terms of which targets are appropriate.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Raphael Sassower and Louis Cicotello. *Political Blind Spots: Reading the Ideology of Images*. (Boulder: Lexington Books, 2006) p. 25.

<sup>23</sup> A reason for Hamas' self-imposed restraint in suicide campaigns during the Second Intifada after they began targeting too many civilians (particularly children) and suffered a significant backlash by the Palestinian population.

3). *What historical lessons can be drawn and applied to current martyrdom movements?*

The illiberal substance of fascism's totalitarian ideology did not die with the movement in 1945,<sup>24</sup> but echoes in many fundamentalist movements today. Throughout the contemporary Muslim world, Islamists movements like Hamas and Iran resonate with the totalitarian principles that first emerged in fascist ideology. This is not coincidental. Not only do these movements share (in varying degrees) a cluster of characteristics but also they emerge under, and actively capitalize upon, similar political and socioeconomic conditions that allow for broad comparative analysis. This research is concerned with comparing one shared characteristic, the construction of a culture of violence and the role martyrdom spectacles play in their consolidation of power.

The scope of potential manifestations of violence is broad. Fascist-like movements tend to have a variety of armed militant wings<sup>25</sup>, paramilitary youth groups<sup>26</sup>, and general campaigns of terror against opposition groups or those deemed potential threats of, or traders to, the movement<sup>27</sup>. Each of these in their own way can

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<sup>24</sup> The Fascist Party with the imminent Allied advance into Italy removes Mussolini from power in 1943. The German government, which occupied the northern regions of Italy, rescued Mussolini from an Italian prison and placed him in charge of a puppet regime known as the Salo Republic until his assassination in 1945.

<sup>25</sup> Sturmabteilung (SA), Schutzstaffel (SS), Squadristi (Blackshirts), Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, and the Nirouye Moqavemate Basij.

<sup>26</sup> Hitler Jugend, Opera Nazioale Balilla, Piccole Italiane, Wandervogel, Ausschuss für Schülerfahrten and the Nirouye Moqavemate Basij.

<sup>27</sup> Kristallnacht, Nacht der langen Messer, Racial Purity Laws, Sharia Law, etc.



contribute to, and/or operate from, cultures of violence. Rather than exploring every possible contributing factor, the dissertation focuses on the concept of martyrdom as a mechanism to construct a generalized account as to how these groups can cultivate a culture of violence and the essential aspect that violence plays for extremist movements. The focus on martyrdom is useful because it allows description of the complex and transformative role that violence serves in bolstering illiberal, extremist movements while simultaneously creating support within a broader population. In this way, the argument goes beyond a more limited account of acts of martyrdom, fix discussions as to who fits the label of martyr or the use of martyrdom as a tactic, and instead treats martyrdom conceptually as a nodal link between three different sets of actors—the movement, the individual and the audience.

The argument here differs from prevailing studies of martyrdom that are generally divided into two approaches; one is strategic and focuses on martyrdom as a political tool for action<sup>28</sup> and one is moral, examining its religious significance and cultural relevance. While these approaches help to demystify the concept and place it outside the context of a solely religious act, neither incorporates a plausible role for the community who responds to these acts and perceives them as having some aspect of worth or value for the larger community. The argument laid out in the dissertation is a societal explanation and arguing that traditional accounts focus on wrongly on those that are targeted rather than the society that they are speaking too.

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<sup>28</sup> Pape (2005), Bloom (2005).

## **A Case for the Comparison of Martyrdom Spectacles in Fascist and Fascist-Like Movements**

### **Ideological Comparison**

The argument here is not that fascist and Islamist movements are identical, but that they share a cluster of characteristics that allow them to be reasonably compared. Fascists advocate an ideology that is hyper-nationalist, elitist, revolutionary (in the sense that it promotes a rebirth and renewal from what the fascists see as a period of political and economic decline), anti-Marxist, anti-conservative and anti-liberal. Fascist-like Islamists are revolutionaries, seeking to transform the entire social fabric of the community including the political, cultural and economic structures in the hopes of creating a world that emulates their conception of a religious utopia. Like fascism, fundamentalism is not simply a reaction to modernity: it is a product of it.

The Islamist's

“influences are anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism and anti-Westernism fused in symbiotic fashion with Western leftist ideologies and grafted onto a radicalized and politicized religious world outlook. Unlike the former they are not rejecting the ideas and symbols of modernity, they are adapting and using them.<sup>29</sup>”

Despite their differences, all extremist groups share the following cluster of characteristics: they are hyper-nationalist, elitist yet populist,<sup>30</sup> promote an ideology

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<sup>29</sup> Michael Whine. Islamism and Totalitarianism: Similarities and Differences. *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, v. 2, N. 2. (Autumn 2001), p. 57. For another take on the similarities between Radical Islam and European Fascism see David Goldfischer and Micheline Ishay, “Belligerent Islamic fundamentalism and the legacy of European fascism,” *The Fletcher Forum of World Politics* 32, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 63–82.

<sup>30</sup> A. James Gregor, *The Ideology of Fascism* (New York: Free Press, 1969).

that is revolutionary (in the sense that it promotes a rebirth and renewal from what the fascists see as a period of political and economic decline<sup>31</sup>), anti-conservative and anti-liberal.

### 1. Anti-liberal

Fascism is anti-liberal in that it rejects the very notion of individual liberty.<sup>32</sup>

Individual interest is sacrificed to the collective fascist will.<sup>33</sup> For example, Mussolini argued that fascism is

“anti-individualistic, the fascist conception of life stresses the importance of the State and accepts the individual only insofar as his interests coincide with those of the state, which stands for the conscience and the universal will of man as a historic entity.”<sup>34</sup>

The illiberal aspect of fascism cannot be underscored enough. Fascism is a direct attack on liberalism and human rights, which it sees as eroding the power of the state. “Liberalism denied the state in the name of the individual; fascism reasserts the rights of the state as expressing the real essence of the individual.”<sup>35</sup>

One implication of this is that fascism is inherently anti-democratic. Hitler argued that the Nazi Party “...is anti-parliamentarian, ...it rejects a principle by the

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<sup>31</sup> This conception of “revolutionary” comes from Roger Griffen’s, “*The Rise of German Fascism*,” in Neil Gregor’s *Nazism* (Oxford: Oxford, 2000).

<sup>32</sup> Stephen Holmes, *The Anatomy of Anti-Liberalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 1-13.

<sup>33</sup> Mabel Berezin, *Making the Fascist Self* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1997).

<sup>34</sup> Mussolini, Benito, *Fascism: Doctrine and Institutions*, (Ardita: Rome, 1935), 10.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

majority, by which the leader is degraded to the position of the executive of the will and opinion of others.”<sup>36</sup> Mussolini described

“the Fascist conception of the state [as] all-embracing; outside of it no human or spiritual values can exist, much less have value. Thus understood, Fascism, is totalitarian, and the Fascist state—a synthesis and a unit inclusive of all values—interprets, develops and potentates the whole life of a people.”<sup>37</sup>

The fascist critique of liberalism thus rests on the rejection of the individual as existing as an autonomous political agent outside the state and sets the stage for the call to sacrifice through martyrdom.

Islamist movements revive this same illiberal, anti-democratic trend especially when it comes to basic conceptions of state sovereignty and reason. If we take a standard definition of Westphalian sovereignty to mean “that states exist in specific territories, within which domestic political authorities are the sole arbiters of legitimate behavior,<sup>38</sup>” Islamists argue that this places man and domestic authorities as sovereign powers rather than vesting sovereignty in God—otherwise known as a state of jahiliyyah.

Sayyid Qutb, an ideological founder of Islamism, saw modernization as beneficial for progress, but negative in terms of the impact it had on society. The Enlightenment conception of reason assumes that mankind is God. For Qutb, God and the state are fused, man plays a part in the play, but is never author of the script. His

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<sup>36</sup> Adolph Hitler, “Mein Kampf,” in *Social and Political Philosophy: Readings from Plato to Gandhi*, eds. John Somerville and Ronald Santoni (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1963), 457

<sup>37</sup> Mussolini, Benito, *Fascism: Doctrine and Institutions*, (Ardita: Rome, 1935), 11.

<sup>38</sup> Steven Krasner. *Sovereignty as Organized Hypocrisy*. P. 20.

most important contribution was the reformulation of jihad. Qutb saw the world as being in a state of *jahiliyyah*, an Arabic term that roughly translates into an “age of ignorance.”<sup>39</sup> The term is traditionally applied to the period of history before the Prophet Muhammad and his divine revelations. Qutb, however, viewed the Twentieth Century with its liberal, capitalist West and atheistic, communist East as returning to a state of jahiliyyah. Even countries with Muslim majorities were no longer fulfilling their Qur’anic obligations.

One of the most prominent characteristics of jahiliyyah is the rejection of sovereignty as vested in God for human or popular sovereignty<sup>40</sup>—a “rebellion against the sovereignty of Allah on earth [which] attempts to transfer to man one of the greatest attributes of Allah, namely sovereignty, by making some men lords over others.”<sup>41</sup> To combat this trend there are essentially three options available, the *Hijra* or a physical migration to remove oneself from a destructive society, educating others in order to reform the population to its purist state, or violence as a means to attack and deconstruct the old society in the hopes of constructing a new social and political order. Hamas followed Qutb’s approach and opted for violence, using “physical power and jihad to abolish the organizations and authorities of the jahili system which

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<sup>39</sup> William Shepard, “Sayyid Qutb’s Doctrine of Jahiliyya,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35 (2003), 522.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 524.

<sup>41</sup> Qutb, Sayyid. Translated with a foreword by Ahmad Zaki Hammad. *Milestones*, (Indianapolis: American Trust Press, 1990) p. 8.

prevent people from reforming their ideas and beliefs, forces them to follow deviant ways, and makes them serve other humans instead of their Almighty Lord.”<sup>42</sup>

An alternative account comes from Pakistani and Shiite Islamist Abul A ‘al Mawdudi (who was the ideological counter-part to Qutb within the Shiite Islamic world). Mawdudi argued that the Islamist political system is based on three principles, *tawhīd* (Oneness of God), *risāla* (Prophethood), *khilāfa* (Caliphate). Tawhid implies that God alone is the ruler of all, organic and inorganic and nothing else can control or dictate the limits of God’s power. Risala, the “*medium through which receive the law of God.*”<sup>43</sup> The two primary sources are the Qur’an and Mohammed’s authoritative interpretation. These two, taken together, comprise Shari’a law. Finally, Khilafa means representation. Man is God’s regent on earth and fulfills or ensures that God’s will is enacted. However, in terms of democratic possibilities, because all people are part of the khalafa no one person, group or dynasty can claim real power over the khalafa or the people. Everyone is equal because everyone in Islamic society (Muslims that is) enjoys the rights of the Caliphate. The community of believers will consent to a government formed and that government must always act under the will of the Caliphate and the guidance of the Shari’a. The government is merely an extension of the powers of the Caliphate. When the Caliphate, the people, no longer have confidence in the government they must

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>43</sup> Abul A ‘al Mawdudi. *Human Rights in Islam*. The Islamic Foundation, 1980, Second edition. p. 9.

step down.<sup>44</sup> The distinction between Western democracy and an Islamist interpretation of democracy lies in the notion of popular will. Western democracy assumes that the people share popular sovereignty. Islamist interpretations assume that God is sovereign and that the people are his Caliphs, or representatives. In such a case, the Umma supersedes the individual under Islamist interpretations, which is in contrast, ironically, to the Quran which speaks of the sanctity of human life. Under Western democracy, the people actually make law, under Islamic rule the people obey and fulfill the law that is already written.

## 2. Anti-Conservative

The fascist model advocates for a new social, economic and political system rooted in an idolized mythic past. The literature has been hesitant to use the label “anti-conservative” because, on the surface, fascism appears to be both reactionary and conservative. Under the Marxist interpretation, fascism is reactionary, serving as capitalism’s “last stand.”<sup>45</sup> Yet Mussolini and Hitler argued that fascism was revolutionary, not conservative. Rather than seeking to preserve the present order, both sought to transcend (perhaps even synthesize) the failed economics of capitalism and socialism and the politics of constitutional monarchy and democracy.<sup>46</sup> Once again the individual becomes sacrificed to the larger social and economic revolution as citizens are called to unify their will with the will of the state.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>45</sup> Robert S. Wistrich. “Leon Trotsky’s Theory of Fascism,” 11 (October 1976), 157-184.

<sup>46</sup> Mussolini, Benito, *Fascism: Doctrine and Institutions*, (Ardita: Rome, 1935), 20-25.

Islamists like Ahmed Yassin,<sup>47</sup> Abul A ‘al Mawdudi<sup>48</sup> and Ruhollah Khomeini<sup>49</sup> see their movement as one of religious purification.<sup>50</sup> Their focus is not a return to the past but a reengagement with what they see as the true interpretation of Islam and the foundation of an Islamic political project that is at once revolutionary and utopian. To achieve this end Islamists hijacked the idea of jihad from an internal struggle against the vestiges of sin (quietist interpretations of jihad) to an outward battle for social and political purification. Dating back to medieval times, jihad simply implied an individual’s “struggle for higher Islamic standards.”<sup>51</sup> Quietist interpretations of jihad are personal, internal efforts of purification and righteousness, with martyrdom—defined as an internal struggle—only one possible outcome of jihad. Islamists, both Sunni and Shiite, utilize Qutb’s interpretation emphasizing individual jihad nearly as importantly as the five pillars of Islam (of which jihad is not a part). Rather than viewing jihad as a struggle of the Islamic people against non-

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<sup>47</sup> Ahmed Yassin was a founder and spiritual leader of the Palestinian based Hamas party. Yassin was influential in framing the narratives around istishhad, or suicide martyrdom, in order to reconcile the act of suicide bombing within Islam. Anat Berko, *The Path to Paradise: The Inner World of Suicide Bombers and Their Dispatchers* (Westport, Conn: Praeger Security International, 2007).

<sup>48</sup> Abul A ‘al Mawdudi was a Pakistani Shiite Islamists who advocated for Pakistan to be an Islamic state and not simply a secular state for Muslims. Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *Mawdudi and the making of Islamic revivalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>49</sup> Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was the spiritual and political head of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979. Ruhollah Khomeini, *A Clarification of Questions: An Unabridged Translation of Resaleh Towzih Al-Masael*, A Westview replica ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984).

<sup>50</sup> Assaf Moghadam defines Islamists as those who “believe that the Quran, with its universal principles, provides a complete system and contains all the answers to life’s pressing questions.” *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2008), p. 115.

<sup>51</sup> Armstrong, Karen. *Islam*. (New York: Modern Library, 2002), p. 36.



believers, it is reconceived as an individual duty<sup>52</sup>, advocating what in Arabic is *istishhadi*<sup>53</sup> —one who martyrs himself.

Suicide in Islam is strictly forbidden, as well as the taking of innocent life, so the transition from martyr to self-martyr did require an ideological justification.

Hamas founder and spiritual icon, Shaykh Ahmad Yassin, distinguishes between suicide and martyrdom arguing:

Suicide means that someone has become tired or despairs of life and takes his own life. This is prohibited in Islam. Those who are martyred while defending their land, country, and people under occupation, however, know where they are going and carry out this because they want to be nearer to God. Consequently, what we are talking about here is martyrdom and not suicide operations.<sup>54</sup>

Islamists movements like Hamas reconcile the contradictions of self-martyrdom within Islam by positing it as an essential individual sacrifice for the larger will and community of God.

### 3. Hyper-nationalist

Extremist movements both past and present use the national card in different ways. Codreanu's Iron Guard movement in Romania fostered national sentiment in order to legitimize and preserve Romanian control over Transylvania (hotly contested by Hungary).<sup>55</sup> Mussolini utilized nationalism as a mantra for imperial expansion,

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 108.

<sup>53</sup> Daxie, Joyce. *Martyrs: Innocence, Vengeance and Despair in the Middle East*. (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 6.

<sup>54</sup> Document and Source Material. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Winter, 1998), 151.

<sup>55</sup> Zvi Yavetz. "An Eyewitness Note: Reflections on the Rumanian Iron Guard," *Journal of Contemporary History* 26 (September 1991), 597-610.

which he saw as essential for securing Italian economic independence.<sup>56</sup> The Iranian government promoted nationalism over a pan-Islamic ideology during its war against Iraq and continued to fan the flames of nationalism whenever domestic forces challenge the regime. Likewise, the idea of Pan-Islamism (the idea of a united Islamic population under a single caliphate) as a variant of nationalism focused on religious rather than ethnic or linguistic ties is attractive at different historical periods whenever the Islamic world is seen as threatened by outside influences.<sup>57</sup>

In each case, nationalism serves as a means of unifying people in a way that transcends partisan politics. Extremists view problems as national in nature and not specific to any class, race or other social cleavage. This implies that every problem and action, both public and private, becomes national in nature. A natural extension of this notion of nationalism is the fascist rejection of the individual outside the context of the state. The nation may be the focal point of extremist rhetoric, but the keystone to fundamentalist doctrine is the state itself at the expense of the individual. The state is the only absolute; groups, individuals, collectives, they are all merely relative.<sup>58</sup>

#### 4) Elitist yet Mass Based (Cult of Personality)

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<sup>56</sup> Marcello De Cecco, "The Economy from Liberalism to Fascism" in Adrian Lyttleton's, ed. *Liberal and Fascist Italy 1900-1945* (Oxford: Oxford, 2002).

<sup>57</sup> Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism since 1979* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>58</sup> Benito Mussolini, *Mussolini as Revealed in his Political Speeches, November 1914 August 1923* (Fertig: New York, 1976) 27.

Another defining characteristic is elitism and mass appeal. Extremist groups are populists in their support, but are highly elitist in their conception of life and the state. Fascist leaders see themselves as fulfilling the teleological movement of history, and thus wish to build a new state and man to achieve their rightful national greatness—greatness not defined by civil liberties or democratic appeal but by the megalomaniacal dreams of a leadership elite. Mussolini called for a *Risorgimento*—a rebirth—an attempt to connect the Italian present and future with its Roman past. In order to create this ideal man Mussolini had to compete against, and essentially counter, the three major sources of the Italian self—the family, regional culture and the Catholic Church. The most important of these to counter was the Church, for in order to create a new man the state needed to assert itself as the moral and cultural arbiter.<sup>59</sup> Ultimately Mussolini was able (at least partially) to mitigate the power of the Church by negotiating the Lateran Treaty (1929) with the Vatican and by integrating fascist dogma into religious ritual (most notably the “Mass of the Martyrs” which required the priests to perform the Roman salute during the Eucharist and liturgy).<sup>60</sup>

Similarly, Islamists are not immune to the lure of elitism. Maududi favored what he called “‘Islamization from above,’ through a state in which sovereignty

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<sup>59</sup> Berezin, Mabel. *Making the Fascist Self: The Political Culture on Interwar Italy*. (Ithaca: Cornell, 1997) 41-59.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* 87-89.

would be exercised in the name of Allah and the Sharia would be implemented.<sup>61</sup>” In Mawdudi’s conception, an Islamic vanguard was necessary to bring the revolution to the people. Here the people would be brought the ‘true’ interpretation of Islam and even though the movement would rest on mass support it would not be open alternative to interpretations of Islam which could challenge the dominance or the legitimacy of the movement.

The synergy of these four attributes sets the foundation for fundamentalist movements’ calls to sacrifice and why it is essential to focus on the spectacle of martyrdom for fundamentalist movements. With their critique of the liberal individualism in the spectrum of a mass based, anti-liberal, hyper-nationalism the call for sacrifice is elevated to an essential demand. The ideological foundation for fundamentalist movements requires that the individual be sacrificed for the collective good of the society and that through this sacrifice the individual becomes elevated within the mass. This is part of the irony of an elitist mass based movement—while within the masses all are essentially equal, by answering the call to sacrifice, the martyr distinguishes herself from the faceless masses and in this way achieves distinction within the movement.

### **Socio-Economic and Political Contexts**

The economic and political systems, if not completely discounted, face major credibility issues. Walter Laqueur argues that extremist parties arise in countries

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<sup>61</sup> Kepel Gilles. *Jihad: The Trial of Political Islam*. Translated by Anthony Roberts (Cambridge: Harvard, 2002) p. 34.

suffering from major economic breakdown and in which there is no tradition of democracy.<sup>62</sup> This is particularly evident when looking at the German example. Detlev Penkert identifies three reasons that the Nazis were able to come to power. First, Germany was disproportionately devastated economic during the Great Depression relative to the other European states. Second, the German people saw their economic and political crisis as extending back to 1918 and the Treaty of Versailles. Finally, the Weimar Republic (Germany's first republican form of government) was unable to gain legitimacy.<sup>63</sup> The combination of extreme economic breakdown and fledgling governments without a tradition of democracy helps to explain why fascism took hold in Germany and Italy but not the United States or Great Britain.<sup>64</sup>

While the crisis of modernity may account for the rise of fascism in Italy and Germany, it fails to explain its rise in Hungary and Romania in the 1930's where there was no history of democracy. "The crisis of democracy is [even more] irrelevant to the rise of radical Islam in Iran, Algeria, and Egypt or to secular totalitarian dictatorships such as that as Iraq."<sup>65</sup> Germany suffered the political and economic humiliation of defeat and the Treaty of Versailles. Italy believed it suffered a

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<sup>62</sup> Walter Laqueur. *Fascism: Past, Present, Future* (New York: Oxford, 1996) 16.

<sup>63</sup> Detlev Penkert, "The Crisis of Classical Modernity" from Neil Gregor's, ed. *Nazism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 104-105.

<sup>64</sup> For a deeper discussion see David Goldfisher and Micheline Ishay's, "Belligerent Islamic Fundamentalism and the Legacy of European Fascism" *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, Vol. 32:1, Winter 2008, pp. 63-82.

<sup>65</sup> Walter Laqueur. *Fascism: Past, Present, Future* (New York: Oxford, 1996), 227.

‘humiliated victory’ from its involvement with the Allies in World War I. However despite their grievances, Germany and Italy emerged as formidable powers. Romania, Afghanistan, Palestine, and Chechnya each deal with the legacy of colonial imperialism and its ability to shape their political and economic climates. Extremist groups within the former states strive for what they see as their rightful share of international prominence; in the latter states, these groups advocate breaking the bonds of oppression. For the Islamists and the fascists, it is the fragility of the prevailing political system, a gelatinous civil society, the weakness of their economic situation and perceptions of national humiliation that fosters a climate in which these movements can successfully operate.

To combat these economic and political crises, fundamentalist movements again reiterate their critique of liberal individualism and argue that the sacrifice of individual interest to the collective good is the only way to strengthen the community. Both the fascist and the belligerent fundamentalist claim that the Western liberal model turned their populations away from their traditional values and it is the rejection of these values that has led to their economic and political decline. The martyr becomes for these movements the physical manifestation of a violent return to the traditional values they seek to reinstate and the spectacle of martyrdom affords the movements the opportunity to frame the narrative of martyrdom in such a way as to ensure that the broader population sees this act as not only a sacrifice but a validation that the movement itself is just.

## On Spectacle, Martyrdom and Fundamentalism: Understanding Terms

### The Power of Spectacle

Guy Debord conceives of spectacle as the primary organizing principle of modern society. It is, in his words,

the “specialization of power... divid[ing] the world into two parts, one of which is held up as self-representation to the world, and is superior to the world. ...Spectators are linked only by a one-way relationship to the very center that maintains their isolation from one another. The spectacle thus unites what is separate, but it unites it only in its separateness.”<sup>66</sup>

Debord’s view of spectacle is one where images of happiness, inclusion and success mask the realities of material and political alienation in modern society and serve to perpetuate the prevailing power dynamics.

Contra Debord, Foucault argues that spectacles are actually relegated to a time of kings and empires and found its primary example in the “spectacle of the scaffold.”<sup>67</sup> It was the guillotine and public executions mixed with graphic and violent depictions of physical pain that are the cornerstones of Foucault’s conception of spectacle. For Foucault, the modern age, however, is the “exact opposite of spectacle,”<sup>68</sup> as public executions gave way to private and the idea of painful punishment was replaced by a modern prison system. Foucault sees the modern world as beyond the age of spectacle and into the age of surveillance.

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<sup>66</sup> Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, 12–22.

<sup>67</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 32.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

I believe that the spectacle of martyrdom provides a unique opportunity to draw from both positions. The spectacle of martyrdom examines the presentation of a narrative; the lessons the presentation is intended to teach; and, the unique way in which martyrdom reintroduces spectacle back into modern society to serve both as a mechanism for inclusion within the community as well as a manifestation of physical destruction and discipline. The first of these three attributes speaks to the difference between ritual and spectacle. At their core, rituals are about transformation, spectacles are about presentation.<sup>69</sup> A study on martyrdom would likely focus on the ritualized aspects of the act (sacrifice, witnessing, etc.) and its transformative nature, whereas this study focuses on the presentation of martyrdom by fundamentalist groups and the various techniques employed for dissemination.

Spectacles are also much more responsive to, and sensitive of, a poor reception by their targeted audience. "More so than ritual, spectacle is more immediately sensitive to upheavals in social order. Thus, particular spectacles are likely to immediately reflect these changes or to fall apart."<sup>70</sup> A case in point is how quickly Hamas reacted to the public outcry among Palestinians to their suicide campaign targeting busses filled with Israeli school children. The presentation of these acts was intended to demonstrate the determination and resolve Hamas had to confront Israeli occupation, but the inclusion of children within this narrative was seen as so extreme and repugnant that Palestinians rejected it en masse. Hamas

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<sup>69</sup> Don Handelman, "Rituals/Spectacles," *International Social Science Journal* 49, no. 3 (September 1997): 388.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 398.



quickly abandoned that practice and repackaged their presentation of martyrdom in a way that still supported their basic narrative but was more palatable to the population. Rituals lack this responsiveness and are generally conceived as seemingly timeless behaviors separate from popular norms.

The second major element is the lessons conveyed by the spectacles. The narrative of these spectacles are intending to portray cannot be so obtuse as to be misconstrued by the broader audience. They need to be universally read by their constituent populations and immediately understood. The presentations must essentially speak to the population and one of the most effective and easiest ways to achieve this is by integrating cultural norms that are already prevalent in society as to provide familiarity but to alter them in such a way as to make the presentation novel and unique. A spectacle has to have a spectacular element, it cannot simply be a retelling of traditional narratives in traditional ways or it fails to rise to the level of spectacular. These presentations must evolve to take different forms, or at the very least, have slightly different ways of executing the original presentation because a spectacle is essentially only spectacular in one moment, each attempt at replicating the same spectacle, the same presentation, in the same way, is that much less spectacular. The same arguably holds true for the narrative conveyed. There is fluidity then in both the presentation and the narrative. What does not change, however, is the underlying message that the organization and its ideology are the salvation of the people and their protector against the enemy. This one underlying

theme is the unifying force among all the spectacles of martyrdom across all the groups studied here.

The final element is perhaps best explained by returning for a moment to Foucault's arguments behind the spectacle of the scaffold. For Foucault, the executioner's scaffold was a spectacle in that it represented two constituent parts: the physical harm of the body<sup>71</sup> and the power dynamics portrayed by execution as a political act.<sup>72</sup> The scaffold is his particular focus, but the broader idea of torture and the physical desecration of the body *publically* is what give the act a spectacular resonance. An execution or a torture is also a political display portraying to the observers two lessons—the state will protect you from those who would do evil, and if you do evil the state will physically desecrate you. The transition from physical, public torture to private, shame based punishment marks the moment when Foucault sees the end of spectacle and the beginning of a surveillance society.<sup>73</sup>

The spectacle of martyrdom, however, has replaced the scaffold and transformed the narrative in such a way as to—arguably even by Foucault's criteria—reintroduce spectacle back into the modern world. The martyr reintroduces the body, the physical back into the equation by creating a public spectacle in which the physical destruction of the body serves to discipline and curtail dissent within the community and represents the power of the ideology. In the modern manifestation,

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<sup>71</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 10.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 21–22.

however, it is the executioner, along with the condemned, who suffer the physical repercussions.

### **Academic Treatment of Martyrdom**

I divide the academic treatment studies on martyrdom into four camps: oppositional, ideological, sociological and strategic. Focusing primarily on the role of the individual martyr, oppositional arguments are more likely to arise in the immediate aftermath of major terrorist attacks, when a sense of powerlessness and confusion are highest. These arguments suggest that attackers operate in a logical framework that is outside our traditional conceptions of political discourse—they do not adhere to international norms and negotiation would be fruitless as their aims ultimately seek the destruction of Western liberalism. Jean Bethke Elshtain (2003) presents an argument to outline a ‘just war’ against these kinds of martyrs. She insists that they are opposed to our freedoms—our freedom of religion, speech and democracy. No matter how we may change our policies as a nation, they will still condemn us based on our very founding, constitutional principles.<sup>74</sup> This position allows Elshtain to describe martyr/terrorists as “...not interested in the subtleties of diplomacy or in compromise solutions. ...No political solution is possible, ...when

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<sup>74</sup> Elshtain, Jean Bethke. *Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World*. (New York: Basic, 2003) pp. 4-6.

the terrorism is aimed at the destruction of innocent civilians—when that itself is the goal.”<sup>75</sup>

Such arguments give voice to a collective frustration for dealing with martyrdom terrorism in general by simply labeling them as a foreign ‘other’ that is diametrically opposed to politics or civility. Temporarily they may be satisfying, but they are simplistic arguments steeped in the rhetoric of good and evil. In the long run, such approaches are dangerous because they categorically define such actors as outside the realm of dialogue, leaving the only possibility engagement on the battlefield.

Like oppositional studies of martyrdom, ideological treatments also focus on the role of the individual martyr. However, arguing that we have to reject fixed explanations for particular choices as conceived by procedural frameworks, such as *realpolitik*, rational choice or moralist conceptions, researchers like Frédéric Volpi (2000) and Roxanne Euben (2002a) instead advocate exploring individual rationales. Unlike the oppositional approach, these studies treat the martyrs as rationally motivated political actors and aim to understand the logic behind their views. Both Volpi and Euben are interested in understanding the development of a radicalized concept of jihad that in turn buttresses a climate conducive to martyrdom. Volpi argues that notions of legitimacy, violence, morality and the like cannot be conceived of as wholly rooted in philosophical statements or in the actions or sayings of leaders (in terms of textual analysis of documents or speeches). Texts and actions are only

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

meaningful when understood within their social contexts—not outside.<sup>76</sup> This argument offers two points for the researcher. First, we cannot separate the ideological arguments from their social contexts (meaning they will likely not have the same resonance across space or time). Second, we cannot presume an adequate understanding of the over-arching ideology simply by analyzing the actions/words of the leadership elite. While they are no doubt influential, there will also be a process of individual digestion in which participants will forge an ideology of their own in applying it through the lenses of their own lives.

Susan Waltz (1995) advocates “an explanation that puts primary emphasis on psycho-social alienation is more compelling” than one which emphasizes economic or political rationales for the rise of fundamentalism,<sup>77</sup> but is such an approach as useful in explaining the subsequent willingness to martyrdom and sacrifice tied with modern (religious, ethnic, national) fundamentalist movements? This third methodological approach is sociological and hinges on the relationship between declining economics, a lack of political efficacy and insubstantial education as key variables.

Alan Dershowitz (2002) offers a potential transition between sociologically driven approaches and strategic ones. Dershowitz acknowledges that terrorism does

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<sup>76</sup> Frédéric Volpi’s “Understanding the Rationale of the Islamic Fundamentalists’ Political Strategies: A Pragmatic Reading of Their Conceptual Schemes During the Modern Era,” *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Winter 2000), pp. 74-75.

<sup>77</sup> Waltz, Susan. ‘Islamist Appeal in Tunisia,’ pp. 662-665 in *Fundamentalisms Comprehended*. Volume 5 of *The Fundamentalism Project*. 1995.

have substantive root causes but suggests that addressing them will only embolden terrorist leaders and make terrorism more attractive and materially beneficial.<sup>78</sup> Such arguments focus on organizational leadership rather than individual martyrs. Even when strategic approaches are geared to the individual level of analysis their work tends to ‘profile’ terrorists rather than explore motivating factors.

A common case example of the strategic approach is a 2003 study by Weinberg (et al.) in which the authors pose three basic questions: who are the bombers and why do they do it; how representative is the Israeli population attacked; and what is the impact on the Israeli citizenry at large? The study is markedly ambitious, but its treatment of homicide martyrdom as a tactical phenomenon limits the depth of analysis and renders their findings superficial. The authors conceptualize suicide bombing as “an operational method in which the very attack is dependent upon the death of the perpetrator.”<sup>79</sup> Their basic finding is that suicide bombers tend to be members who have a history of terrorist activities and undergo an extensive period of socialization. These ‘career terrorists’ generally engaged in earlier, less violent forms of terrorism before finally becoming a human bomb.<sup>80</sup> What the argument lacks is a discussion of the motivation to martyrdom. If the path to

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<sup>78</sup> Dershowitz, Alan. *Why Terrorism Works: Understanding the Threat, Responding to the Problem*. (New Haven, Yale, 2002) pp. 30-33.

<sup>79</sup> Weinberg, Leonard, Ami Pedahzur and Daphna Canetti-Nisim, “The Social and Religious Characteristics of Suicide Bombers and Their Victims,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 15, No. 3 (Autumn 2003), p. 139. It should also be noted that this definition of suicide bombing is borrowed from Boaz, Ganor in “Suicide Terrorism: An Overview” in Ganor, ed. *Countering Suicide Terrorism*, p. 1.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 142-143.

homicide martyrdom is a linear progression from rock throwing youth to saboteur to human bomber then how does a person first get on that path? And more importantly, what accounts for the countless ‘petty’ terrorists, the young rock throwers that will never progress to suicide bomber?

The general weakness of strategic arguments is that they focus solely on organizational rather than individual or social motivation (as perceived subjectively by perpetrators). The prospect of significant casualties (at least one in terms of the bomber) may account for why organizations employ this strategy but is not a satisfactory motivator to explain why volunteers offer their lives to kill others. Suicide based strategies rest on the voluntary participation of individuals. It seems appropriate to at least question if these individuals have their own motivations as martyrs. I suspect they do, and their individual rational should be given equal attention. Berman and Laitin do this by presuming martyrs as religiously motivated. But how do we explain Marxist movements like the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) that engaged in two suicide campaigns against Turkey (between July 1996 to October 1996 and again from March 1999 to August 1999<sup>81</sup>) or the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka? When the appeal to religious salvation is absent, why would individuals knowingly sacrifice themselves? Moreover, strategic arguments do not address why groups exhibiting similar characteristics do not employ suicide martyrdom. If suicide bombings rationality is facilitated by nationalist aspirations coupled with a weak

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<sup>81</sup> See Pape’s ‘Appendix: Suicide Terrorist Campaigns, 1980-2001’ in Pape, Robert. “Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism,” *American Political Science Review* Vol. 97, No. 3 (August, 2003) p. 359.

organization struggling against a strong state how do we account for the ETA Basque separatist in Spain or the Irish Republican Army in the United Kingdom? Both practice acts of terrorism and yet do not engage in suicide terrorism.

The preceding section summarized the main ways in which researchers have traditionally explored the concept of martyrdom. However, it also introduces a significant number of questions as to the limits of these various approaches. While exploring the causes and the logic of why individuals may desire to become martyrs are interesting questions, my approach is to look at what the nature of martyrdom is for the groups that use it and how they go about cultivating martyrdom spectacles to disseminating their message to the masses.

### **From Martyrdom as Ritual to Martyrdom as Spectacle**

The early Christian Church saw martyrdom as an act of submission and victimization, ultimately mimicking Christ's death on the cross. The reward for martyrdom was an immediate joining with Christ in heaven and a witnessing of the gospel here on earth.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, standard Islam accounts advocate martyrdom both in the text of the Koran and in the hadith.<sup>83</sup> Martyrdom in Islam is rooted in the same tradition as the Roman/Greco conception. Romans believed, like the Greeks, that one can only possess what they can freely give away. By volunteering one's life, the

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<sup>82</sup>Margaret Cormack. "Murder and Martyrs in Anglo-Saxon England" in Margaret Cormack's *Sacrificing the Self: Perspective on Martyrdom and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford, 2002), 58.

<sup>83</sup> The hadith is the record of the sayings and actions of the Prophet Mohammed.



Roman was not a victim but an empowered soldier proving his own authenticity.<sup>84</sup> Islamic revivalists, both Sunni and Shiite, borrow from this tradition by emphasizing individual jihad. Rather than viewing jihad as a struggle of the Islamic people against non-believers, it is reconceived as an individual duty<sup>85</sup> for Islamists, advocating what in Arabic is *istishhad*<sup>86</sup>—one who martyrs themselves.

Here lies the tension between martyrdom as ritual and martyrdom as spectacle. The ritualized martyr is rooted in a logic of victimization resting on the relative weakness of the movement and the need for witness thus highlighting one's willingness to die for it. Whereas the later may appear on the surface as resting on a position of weakness because they are losing their lives, however the underlying narrative is one of empowerment because rather than live under a regime they find unjust, the spectacle martyr is actively pursuing death. The following section examines four different narratives of martyrdom—two rooted in what I call victimization rituals and two rooted in empowerment spectacles and concludes with an account of the implications of viewing the fascist martyr as spectacle not ritual.

In my research, I review two strands of victim-martyrdom (Spartan and Christian) and two strands of self-martyrdom (Homicidal and Suicidal). A victim-martyr is one whose death comes at the hands of another while witnessing for their

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<sup>84</sup> Straw, Carole. "A Very special Death: Christian Martyrdom in its Classical Context" in Margaret Cormack's *Sacrificing the Self: Perspective on Martyrdom and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford, 2002), 46.

<sup>85</sup> Brown, Daniel. "Rethinking Tradition in Islamic Thought" in Margaret Cormack's *Sacrificing the Self: Perspective on Martyrdom and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford, 2002), 108.

<sup>86</sup> Daxie, Joyce. *Martyrs: Innocence, Vengeance and Despair in the Middle East*. (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 6.

cause. The martyr either is a victim on the battlefield, or is victimized and humiliated (as in the example of Christ). This strand has two variations: the *Spartan* and the *Christian*. The Christian martyr is arguably the more familiar of the two and is best illustrated by Biblical examples like Peter and Paul who are both crucified for refusing to renounce their belief in the Christian faith. The notion of ‘carrying one’s cross’ is illustrative of the burden one carries on their path as witness with the knowledge that her witnessing will likely lead them to scorn and ridicule at the hands of another.

The Medieval Crusaders or Husain ibn Ali, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, if they are to be conceptualized as martyrs, more appropriately fall under the *Spartan* category. A Spartan martyr is one who dies during battle in a struggle they cannot win, an individual so devoted to their cause that they would rather embrace death than surrender. The landscape of warfare is littered with such individuals. King Leonidas I of Sparta exemplified this spirit of defiance even at the face of death when he led his vastly outnumbered troops against the Persian army of Xerxes at Thermopylae.<sup>87</sup> Husain ibn Ali, revered by Shiite Muslims as their Third Imam and as a martyr who died while battling Caliph Yazid I’s Umayyad troops,<sup>88</sup> is another example. Unlike the Christian martyr whose refusal to resist death is tantamount to passively embracing it, the Spartan martyr distinguishes himself in his active and ferocious battle against the odds.

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<sup>87</sup> See for example John R. Grant’s, “Leonidas’ Last Stand,” in *Phoenix*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Spring, 1961), 14-27.

<sup>88</sup> Armstrong, Karen. *Islam*. (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 43-45.

There is something that resonates about a Spartan or Christian martyr that makes their death easier to accept or understand. Perhaps we find comfort and dignity in one's ability to publicly maintain her beliefs, or are inspired by heroism and valor. There is arguably a resonance about a victim that makes it easier to identify; what becomes more difficult to understand is the transition from victim-martyr to self-martyr. The inherent difference between the two is the transference from victimhood to empowerment.

By taking his own life, the self-martyr rejects the power of the 'Other' (however this cohort is defined) to choose his destiny, leaving the matter of life and death to his choosing. There are two variations within this strand; *suicidal* and *homicidal*. The historical record of the suicidal martyr dates back at least to the Roman soldier Vulteius who, speaking to his troops during a battle they were incapable of winning, argues that suicide (as opposed to surrender and capture) was desirable: "But at least our suicide will demonstrate to the witnesses that we are unconquered, *indomiti*."<sup>89</sup> The unconquerable spirit is the rhetorical foundation of suicidal martyrdom—by taking their own blood they deny their enemies victory (rather than being defeated, they defeat themselves). Yet suicidal martyrdom is not always conceived militarily. Tibetan monks who burned themselves in protest<sup>90</sup> of the Chinese policy in Tibet (1959) may arguably be labeled suicide martyrs because they

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<sup>89</sup> Barton, Carlin. "Honor and Sacredness in the Roman and Christian World" in Margaret Cormack's *Sacrificing the Self: Perspective on Martyrdom and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford, 2002), 26.

<sup>90</sup> Burning of course also has symbolic value as many religious offerings are offered to the gods through burning.

perceived this extreme sacrifice as their only form of witness against Chinese aggression to their homeland and culture.

The final strand of self-martyrdom is the *homicidal* martyr. Journalistic, popular, even academic literatures generally label these combatants as ‘suicide terrorists’ or ‘suicide bombers’<sup>91</sup> yet this erroneously places the emphasis on the act of suicide. Advocates of this narrative of martyrdom often wish to define the term in such a way as to highlight the element of sacrifice and selflessness of the participant while failing to acknowledge that the act of murdering others is the primary goal with their death only secondary. Perhaps it is because the act of self-murder seems so against the grain of logic that the academic community privileges this aspect over the murder of others. I believe, however, it is important to clarify that there are really two analytically distinct strands of martyrdom at play—suicidal *and* homicidal.

The Biblical account of Samson is the prototypical example of homicidal martyr. After being imprisoned, blinded, and humiliated by the Philistines, Samson clearly had one objective in mind—revenge—even if it cost him his own life.

When they stood him among the pillars, Samson said to the servant who held his hand, “put me where I can feel the pillars that support the temple, so that I may lean against them.” Now the temple was crowded with men and women; all the rulers of the Philistines were there, and on the roof there were about three thousand men and women watching Samson perform. Then Samson prayed to the Lord, “O Sovereign Lord, remember me. O God, please strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get my revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes.” Then Samson reached toward the two pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, Samson said, “Let me die with the

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<sup>91</sup> See for example: Shaul Mishal’s “The Pragmatic Dimension of the Palestinian Hamas: A Network Perspective,” *Armed Forces and Society*, v. 29, n. 4, Summer 2003, pp. 569-589 and the International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism’s, *Countering Suicide Terrorism*, Feb 20-23, 2000.

Philistines!” Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more people when he died than while he lived.<sup>92</sup>

This image of Samson eerily echoes contemporary cases of homicide martyrs and hints at the logic behind their acts of violence—through their death they can wage a mightier vengeance than if they lived.<sup>93</sup> Offered as a public good, homicide-martyrdom is the hardest to sell, but if implemented effectively it can have a powerful political payout, demonstrating arguably the highest level of commitment while providing an aura of the ‘rightness’ for a cause secured through the ultimate sacrifice.

Earlier I argued that martyrdom has replaced Foucault’s scaffold to reintroduce spectacle back into political society but I have yet to account for why that matters. As long as martyrdom is conceived as a ritualistic practice, then it is something that becomes exceptionally difficult to prevent because the groups who engage in martyrdom are portrayed as unyielding zealots and the individual martyrs as irrational fanatics. However, in conceiving of martyrdom as spectacle and in focusing on the narrative of martyrdom as a presentation *rather than* as a ritual, we can construct policies based on denying opportunities for spectacular events, rob fundamentalist movements of the power to disseminate the spectacles and ultimately understand that spectacles are themselves self-limiting.

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<sup>92</sup> New International Version, Judges 16:25-30.

<sup>93</sup> Uzi Arad breaks down this model even more by arguing that there are really two models here—the ‘Samson model’ which is retaliatory and the ‘Saul model’ which is preemptive (see Uzi Arad’s “Do Nations Commit Suicide? A Middle Eastern Perspective” in the International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism’s *Countering Suicide Terrorism* (February 20-23, 2000) pp. 13-20.

The real power of Foucault's scaffold, of the guillotine, was not in the single head that it could swiftly dispatch, but in the egalitarian nature of its implied threat—that the next head could easily be yours. The spectacle of martyrdom is only successful when the events are indeed spectacular, and every successful narrative raises the bar on subsequent events. Moreover, events that are too spectacular, too egregious, run the risk of alienating the audience and being more destructive to the perpetrators than to their targets.

### **Fascism and Fundamentalism in the Literature**

In an interview to the British press, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi described Mussolini's rule as a "benign dictatorship," going so far as to say "Mussolini did not murder anyone. Mussolini sent people on holiday to internal exile."<sup>94</sup> Berlusconi's off the cuff remarks are not merely historically inaccurate, they are indicative of ongoing efforts to distinguish fascist regimes merely by the degree of their brutality, rather than their structure, ideology, programs, etc.<sup>95</sup> This confusion as to the meaning of fascism demonstrates the degree to which political scientists have failed to distinguish what fascism is to the larger public.

Studies on fascism generally fit into four debates. The first (1945-1950's) generally neglects fascism as a distinct political phenomenon and instead focuses on totalitarianism (of which they argue fascism is merely a strand). By the 1970's the

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<sup>94</sup> Alexander Stille, "The Latest Obscenity Has Seven Letters," *The New York Times*, 13 September 2003. [newspaper on-line]; available from *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/09/14/opinion/14FRYE.html?th> (accessed 14 September 2003).

<sup>95</sup> For his part, Berlusconi was trying to differentiate Saddam Hussein's regime (which was not fascist) from Mussolini's.

discipline generally derided the notion of fascism as totalitarianism and set about on two diverging paths—definitional and causal. Arguably the more familiar of the two, the definitional debate attempts to generalize fascism as a movement as it concerns itself with finding a fascist minimum. The causal camp, focusing instead on merely putative fascist movements, seeks to understand why fascist movements achieve power, generally arguing a modernization thesis. Finally, the modern debate (post-Cold War) argues that a second coming of fascism is imminent and seeks to understand how these new movements may look, and what their impact may be.

The first post-War attempts to deal with fascism generally misunderstood the movement and focused instead on its outcome. The horrors of the Holocaust blocked any attempt at creating some generic conception of fascism. Perhaps a reflection of Cold War antagonisms and the undeniable atrocities of the two regimes, scholars define totalitarianism by comparing Nazism and Stalinism.<sup>96</sup> Hannah Arendt, one of the first and most influential scholars of totalitarianism, goes so far as to dismiss Mussolini's Italy as an irrelevant, authoritarian regime.<sup>97</sup>

This position gives too little credence to the political, social and economic ideology underpinning fascism and privileges too highly the destructive and murderous aspects of the Hitler and Stalin regimes. While scholars of fascism tend to systematically discount this discussion of "totalitarianism," they did establish two

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<sup>96</sup> Gilbert Allardyce "What Fascism is Not: Thoughts on the Deflation of a Concept," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 4 (April 1979): 371.

<sup>97</sup> David Roberts, *Nazism, Fascism, Totalitarianism: the Layers of Historical Understanding* (Rostock: University of Rostock, 2001 ), 13-14.

inter-related concepts of fascism that would arise in the definitional and causal debates. First, Arendt rightly argues that leaders rest on mass support—masses, not classes are the engine driving fascist movements.<sup>98</sup> Second, she argues that a high degree of social atomization precedes fascist movements and the subsequent alienation leads to the formation of the “mass man,” abandoning their individual self to the masses.<sup>99</sup>

This latter point hints at what will be taken up by the causal debate; namely that underlying forces promote or at least allow for the rise of fascist movements. The first major causal effort is by Barrington Moore who looks at the role of revolution and the relationship between the landed upper classes and the peasants. Moore’s thesis is that the kind of modernization that occurs is in direct response to the political relationship between the classes.<sup>100</sup> From this argument, Moore sees three kinds of modernization projects: Bourgeois revolutions (England, France, the United States) combining capitalism and parliamentary democracy,<sup>101</sup> communism (Russia and China) which he sees as successful peasant revolutions occurring prior to modernization<sup>102</sup> and what he labels a “revolution from above,” fascism.

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<sup>98</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1958), 308.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 316-317.

<sup>100</sup> Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant In the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), xvii.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 413.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 201-227.



For Moore, fascism is a product of modernization movements in which capitalism is highly developed but there is no subsequent political or liberal revolution.<sup>103</sup> Astounding in scope, Moore's work suffers in terms of generalizability. While alluding throughout to Germany, his only example of a "revolution from above" is Imperial Japan. This of course begs the question as to whether Japan really was fascist,<sup>104</sup> something Moore cannot answer because he never defines what fascism actually is. With Moore's conception of fascism as merely modernization in the absence of a popular revolution, is this really anything other than traditional authoritarianism? If this is the case, then does it make sense to differentiate between fascist movements and any other conservative movement?

Henry Ashby Turner resurrects the idea of modernization theory and fascism except that, unlike Moore, he focuses on Germany and Italy. Turner's concern is on the desires of the fascist leadership—do they wish to continue modernizing or to undo it?<sup>105</sup> For Turner, we must not start a study of fascism with the assumption that there certainly is a generic conception of fascism. What we can do is look at putative fascist movements from the process of modernization and thus explore their similarities and contrasts.<sup>106</sup> Accordingly, he argues that Mussolini saw the modernization of Italy as an end in itself whereas Hitler viewed it merely as a means of achieving his desired

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 433-452.

<sup>104</sup> For a discussion on how fascism does not apply to Japan see George Macklin Wilson, "A New Look at the Problem of 'Japanese Fascism,'" *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, X (July 1968).

<sup>105</sup> Henry Ashby Turner, Jr., "Fascism and Modernization," *World Politics*, 24 (July 1972), 550.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 564.

*Lebensraum* (the policy of retrieving the arable soil in Eastern Europe) and afterwards would be abandoned for a return to an agricultural life.<sup>107</sup>

This is the paradox of Turner's thesis: how can fascism be inherently anti-modern, as Turner argues, while at the same time desiring economic modernization and industrialization? How are we to view two fascist movements, both utilizing modernization, one for its own sake, and one merely to gain the means by which to turn back to a pre-modern past? If modernization is used as a means on the one hand, and as an end on the other, does this alter any of the essential characteristics of fascism within either movement? In his critique of Turner's thesis, A. James Gregor argues that modernism may not be the best lens by which to address fascism as it suffers from the same intangibility.<sup>108</sup> What exactly is meant by "modernization"? Is it economic, political, cultural, urbanization or something else? And how does one go about measuring modernization and its impact relative to fascism?<sup>109</sup>

Largely in response to the failings of these two preceding debates, an emphasis on defining, or at the very least conceptualizing, fascism arose. There are two schools within this debate, those that believe that a generally applicable definition of fascism is possible (the fascist minimum school) and those who argue that fascism is a historical aberration unique to one historic setting. The general

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 551-552.

<sup>108</sup> A. James Gregor, "Fascism and Modernization: Some Addenda," *World Politics*, 26 (April 1974), 370.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 372.

debate is best summarized through an exchange between Gilbert Allardyce, Stanley Payne and Ernst Nolte in *The American Historical Review*.

Rather than creating a definition of what fascism is, Allardyce begins the debate by arguing what fascism is not. Fascism is not a generic concept, and it has no applicability outside of inter-war Italy.<sup>110</sup> Fascism is not an ideology.<sup>111</sup> Nor is fascism a personality type.<sup>112</sup>

With regard to proposition one, Allardyce attacks both the fascist minimum and fascism as modernization schools. By arguing that nationalist movements cannot share programmatic agendas, there can be no such thing as “unifascism.”<sup>113</sup> Similarly, examining fascism through the lens of modernization theory is futile as there is no *theory* of modernization (merely modernization theories). And, logically, how can modernization theory adequately explain fascism’s advent in one of the world’s most modernized countries and in a developing one, but nowhere in-between?<sup>114</sup>

In regards to the second proposition, Allardyce questions whether we can really view Mussolini or Hitler as pragmatic men looking for a deeper philosophical tradition in which to root their theories. Even if they were, how can we trust either man with their record of lying and genocide? The real push towards a fascist ideology

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<sup>110</sup> Gilbert Allardyce, “What Fascism is Not: Thoughts on the Deflation of a Concept,” *The American Historical Review* 84 (April 1979), 370.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 378.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 385.

<sup>113</sup> “Unifascism” is his term for universal fascism. *Ibid.*, 371.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 372.

only came in the 1930's, almost as an afterthought by Hitler and Mussolini while both attempted to mold fascism into their own visions.<sup>115</sup> The final critique primarily responds to the reductionist assertion that fascism is a personality type.<sup>116</sup> This argument is generally disregarded in the literature. After all, if fascism truly were a personality type, why would it be so present in two countries but relatively absent after their defeat?

In response to Allardyce, Stanley Payne and Ernst Nolte argue that indeed there can be such a thing as a fascist minimum—radically national,<sup>117</sup> revolutionary movements that are at the same time anti-Marxian, anti-liberal and anti-conservative.<sup>118</sup> The concern is not whether these movements shared a common program, as Allardyce argues, but whether they share enough characteristics as to place them in the same genus. Even when we do see programmatic similarities after the formation of the Axis alliance it seems less a shift in the doctrinal aspects of fascism but of great-power domination by the Germans.<sup>119</sup>

Rooted in this on-going dialogue, the fourth fascism debate argues that one can logically speak of such a thing as a fascist minimum and exploring it highlights the emergence of modern fascist movements. Two of the most prominent voices in

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 378-381.

<sup>116</sup> See Erich Fromm's *Escape from Freedom*.

<sup>117</sup> "Fascism begins at the point where nationalism becomes radicalized and, therefore, changed." Stanley Payne and Ernst Nolte, "What Fascism is Not Thoughts on the Deflation of a Concept: Comment," *The American Historical Review* 84 (April, 1979), 393

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 389.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 390.

this contemporary debate are Walter Laqueur and A. James Gregor. Laqueur's fascist minimum is defined as being: nationalist; hierarchical party structure; party and, if it attains power, the state is run by quasi-religious cult leaders; anti-liberal, anti-conservative and anti-Marxist; party doctrine as a required statement of faith forced on the whole citizenry through constant promoted propaganda; and the threat and use of violence against political opponents.<sup>120</sup>

From these minimums Laqueur argues that there are two emerging strands of fascism in the modern world—neo-fascism and clerical fascism. Like its predecessor, neo-fascist movements are still European in their constituency. Where they differ is in their abandonment of military aggression with other continental powers and their shift in emphasis towards European defense.<sup>121</sup> But as I discussed earlier, this category of neo-fascism seems redundant in that the movements are simply contemporary manifestations of traditional fascism. The more interesting research is on clerical fascism, seen is a synthesis between religious fundamentalism<sup>122</sup> and fascism. While any religion may have its fundamentalists, Laqueur believes that “only in the Muslim world have radicals acquired positions of power and are likely to have continued successes, from Algeria to Afghanistan, Bangladesh and beyond.”<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Walter Laqueur, *Fascism: Past, Present and Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 90-92.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 93-94.

<sup>122</sup> Fundamentalism is defined as “a radical, militant, fanatical movement trying to impose its beliefs on others by means of force, and thus it is a political movement.” *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

Both religion and fascism are ultimately holistic Weltanschauungen, demanding of the body and soul either for the state or religion. Islam itself offers a bridge between the two, promoting itself as both a political and religious system. But it is the radical versions of Islam that truly share characteristics of traditional fascism. It is anti-liberal, has an elite leadership structure and governing elite, is resolute in its use of widespread propaganda and terror, and is a mass movement. The main difference is that a mass community of believers replaces the mass party.<sup>124</sup>

Gregor's thesis is similar to Laqueur's except that he offers an element of mass psychology to the ascendance of fascism in the developing world. Gregor argues that proto-fascism consists of elitism, myths and the masses.<sup>125</sup> He further contends that fascist movements are not lacking in ideology but directly respond to the specific needs and demands of their populations.<sup>126</sup> This is a much larger argument than it appears on the surface, for myth is defined as any group of ideas that creates a hierarchy of values, duties and obligations in society.<sup>127</sup> It is elitist, even ethnocentric, in that it looks at shared traits as the referent by which to base this myth and its subsequent values.<sup>128</sup> The role of myth becomes prominent when it is applied to the developing world, particularly the Islamic, which feel great despair that their

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 149-155.

<sup>125</sup> A. James Gregor, *The Ideology of Fascism* (New York: Free Press, 1969), 3-5.

<sup>126</sup> A. James Gregor, *Phoenix: Fascism in Our Time* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1999), 20.

<sup>127</sup> A. James Gregor, *The Ideology of Fascism* (New York: Free Press, 1969), 46.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 49-50.

presumably superior culture is unable to compete with the developed West.

Ultimately, fascism plays on a people's feelings of humiliation and failure (which is why Gregor believes fascism will become more prominent in the Islamic world and Eastern Europe).<sup>129</sup>

## Chapter Summary

In tracing the progression of martyrdom spectacles among the fascist and belligerent fundamentalist movements, chapter two explores the rise of fascist movements between the world wars and the role that martyrdom spectacles played in building support. The goal of the chapter is twofold: first, to argue that use and purpose of martyrdom spectacles evolve depending on the group's position of power. I label and identify two possibilities—movement phase and regime phase. In the movement phase,<sup>130</sup> fascist parties rely on actual “blood” martyrs (named, identifiable individuals) whose sacrifice the parties portray as essential to the success of the movement. For Mussolini these blood martyrs will come from the *Avanti!* deaths<sup>131</sup> and for Hitler from the sixteen Nazis killed during the Beer Hall Putsch.<sup>132</sup> In the

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<sup>129</sup> A. James Gregor, *Phoenix: Fascism in Our Time* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1999), 21-27.

<sup>130</sup> The time when the parties are attempting to consolidate power.

<sup>131</sup> The *Avanti!* deaths refer to the killing of two young fascists while they were attacking the offices of the socialist newspaper. The attacks were heralded by Mussolini throughout 1922 as the first blood spilt by the fascists and as a model for other fascists to follow. “This is the violence of which I approve and which I exalt. . . . Their violence has been saintly and moral.” Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist spectacle the aesthetics of power in Mussolini's Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 35.

<sup>132</sup> The Beer Hall Putsch deaths refer to the sixteen Nazis who were killed during Hitler's failed attempt at taking over Germany in 1923.

regime phase,<sup>133</sup> on the other hand, there is an institutionalization of martyrdom spectacles that memorializes the dead from the movement phase but also expands out to include the faceless image of the unknown martyr in the Italian example of the Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista and the Nazi Temple of Honor and the Resurrection of the Dead.

The discussion focuses in part on the movement's challenge to liberal democracies and examines the economic, political and cultural alternatives the ideology espoused. The second part of the discussion surrounds the relationship between violence, sacrifice and the creation of an idealized conception of citizen to symbolize the purity of the movement and the possibility of national rebirth through the movement. The use of martyrdom imagery to construct this ideal citizen is explored through the example of the play 18BL (Italy) and the blood flag (Germany). The Italian example showcases selflessness, solidarity and hard work to the point of death as the cornerstone for being an ideal fascist. The Nazi example illustrates the essential relationship between patriotism, community and the willingness to die for the Nazi citizen.

Next, the chapter builds on the contextual analysis of fascism's roots by exploring its ideological development with regards to fascist conceptions of sacrifice and the spectacle of sacrifice and myth construction. It argues that violence played an increasingly relevant role within each movement as their fortunes declined on the battlefield and traces the process by which the rhetoric of martyrdom is introduced

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<sup>133</sup> Once the consolidation of power has occurred and the parties are in control of the state.



into each movement as a means for gaining or maintaining public support. The final section of the chapter then moves from the rhetoric of martyrdom to the dissemination of each movement's vision of martyrdom and the mechanisms (art, theater, cinema) by which they shared these visions with their public.

The third chapter argues that the use of martyrdom spectacles in Iran and with the Hamas serve the same purpose for the movement as they did in the Italian and German cases. The only significant difference between contemporary martyrdom spectacles and the historic cases is the use of modern outlets for dissemination (like the Internet). Yet the mode of distribution aside, the movements continue to utilize the existing social norms to inform their martyrdom narratives and rely on culturally appropriate distribution methods connects their distribution methods and their patterns follow that of the earlier cases.

The connection between the roots of fascism in the early Twentieth Century and those of contemporary belligerent fundamentalism are traced with an emphasis on how lessons learned from confronting historical fascism can be applied to fundamentalists today. The chapter goes on to explore the spectacle of martyrdom as it is developing within the modern world particularly in the Middle East. The argument is that by building upon their particular cultural norms, they are creating a discourse surrounding martyrdom that like the fascist is used for constituency building and legitimacy claims, but that their vision of martyrdom and sacrifice is much more aggressive, participatory and extreme. I also make the argument that martyrdom spectacles in the movement phase continue to be based on actual blood

martyrs as in the case of Sheikh Izz ad-Din al-Qassam<sup>134</sup> for Hamas and the Black Friday Massacres<sup>135</sup> for Iran, whereas the regime phase sees an institutionalization of martyrdom spectacles that rely less on actual martyrs but moves to memorialization efforts spreading messages of ideal citizenship.<sup>136</sup> The chapter traces the ideological development for the arguments surrounding martyrdom, how the movements are modifying it to fit their cultural norms, and then examines the increasingly high-tech and orchestrated ways (media, internet, museums, parades, etc.) the movements are elevating martyrdom from a specific act into a social spectacle. Finally, chapter four examines the disciplining nature of martyrdom spectacles and offers a candid account of how to approach martyrdom groups in the future. In this concluding chapter I argue that the utilization of new technologies for the distribution of martyrdom spectacles may appear more graphic and disturbing than in the past but the important concern is which stage the party is in. Parties only seem to rely on physical martyrdom during the movement stage, once in power, martyrdom spectacles become more about rhetoric than actual blood.

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<sup>134</sup> Sheikh Izz ad-Din al-Qassam was killed by the British during colonial occupation in a battle in which he told his men to “die a martyr” than to surrender to the British. Hamas also chose to name their military wing, the al-Qassam Brigade, after him. Edmund Burke, Nejde Yaghoubian, and Schleifer, Abdullah, “Izz al-Din al-Qassam: Preacher and Mujahid,” in *Struggle and survival in the modern Middle East* (University of California Press, 2006), 137–151.

<sup>135</sup> See note 15.

<sup>136</sup> Perhaps nowhere is this best demonstrated than in the “martyrdom” of Farfour, a Mickey Mouse like character on Hamas TV who is killed at the hands of the Israeli state while trying to defend Palestine. This story comes from the children’s television show “Pioneers of Tomorrow” and graphically portrays the link between martyrdom, citizenship and nationalism to children. Peter Edidin, “A Mouse’s Grisly Demise,” *The New York Times*, June 30, 2007, sec. Arts, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/30/arts/30arts-006.html?scp=2&sq=pioneers%20of%20tomorrow%20farfour&st=cse>, (accessed July 31, 2011).

## **Chapter Two: The Rise of Fascism and the Sanctity of Violence**

### **Introduction, Foundational Narratives: The March on Rome and the Beer Hall Putsch**

“That [fascism] is a doctrine of life is shown by the fact that it has resuscitated a faith. That this faith has conquered minds is proved by the fact that Fascism has had its dead and its martyrs.”<sup>137</sup>

The following chapter explores the use and evolution of martyrdom spectacles within fascist movements. While the phenomenon of martyrdom spectacles may appear to be linked more with modern fundamentalist groups, I argue that they are surprisingly similar to the spectacles created by fascists between the two world wars. Moreover, studying on the use of martyrdom spectacles in these historic groups actually sheds light on the utilization of similar spectacles today. One of the key findings is that early in the movement’s political campaigns, martyrdom spectacles rely on actual (read here as individuals who were actually killed) martyrs as a way of portraying devotion to the cause and as a means of showing the party’s sacrifice to the population. However, as the party moves into power the scope of martyrdom celebrations change and they rely more on symbolic martyrdom through memorials or fictionalized accounts of martyrdom that invite everyone to connect to the message of sacrifice and model citizenship the group wishes to portray.

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<sup>137</sup> Benito Mussolini, quoted in Carl Cohen, *Communism, fascism, and democracy: the theoretical foundations* (The McGraw-Hill Companies, 1997), 299.

I argue that this transformation is best understood if we think about these parties as going through phases. The movement phase is when the party is vying for, and attempting to, solidifying power. Here martyrdom spectacles overinflate the actual sacrifice of the group and connect the image of selflessness by the would-be martyr with the group itself. The regime phase occurs once the party has taken power and here martyrdom spectacles are used as a way to connect with the broader population to perpetuate the revolutionary zeal of the early martyrs and keep the memory of the revolution in the mind of the population. Martyrdom spectacles in the regime phase are much more symbolic and are often celebrations of faceless martyrs where the spectators are invited to envision themselves in the role of martyr and to contemplate their sacrifice for the party. At the end of each section I will argue that similar conditions are present among today's fundamentalist movements and that exploring these historical cases can shed new light on the underlying rational and development of belligerent fundamentalism in the modern world.

Fascist movements arose throughout Europe shortly after the end of the First World War as a reaction to modernity, national humiliation and the economic and political movements born of Enlightenment liberalism, but the 'incubatory period of fascism' can be traced back to the 1890's.<sup>138</sup> The countries where fascist ideology was most pervasive were also the latecomers to nation-state consolidation and by the time Germany and Italy came into political unification they were the weakest of the

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<sup>138</sup> H. R. Trevor-Roper's "The Phenomenon of Fascism" in S. J. Wolf, *Fascism in Europe*, Meuthen: London, 1981 p. 28.

major European powers.<sup>139</sup> The desire to leapfrog ahead, or at the very least catch-up, to the vast colonial possessions of France, Great Britain and to a lesser extent Russia, fostered a political climate in which ideological experimentation was possible. By the end of the nineteenth century, the remaining vestiges of aristocratic conservatism was being challenged by the emergence of a new economic elite who emboldened by its new prosperity challenged the traditional social order. It is within this context that the lower middle class, who benefited enough from capitalism to raise it above the common working class but not enough to afford them the political privileges of fortune. This will turn the “petite bourgeoisie” to fascism as a political force that will appeal directly to their economic and political needs as a movement concerned with mass not class and national greatness rather than individual.

The apparent success of Western Democratic Liberalism after the Cold War left many in the developing world questioning the viability of Enlightenment liberalism within their national contexts. The failures of the post-colonial states to deliver on the pledge of civil and political rights along with the promise of economic prosperity called into question the very presumption that the democratic, capitalist Western state model could work throughout the developing world. Just as fascist movements did in the early part of the century, belligerent fundamentalism would offer an alternative political ideology that addresses liberalism’s failures while

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<sup>139</sup> There were a number of nascent fascist movements to arise around the same time including Metaxas in Greece, Codreanu in Romania, Horthy in Hungary and Franco in Spain, and while these various movements claimed to be fascist, there is significant debate in the field as to whether or not they are properly categorized as such. For additional information on this debate please review the following two works: *Fascism in Europe* (London: Methuen, 1981); and *International Fascism, 1919-45* (London: Frank Cass, 2002).

incorporating traditional cultural cues that call for a mass man and new political identity that will lift the population out of their national humiliation and create a strong, viable state.

The following chapter has two goals, 1) to explore the roots of fascism, outlining the historical conditions that gave rise to the development of the first wave of belligerent fundamentalism and providing a framework by which to assess and address more recent waves of a similar phenomenon; 2) to examine how the spectacle of martyrdom and myth construction were utilized in the Italian and German cases during different phases of each movement and the implications this can have on contemporary movements. The chapter is divided into four sections; first, a socioeconomic discussion that explores the “gelatinous” nature of civil society within each context as a partial explanation as to why both were susceptible to extremist movements; second, a brief historical survey of Interwar Europe and a discussion of Italy and Germany in the aftermath of World War I and the Treaty of Versailles; third, an ideological account of how fascism is purported to transform the party, the state and the individual; and fourth, an exploration into the spectacle of martyrdom and myth construction.

## **The Interwar Period: The Economic Context and the Fragmentation of Political Legitimacy**

### **The Economic Crisis**

#### *The Italian Biennio Rosso and State Corporatist Response*

Shortly after the end of WWI, Italy underwent the *Biennio Rosso* or the “Red Two Years” which started as a popular onslaught by rural peasants and the working class on the state as inspired by the success of the Russian Revolution. These were initially economic demands (wage increases, working day limitations, safe working conditions) but they later extended into property rights, land reform and a call for the alleviation of class distinctions within Italy.<sup>140</sup> Mussolini, who had been a socialist until 1914 when he broke with the party over Italian intervention in the war, was skeptical of the *Biennio Rosso* movement and saw their class claims as denying the primacy of the state. Yet, the conflict during this time did provide an opportunity for Mussolini to capitalize on class frustration by allying the Fascist party with the capitalists and leading the call for the capitalist to break the socialist stronghold over the labor markets and rural areas. In successfully doing so, fascism was able to grow a substantial base of support in the agrarian parts of the state (the same is true for Romanian fascism) and then use this as a springboard for an urban fascist movement.<sup>141</sup>

The Fascist economic model was one that bridged the gap between the politicians and the technocrats (who had gained significant standing during the war and did not want to lose their status to the politicians after its conclusion) on who would run the Italian economy by maintaining the wartime dirigisme. Mussolini rose to power advocating for the small, labor-intensive industrialists but soon abandoned

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<sup>140</sup> Paul Corner’s “State and Society 1901-1922” in Adrian Lyttleton’s, ed., *Liberal and Fascist Italy 1900-1945* Oxford: Oxford, 2002 pp. 37-38.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40-43.

them for the capital rich major industrialists. During his tenure most of the capital-intensive markets expanded through a policy of import substitution and protectionism. Additionally, through the appointment of Alberto Beneduce and Giuseppe Volpi as his economic advisors, Mussolini was able to successfully leverage the economic crisis of the Great Depression to institute long-term financial reforms some of which put Italy in competitive standing with capital intensive industries all the way up to the early 1970's.<sup>142</sup>

Beneduce was really the father of the Fascist state corporatist model, but like so many aspects of fascism, Mussolini would take the credit. The three most significant policies Beneduce produced related to banking, investment and the joint public-private ownership of factories. In regards to investment, the ICIPU (1924) and the *Istituto di Credito Navale* (1928) were created as special quasi-banks to finance the development of public works projects like dams, roads and electric companies. These were needed throughout Italy to fully modernize but up until then, there was little investment in these industries, as they were slow to provide returns. The banking industry was debilitated under the weight of the Great Depression and in 1931 required a significant bank bailout. Previously, banks invested heavily into firms who simultaneously invested in banks and the lines between the two were so entwined that a failure in one economic sector would devastate the other. Beneduce was able to limit the role of banks to short-term deposits and loans, effectively taking them out of

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<sup>142</sup> Marcello De Cecco, "The Economy from Liberalism to Fascism," in Adrian Lyttleton's, ed., *Liberal and Fascist Italy 1900-1945* Oxford: Oxford, 2002 pp. 73-76.



the investing realm, and then secured individual deposits through government backing.<sup>143</sup> Finally, the banking law (1936) significantly pushed to the state's favor public control over industry in the major economic sectors, thereby solidifying corporatist ambitions and giving public managers a free hand in guiding the economy while not directly owning the means of production.<sup>144</sup>

The Labor Charter justifies this relationship between the state, the worker and business in arguing, "the Italian Nation ... is a moral, political and economic unit which finds its integral realization in the Fascist State."<sup>145</sup> Within the Labor Charter, work is defined as a social duty and thus protected by the state with the effort of production aimed at increasing state power (Article II). For business owners, it establishes the right of syndicalists to solely represent their arena of production (III) creates a labor court for the state to mediate labor disputes (V) and ensures that the state intervention does not occur unless private initiative fails (IX). Workers to have rights now guaranteed through the Labor Charter including collective bargaining of labor contracts (XI), living wages (XII), right to Sundays off and an annual paid holiday (XV and XVI).<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> If all of this sounds familiar to today it is no coincident, the economic integration of the 1920's along with a significant period of non-existent regulatory institutions created economic dilemmas that are very similar to the modern world, and our response is not too far afield from theirs.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., pp. 75-78 and Simone Selva's "State and Economy in Italy before the Economic Miracle: Economic Policy and International Constraints from the Reconstruction through the Pre-Boom Years," *Business and Economic History*, Published by the Business History Conference, Vol. 2, 2004, pp. 13-14.

<sup>145</sup> Pitigliani, Fausto. *The Italian Corporative State*. New York: MacMillan, 1934 p.245.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., pp245-248.

The Iranian constitution (1979) outlines similar joint economic partnerships between the public and the private with an economic model that is resonant of Mussolini's. Article 44 of the Iranian constitution outlines the three economic sectors: the state, cooperative and private. The state based sectors focus on large-scale production and areas essential to national security. The cooperative sector focuses on areas and industries held cooperatively focusing on smaller scale industries, production and distribution. The private sector covers largely agriculture, trades and crafts.<sup>147</sup> Just as the corporate syndicalist model was devised to advance the economic interest of the fascist state, the Iranian cooperative model is argued as a necessary step in protecting the Islamic nature of the economy and to ensure self-sufficiency.

#### ***The Economic Burden of Versailles and the National Socialist Model***

Germany's economic system had to contend with the severe economic burdens of Versailles as well. There was a palpable dissatisfaction among Germans surrounding their treatment at the Paris Peace Conference, yet it was the lower middle classes that suffered the most. The wealthy had the money to wade out the economic crisis and the lower classes gained in significance both politically and economically once their domination under the Kaiser was wiped away with the establishment of the republic.<sup>148</sup> Nazi economic priorities were quite similar to those of Mussolini except that the state is no longer technically the engine for economic growth and instead all

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<sup>147</sup> Article 44 of the Iranian Constitution. <http://www.iranonline.com/iran/iran-info/government/constitution-4.html>. Accessed October 22, 2012.

<sup>148</sup> Erich Fromm, "Psychology of Nazism" and Harold Laski's, "The Meaning of Fascism" both from Neil Gregor's, ed. *Nazism*. Oxford: Oxford, 2000 pp 43 and 52-54.

is done for the Volksgemeinschaft or the community of the nation. One can argue that the difference here is just semantic but I think there is an important distinction to be made between Fascism's preeminence of the state and the Nazi's with the nation. In theory, anyone could be a 'good Italian'—including the Libyan or Ethiopian (assuming of course neither wanted to still be Libyan or Ethiopian). However, the Nazi regime had a clear idea of what were 'German spaces' and what parts of Europe would be integrated into Germany based on the degree to which they were influenced by German blood, language and finally culture.<sup>149</sup>

The German economic plan was very clearly concerned primarily with raising the raw materials and capital necessary for rearmament and for making Germany self-sufficient. Broadly speaking, the policy divided into four direct and eight indirect measures. The four direct measures included the regulation and reduction of taxes. For example, in 1933, to stimulate automobile production, the government repealed all taxes on new cars and eventually taxes on all cars. Second was a price policy (reduction of cost and increase in price), which was mostly on agriculture where production rates and price fluctuations are highly interdependent. Third, tariff policies designed to make German goods more marketable when they have to compete domestically with foreign imports. The final direct measure eliminated any new private businesses in the capital markets. Expansion (plants, etc.) require capital and

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<sup>149</sup> The five "German spaces" were ranked in the descending order of prominence: 1) the military space (the area of land actually controlled by the German military), 2) the physical territory of the Reich itself, 3) German 'folk soil' which were areas actually populated by people of German descent, 4) areas influenced by German culture and where the German language is prevalent, and 5) Dutch and Flemish territories. Franz Neumann. *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism*. (New York: Oxford, 1942), p. 143.

by limiting capital to only companies and industries that fulfill the goals set up in the Four-Year Plan the government can free up capital for use in companies satisfying the state's economic needs. Essentially, this means a planned economy at least as far as capital investment is concerned.<sup>150</sup>

The indirect influences on the economy included a capital investment policy and subsidies. Profit and sales guarantees also limits the burden and risk to certain industries when they are producing something deemed in the interest of the state but not necessarily promising in terms of market payoff. Also included was the regulating the consumption of raw materials. The regulation of raw materials may serve to some degree as a stimulus for industries to 'make do' by inventing or using materials that under conditions of scarcity they would otherwise not have had to do. In a similar fashion as the fascist indirect influences also included the regulation of the labor supply. The enormous death toll in the First World War obviously lead to drastic changes in the labor supply with part of the void filled by female labor and later retirement but the absence of certain levels of unemployment makes economic expansion virtually impossible. All available workers were seen as needing regulation to fulfill labor demands present in key industries.<sup>151</sup>

Perhaps paradoxically there was also an increase in production while simultaneously regulating consumption. By requiring a certain amount of maize in bread production or a certain amount of synthetic fibers in textiles, consumption

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<sup>150</sup> Baurer, Wilhelm. *German Economic Policy*, from the German Institute for Business Research, edited by Richard Moennig. Terramare Publications: Berlin, 1939 pp. 4-6.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-13.

quantities can be limited and or, fewer resources can be spread out making greater production possibilities and thus greater consumption possibilities. The goal of German consumption policy was to actually increase the consumption and raise the standard of living for the workers. The final two direct measures were aimed at boosting the life of the worker by nutrition regulation. Germany produces certain foodstuffs in abundance and certain ones must be imported. The desire is twofold, increase consumption of German grown foodstuff and limit consumption of imports while simultaneously trying to improve the German diet and make the race stronger and healthier. Finally, what the Nazis called organized consumption such as the vacation trips regulated and subsidized through the *Kraft durch Freude* 'Strength through Joy' program.<sup>152</sup>

Both the Italian and Nazi examples present alternatives to economic liberalism when the economic systems in place do not adequately meet the needs of the populations. The fundamental issue with these examples is not to demonize capitalism but to highlight how illiberal movements can capitalize on collective frustration and the societal sense of a broken system in order to advocate for radical political, economic and social change. What may at other times seem irrational or illogical suddenly become possible, perhaps even desirable, in the face of significant social upheaval.

In the case of belligerent fundamentalist movements of today we must keep in mind that secure, employed, fed, socially integrated populations rarely challenge a

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 14-15.

governmental structure that they feel it is responsive to their needs. However, when states or movements are either unwilling or unable to act on behalf of the welfare of its citizens, not only will these institutions lose legitimacy, but somewhere in the political spectrum an oppositional movement may already be fomenting the seeds for radical social change. The situation in Gaza is a case in point. Under Israeli occupation Gaza has suffered from a state of economic de-development a process defined as “the deliberate, systematic and progressive dismemberment of an indigenous economy by a dominant one, where economic—and by extension, societal—potential is not only distorted but denied.”<sup>153</sup> The lack of economic and social outlets creates a vacuum Hamas attempts to fill by providing real economic sustenance as well as an alternative identity based on a sense of empowerment. Just as the Nazis created the image of Germans becoming economically, militarily and socially strengthened through their challenging of the Versailles treaties, Hamas is attempting to replicate a similar effect within Gaza.

### **The Fragmentation of Political Legitimacy**

#### ***Fragmented Civil Society: Italy, Mussolini and D’Annunzio***

Albeit in different ways, Germany and Italy were both losers of World War I and the Treaty of Versailles that formally brought the war to its conclusion. Italy was a latecomer to the First World War and a second tier power at best, but the experience of fighting the war emboldened many Italian soldiers with a heightened sense of nationalism, pride and sacrifice. Nowhere was this more palpable than with Gabriele

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<sup>153</sup> Sara M Roy, *Failing Peace: Gaza and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict* (London: Pluto, 2007), 33.

D'Annunzio in the town of Fiume who Michael Arthur Ledeen referred to as the “John the Baptist” of fascism.<sup>154</sup> Before Mussolini ever addressed a crowd from his balcony, D'Annunzio had spoken stridently in reference to Italian nationalism. D'Annunzio was a major poet, novelist, dramatist and political figure in Italy before WWI and during the war enlisted as a fighter pilot in the Italian air force.<sup>155</sup> With victory in sight, D'Annunzio was angered by what he saw as Italy missing the territorial spoils of war promised in the Treaty of London (1915). It was here that Italy signed with the Entente powers (France, Britain and Russia) and formally abandoned the Triple Alliance powers (from 1882-1915 which included Italy, Germany and Austria-Hungary until Italy's desertion). D'Annunzio as well as many other Italians saw the treaty as an annexation of most of the Balkans under Italy, the establishment of an Italian empire, and the acknowledgment by the larger European powers that Italy had finally arrived on the world stage.<sup>156</sup>

With Italian losses at the Paris Peace Conference appearing inevitable, D'Annunzio famously labeled the Italian outcome of the war a “mutilated victory” and led an army of irregular Italian militiamen into Fiume where D'Annunzio took over the city (which had an Italian majority population) and declared it a sovereign Italian republic. The seizure of Fiume was a model for Mussolini and symbolized

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<sup>154</sup> Michael Arthur Ledeen *D'Annunzio: The First Duce*. Transaction: Brunswick, 2003 p. 169.

<sup>155</sup> It was here that he was involved one of the Italian air force's most significant operation—the “il Volo su Vienna” or flight over Vienna where he led a fighter squadron on a 700 mile flight to drop propaganda handbills over the city. While this may lack some of the heroic undertones that it had at the time, it was seen as an example of Italian valor and was enthusiastically received by the Italian population at home. *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>156</sup> Bullitt Lowry. *Armistice 1918*. Kent State: Kent, 1996 pp. 28 and 102.

many of the characteristics seen later in the fascist state. The March on Rome was akin to the march on Fiume both of which were staged to reclaim the land of Italy<sup>157</sup> and to rescue the state from a perceived decline in Italian culture. D'Annunzio argued that the failures of the Italian delegation at the Paris Peace Conference were largely traceable to the decline in Italian culture and the adoption of liberal principles by the Italian population as a whole. He argued that Italy was essentially divided into two different classes of citizen. One that was a corrupted, self-interested, materialist liberal who thought only of his individual gain and a second that was a heroic model who rejected the Enlightenment conception of man and instead “looks far ahead, learning again the Roman art of building roads, of multiplying them, of stretching them out toward all the far horizons and the ideal goals.”<sup>158</sup> This theme of cultural corruption and decline was one that Mussolini would repeat, placing the blame on liberal parliamentarianism.

D'Annunzio was able to hold onto Fiume for fourteen months until in December 1920 when, after he declared war on Italy, the Italian navy blockaded the city and forcing D'Annunzio into surrender. Mussolini, however, incorporated much of what made D'Annunzio famous directly into his fascist repertoire. “Virtually the entire ritual of Fascism came from the ‘Free State of Fiume’”: the balcony address, the Roman salute, the cries of ‘aia, aia, alala,’ the dramatic dialogues with the crowd, the

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<sup>157</sup> Rome at the time was technically still considered part of the Papal estates and was not officially turned back over to the Italian state until the 1929 Lateran Treaties which Mussolini negotiated.

<sup>158</sup> Gabriele D'Annunzio as quoted in Alfredo Bonadeo's *D'Annunzio and the Great War*. Associated University Press: London, 1995 pp. 129-130.



use of religious symbols in a new secular setting, the eulogies to the ‘martyrs’ of the cause and the employment of their ‘relics’ in political ceremonies.”<sup>159</sup> The Italian frustration surrounding their ‘mutilated victory’ along with the government’s handling of Fiume and D’Annunzio provided fodder for collective frustration both with the governmental regime and its liberal ideology. Mussolini went so far as to argue that Italy’s entrance into World War I and the chain of events that it started “...was really the beginning of the Fascist revolution.”<sup>160</sup>

### ***Fragmented Civil Society: Germany, Hitler and Weimar***

German losses out of World War I are more obvious. Though an armistice had been signed some six months earlier, the Treaty of Versailles formally saw the surrender of Germany to the Allies and included the controversial War Guilt Clauses (articles 231-248) in which Germany took full responsibility for the war, paid exorbitant reparations and took significant territorial losses as well as disarmament.<sup>161</sup> In response to a war which Germans had difficulty understanding as a loss (largely because it was fought outside of Germany and so the desperation of the German military position was less visible), the Germans, reeling from their loss, revolted against the Kaiser and formed the Weimar republic, so named after the city in which it was founded.

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<sup>159</sup> Michael Arthur Ledeen *D’Annunzio: The First Duce*. Transaction: Brunswick, 2003 pp. x.

<sup>160</sup> Emil Ludwig. *Talks with Mussolini*. Little, Brown and Company: Boston, 1933 p. 145.

<sup>161</sup> Bullitt Lowry. *Armistice 1918*. Kent State: Kent, 1996 pp 93-94.

The newly formed republic was Germany's first real attempt at a truly liberal form of parliamentary democracy and was burdened by the synergism of the Great Depression and the political and financial limitations imposed by the Treaty of Versailles. The German economy was more badly damaged by the economic failures of the Great Depression and the German people saw this economic crisis as extending as far back as 1918 with the armistice (not 1929 when the stock markets fell) which instilled a sense of pessimism that the crisis could ever truly be overcome. Likewise, there was a breach of political continuity with the end of the Kaiser Reich (1918) and the Weimar Republic was never able to achieve real legitimacy on its own. The dismantling of Weimar thus came in four successive waves. The first was a weakening of the state by the chronic economic and social crises. Second was a loss of any sense of political legitimacy. Third came a reversion to authoritarianism by the old anti-republican (pro-Kaiser) elites to destroy Weimar's parliamentary and democratic institutions. Finally, the *Machtergreifung* or 'seizure of power' in which Hitler is able to achieve power only after he forges an alliance with (or they with him) the old Kaiser elite who wanted to revert to authoritarian control. The chronology looks something like this: 1918-1930, the fundamental compromises of 1918's Weimar constitution evaporated and a majority of republicans no longer support the republic. 1930-1933, the presidential regimes destroyed what was left of the republican ideals and provided a power vacuum that moves to authoritarianism were

unable to fill. 1933, with no alternative the authoritarian elite/National Socialist consortium created the Third Reich.<sup>162</sup>

The relevance of this historical foundation is even more compelling when we consider the crisis of legitimacy among post-colonial states within the modern Middle East. In a similar vein to Weimar, liberal Western institutions replaced traditional forms of local rule and have failed to live up to the promise of transparent government, political participation and economic growth that modern, liberal governments are expected to provide. Moreover, as both historic cases illustrate, great powers can renege on their promises of inclusion and can treat weaker powers as second class actors in the international system (unless of course they develop the ultimate trump card for admission to the great power camp, a nuclear bomb). The negative impact of being a late-comer to nation-state status and the failures of modern, liberal political institutions will in part influence the belligerent fundamentalist movements like Hamas and Iran and how they will utilize the spectacle of myth and martyrdom to articulate a new political vision of man and the state that would be rooted in the idea of the mass party.

### ***Fascism as an Antithesis to Liberal Democracy***

S.J. Wolf once argued that “the word [fascism], unfortunately, has certain commode-like tendencies—the more you stuff into it, the more it takes.”<sup>163</sup> Despite the colorful allusion to fascism’s elasticity, both fascism and fundamentalist

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<sup>162</sup> Detlev Penkert’s “The Crisis of Classical Modernity” from *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* in Neil Greger’s, ed. *Nazism*. Oxford: Oxford, 2000 pp. 104-105.

<sup>163</sup> S. J. Wolf, *Fascism in Europe*, Meuthen: London, 1981 p.1.

movements share a similar critique about the misguided nature of liberal democracy. The assumption that individual opinion and popular consultation are the appropriate foundation for law and politics is wholly discarded. Islamists like Sayyid Qutb argue that liberal democracy creates a condition of jahaliyyah, or a condition in which the sovereignty rests not with God but with mankind:

If we look at the sources and foundations of modern modes of living, it becomes clear that the whole world is steeped in jahiliyyah. This jahiliyyah is based on rebellion against the sovereignty of Allah on earth. It attempts to transfer to man one of the greatest attributes of Allah, namely sovereignty, by making some men lords over others. It does so not in the simple and primitive ways of the anviet jahiliyyah, but in the more subtle form of claiming that the right to create values, to legislate rules of collective behavior, and to choose a way of life rests with men, without regard to what Allah has prescribed.<sup>164</sup>

For the Islamists the critique of liberal democracy rests upon their rejection of transferring sovereign decision-making power to individuals, for the fascists it will be a more pragmatic argument that simply denies the rational capacity of people to govern themselves.

In Mussolini's political manifesto, *The Doctrine of Fascism* (which some scholars actually attribute to Giovanni Gentile as ghost writer), Mussolini argued, "the masses are nothing but a herd of sheep, so long as they are unorganized. I am nowise antagonistic to them. All that I deny is that they are capable of ruling themselves."<sup>165</sup> In removing the prevailing political cleavages of individual and class

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<sup>164</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones* (Damascus, Syria: Dar al-Ilm, 1990), 8.

<sup>165</sup> Ludwig, Emil. *Talks With Mussolini*. Translated from the German by Eden and Cedar Paul. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1933, p 120.

as political agents, Mussolini is able to refocus the debate around a mythic conception of the Italian state and sets the stage for a call to sacrifice in its name.

Functionally, the Fascist state lies somewhere between democracy and absolute monarchy. As a synthesis of the two, Fascism “denies the right of numbers to govern by means of periodical consultations; it asserts the irremediable and fertile and beneficent inequality of men who cannot be leveled by any such mechanical and extrinsic device as universal suffrage.”<sup>166</sup> The defect of absolute monarchy and of popular democracy lies in the conception of sovereignty and within whom it is vested. Sovereignty must rest in the state, not the people or king. To assume either would be to assert that the state is merely functionary in nature, rather than acknowledging that the state is organic in essence and has its own, reified existence—separate and apart from the king or the people.<sup>167</sup>

Politically, Fascism argues that the state is supreme.

“The Fascists conception of the State is all-embracing; outside of it no human or spiritual values can exist, much less have value. Thus understood, Fascism, is totalitarian, and the Fascist state—a synthesis, and a unit inclusive of all values—interprets, develops, and potentiates the whole life of a people.”<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Mussolini, Benito, *Fascism: Doctrine and Institutions*, Ardita: Rome, 1935 p 21.

<sup>167</sup> This, of course, is a difficult concept to grasp for liberals, but from a Fascist point of view, unlike its liberal counterpart, the state makes the nation and the people. Thus, the people, the individual, even the nation cannot “know themselves” (in a Hegelian sense) without the state. In this way, there can be no individual, class, or economy, except through the state. (Ibid., 38)

<sup>168</sup> Mussolini, Benito, *Fascism: Doctrine and Institutions*, Ardita: Rome, 1935 p 11.

It is only through the state that the individual, social groups, and the nation can gain meaning and substance.<sup>169</sup> By positing the state as the supreme actor within political life, Fascism is by nature anti-internationalist and opposed to any supranational efforts.<sup>170</sup>

Mussolini warned that “all the States of the world are in a condition of fatal interdependence.”<sup>171</sup> The revulsion at internationalism fits into Mussolini’s larger state centered conception of life. Formal international institutions may serve to limit the autonomy of the state and—arguably worse for the fascists—provide an alternative political entity by which an individual can swear their allegiance. Nowhere would this threat of growing internationalism be more concrete for Mussolini than in the emergence of the League of Nations.

After the end of the First World War, Italy was in a vulnerable position if it were to really be a major player on the international stage. Its reward for being on the victorious side amounted to little more than token land gains, she lacked colonial possessions for trade, wealth or resources and the geographical positioning of Italy that helped secure its fortunes in the Ancient world in the very center of the Mediterranean now proved a liability as she possessed no outlet to the ocean. Great Britain controlled both the Rock of Gibraltar and the Suez Canal, the only two points

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<sup>169</sup> “Anti-individualistic, the fascist conception of life stresses the importance of the State and accepts the individual only insofar as his interests coincide with those of the state, which stands for the conscience and the universal will of man as a historic entity” *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>171</sup> Mussolini, Benito. “Fascism and the Problems of Foreign Policy” given February 6, 1921. In *Mussolini as Revealed in His Political Speeches*. H. Fertig: New York, 1976 p 121.

in or out of the Mediterranean. Without an alternative route to the open ocean, Italy's international trade was essentially in the hands of the British. Mussolini used this threat to Italian economic independence as the justification to pursue two goals—to challenge the authority of the League of Nations, to create an Italian empire through colonial acquisition and to bring war victories to the Italian people to show them the power of fascism's ideology.

Mussolini began his colonial campaigns with the consolidation of Italian possessions in North Africa won after the Italian-Ottoman War (1911-1912). Italy's scant colonial possessions in Northern Africa were largely titular and even liberal Italian governments were keen to solidify Italian control, but it was not until 1934 with an uprising among the Arab population in the territories that Mussolini was provided with an opportunity to flex growing Italian military muscle in crushing the insurrection. After Italian victories, the colonial possessions in northern Africa were subdued under Italian authority and consolidated into what would be called Libya.<sup>172</sup>

But the successful Libyan campaigns only solidified what were already Italian possessions and still did not provide the country with an ocean port that would allow them access to international trade that did not have to go through the British. The next target was one of the few remaining independent nations of Africa, Ethiopia. The Ethiopian campaign (1936) began immediately following their success in Libya.<sup>173</sup>

Unlike their earlier victories in Northern Africa, the colonial possessions forged out

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<sup>172</sup> Bosworth, R.J.B., *Mussolini's Italy: Life Under the Fascist Dictatorship 1915-1945*, Penguin: New York, 2005 p 379.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid. 406-407.

of victories in Ethiopia (which became known as Italian East Africa) more blatantly challenged the authority and of the League of Nations and the principle of international peace. A main tenet of the League was that disputes should be settled peacefully and while not legally banning war, any aggressor state would be punished collectively by all other member states of the League.<sup>174</sup> The lack of a credible collective response by the League, in large part because of their fear that Italy may form an alliance with Germany, to the Italian declaration of war on Ethiopia highlighted its institutional weaknesses<sup>175</sup> and the potential weakness of internationalism in general when put to the test by a power with strong nationalist aspirations.

### ***Fascism as a Challenge to Capitalism and Communism***

The international fascist revolution, according to Mussolini, began with the First World War and the Great Depression. Mussolini foresaw the emerging economic crisis as the catalyst for fascist revolutions throughout Europe. “But the time is not yet ripe. The crisis has first to be intensified. New revolutions will come and it is their sequel that the type of the European tomorrow will be established.”<sup>176</sup> Like his former socialist comrades, Mussolini saw the economic crisis as a critique of the very principles of capitalism itself. The crisis appeared to validate concerns that a

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<sup>174</sup> Van Dervort, Thomas, *International Law and Organization*, Sage: Thousand Oaks, 1998 p 26-27.

<sup>175</sup> Bosworth, R.J.B., *Mussolini's Italy: Life Under the Fascist Dictatorship 1915-1945*, Penguin: New York, 2005 p 407.

<sup>176</sup> Ludwig, Emil. *Talks With Mussolini*. Translated from the German by Eden and Cedar Paul. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1933, p 147.



focus just on individual economic growth would put the health of the entire system into jeopardy, whereas a focus on class interests neglects the common bonds that owners and workers share and denies any role for the state.

Zeev Sternhell's work offers some insight as to how Mussolini's economic program would find mass appeal. Sternhell provides an historical analysis of fascism's roots, arguing that while its emergence as a regime finds its opportunity in the political and economic crisis of the inter-war period; the roots of the ideology can be traced back to the 1880's. It was during this period that there emerged an anti-Marxist (and liberal) ideology that aligned itself with the promotion of nationalism (Sternhell, 321).<sup>177</sup> But Sternhell does more than provide a historical narrative; he also gives a framework by which to evaluate political movements in general. By arguing that there is a distinction between regimes and movements, Sternhell reminds us that when assessing political regimes and their concurrent logics we must be conscious of the political realities which may make the full implementation of the ideology's principles impossible—that even fascist regimes have to succumb, or at the least deal with, political pressures. Despite all the rhetoric they may espouse about the mythic qualities of the state, even the fascist state is no more immune to economic realities than any other state. This explains, in part, why Mussolini's economic arguments for state corporatism could find resonance when placed in the context of

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<sup>177</sup> Sternhell, Zeev. *The Birth of Fascist Ideology*. Translated by David Maisel. Princeton: Princeton, 1994 pp160-194.

an economic crisis that appeared to discredit both the capitalist and communist alternatives.

Economically, Fascism rejects both liberalism and Marxian socialism and draws on the idea of syndicalism to create what Mussolini will call state corporatism. Fascism argues the economic futility of liberalism lies in the sacrificing of the supremacy of the state to private interests.<sup>178</sup> The main premise underpinning the Law of Corporations (1934) is that there is no economic event of an exclusively private or individual interest. It is through liberalism that individual self-interest is allowed to flourish, ultimately to the detriment of the state.<sup>179</sup> As the state is the foundation of Fascism, any economic system that privileges the interests of an individual or group over that of the state is problematic. The Iranians echo this critique on capitalism some fifty years later as a justification for their modified socialist approach—one that focuses on a more equitable distribution of wealth but justified in terms of religious dictates and piety rather than class solidarity.<sup>180</sup>

For this very reason, Fascism also finds fault with the socialist project. Socialism assumes the world to be divided among class lines and imbued in class struggle between capital and labor. Through this perpetual struggle between those who own and manage the means of production, and the labor that toils for them, all

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<sup>178</sup>Bosworth, R.J.B., *Mussolini's Italy: Life Under the Fascist Dictatorship 1915-1945*, Penguin: New York, 2005 p 25.

<sup>179</sup> The logic behind this argument lies in a zero-sum mentality towards the individual and the state. The assumption is that *either* the individual or the state must be supreme, that both cannot be valued equally.

<sup>180</sup> See Articles 43 and 49 of the Iranian Constitution.

inequality is formed. In order to rectify the inherent inequality within the production system, socialism argues for the proletariats to join labor unions and ultimately to revolt and assume the means of production for themselves.

Fascism rejects the dogma of socialism on the grounds that economic discrepancies alone cannot account for the movement of history or inequality among peoples.

“That the vicissitudes of economic life—discoveries of raw materials, new technical processes, scientific inventions—have their importance, no one denies; but that they suffice to explain human history to the exclusion of other factors is absurd.”<sup>181</sup>

And to assume that the world is divided among classes, forged through the process of production, again relegates the state to a secondary role. By viewing the world through a lens of class, the socialist agenda is international in nature and transcends state borders. And even the rectification of class division only promises the advancement of the proletariat cause, not the higher glory of the state.

“In politics, fascism aims at realism; in practice it desires to deal only with those problems which are spontaneous products of historic conditions and which find or suggest their own solutions.”<sup>182</sup> Taking aspects of both ideologies, fascism advocates an economic alternative that addresses the concerns of workers while acknowledging private property, competition and the needs of the state. State

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<sup>181</sup> Mussolini [a], Benito, *Fascism: Doctrine and Institutions*, Ardita: Rome, 1935 p 20.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

corporatism is a harmonization of “guided” laissez-faire<sup>183</sup> with an inclusion of worker’s rights, and participation, within the production process.

“The corporate state considers that private enterprise in the sphere of production is the most effective and useful instrument in the interests of the nation. In view of the fact that private organization of production is a function of national concern, the organizer of the enterprise is responsible to the State for the direction given to production.”<sup>184</sup>

In other words, Fascists justify their conception of state corporatism on the assumption that it is the most efficient way to organize the economy, and that a strong economy is the best way to promote and secure the interests of the state.<sup>185</sup>

Mussolini argues that capitalism is not to be confused with the bourgeoisie, and instead should be seen as a specific mode of production—industrial production.<sup>186</sup> However, capitalism itself, he argues, has undergone three different periods of development: dynamic, static and decline. The dynamic period is distinguished by “free competition” and cycles of economic progress and decline which are neither universal nor extended in time. During this dynamic period of capitalism the appropriate role of the state is one of liberal non-regulation in which the state remains apart from economic affairs.<sup>187</sup> At some point within this process

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<sup>183</sup> While I will discuss this term more thoroughly below, briefly, guided laissez faire is a direct hands off approach by the government in economic affairs, but with the ultimate gain of the government, not the individual as the primary goal of economic activity.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Mussolini, Benito, *Four Speeches on the Corporate State*, Laboremus, Rome: 1935, p. 11.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 12. However, states may enter into short wars in order to spur economic growth, but this indirect action is the only way that states may enter into the economic process.

cartels begin to form and the principle of free competition is eroded, which leads to the static period. The static period forces the state to intervene within the economy in terms of customs protection and anti-monopoly policies.<sup>188</sup> At this point capitalism ceases to be an *economic* phenomenon and becomes a *social* one—and by assuming this social character it falls completely under the domain of the state.<sup>189</sup> Finally, the period of capitalist decline ushers in a new phase in the state's economic role.

By defining economic history in this way, Mussolini justifies his notion of state corporatism, arguing that the social aspect of the economy forces the need for state intervention, while at the same time; the output efficiency of private ownership of production bolsters the need to leave capital in the hands of individuals. As an answer to these two needs, Mussolini incorporates workers interests within the production process (after all, workers are part of the state and the economy is within the interests of the state, thus they should have a voice) while at the same time instituting a guided *laissez faire* economic policy. Guided *laissez faire* is different from the conventional term in that it assumes that the goal of economic activity is not to enrich the individual, but to enrich the state. And of course, the individual will prosper as a byproduct of the strength of the state. Thus, while the state will maintain a hands-off approach to the economy in general, it will retain ultimate control over the corporations by redirecting policies of the corporations when they are off track with the interests of the state. In other words, there are essentially three aspects of the

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<sup>188</sup> Mussolini sees this period as creating the social, political and economic conditions which led to World War I.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15-20.

corporate economy: a respect for private property—but a private property which facilitates growth not simply lays dormant, respects private initiative, and orders the economy by directing it to a definite purpose—the good of the whole population.<sup>190</sup> The “fascist corporate economy is the economy of individuals as well as of associated groups and of the state.”<sup>191</sup>

Organizationally, the state corporatist model is “opposed to trade-unionism as a class weapon. ...Fascism recognizes the real need which gave rise to socialism and trade-unionism, which divergent interests are coordinated and harmonized in the unity of the state.”<sup>192</sup> The economic needs and exploitative potential of unfettered capitalism are not neglected under fascism, but they are placed within the fascist worldview that real liberation will not come through organization along class lines but through the redemptive quality of the state. It is through the state and state guided laissez faire economics that both workers, party, state and business leaders will be able to achieve mutual gain by answering the call to sacrifice their individual and class interest to the needs of the state. The legacy of this sense of collective responsibility by the masses will reemerge with the belligerent fundamentalists who will make similar calls for personal economic sacrifice in the name of national liberation.

### ***The Totalizing State***

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid., pp. 30-33.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Mussolini [a], Benito, *Fascism: Doctrine and Institutions*, Ardita: Rome, 1935 p 11.

The ideology of fascism Mussolini constructs is totalitarian in nature and based around the supremacy of the state. Politically, the party as state is all encompassing and individual interests are relegated to secondary status. The Fascist regime is neither democratic nor monarchical; instead, it is a dictatorial system with sovereignty resting not in the people or the head of state, but in a reified concept of the state itself with the party at its head. Economically, the state functions in a hands off approach, leaving capital in the hands of the citizens, but demands that the interests of the state be placed above those of the citizens and that wealth generated from the economic process be made to enrich the state rather than private interests.

For Mussolini, Fascism assumes the primacy of the state in all affairs. As such, the only way to maintain the security of the state is to ensure that the state is independent, at least to a reasonable degree from other actors. However, this degree of independence comes at high costs both on the domestic and international front. Domestically, there can be no opposition parties because opposition parties strive for divisions, often times around interests of class (economic or social) and do not attempt to unite the people for the betterment of the state. With the exclusion of outlets for opposition, coupled with the inclusivity of the state corporatists system, injustice at home will end.<sup>193</sup> At least domestically, the security dilemma seems to rest in disunity. The only threat to the state is one of authority. Should the state lose its control over the people or its legitimacy to some other group or institution, then the security of the state is undermined. In this way, there is an intimate relationship

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 46.

between the economic system of the Fascist state and the preservation of domestic prosperity.

Internationally, as well, the security of the state relies heavily on the strength of the economy. In order for the state to have a strong national defense, it needs to have an equally strong economy capable of purchasing and maintaining the needs for that defense. However, Mussolini sees economic dependency as just as great a threat internationally. Logically, if the state relies on its economy to provide the means for its self-defense, and if its economy is dependent on resources or trade with other states, then the entire security of the state is dependent on another. As such, the object of the corporatists system is to provide for the needs of the people while at the same time increasing the sum total of national forces.<sup>194</sup>

### *Perpetual War*

During the early stage of the corporate system, there needs to be peace in order for the state to fully develop its own economic infrastructure.<sup>195</sup> However, this time of peace affords the opportunity for the military buildup which will help the state during inevitable conflicts and will lay the foundation for an imperialist phase. The fascist ideology does not believe in the utility or potential of the Kantian notion of perpetual peace. War, for the fascist is not only inevitable, but necessary. “War alone keys up all human energies to their maximum tension and sets the seal of

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 40.



nobility on those people who have the courage to face it.”<sup>196</sup> But war can also have a stimulating economic effect. During what he labels the “dynamic period” of economic growth, Mussolini argues that short wars can spur growth without unduly burdening the state in long term conflicts<sup>197</sup> and the Libyan and Ethiopian campaigns would seem to fit this mold.

Assuming that war is necessary for the glorification and the preservation of the state, and realizing that finite natural resources will cause the state to be dependent on others if it cannot procure new resources, the state must enter into an imperialist phase and secure colonies. From this follows a five part foreign policy agenda for Italian Fascists. The first policy was developing its own economic infrastructure in order to gain eventual independence. The second was to renew diplomatic relations with enemy states to foster a climate of peace in order to prepare for war. Third, the intensification of friendly relations with those states with which little contact has been established. The fourth policy was the securing of the rights of the state to possess colonies. The furtherance of colonies abroad “by economic and educational means and by rapid communication”<sup>198</sup> was the final policy position.

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<sup>196</sup> Mussolini [a], Benito, *Fascism: Doctrine and Institutions*, Ardita: Rome, 1935, p. 19.

<sup>197</sup> Mussolini, Benito, *Four Speeches on the Corporate State*, Laboremus, Rome: 1935, p. 12.

<sup>198</sup> Mussolini, Benito, *Mussolini as Revealed in his Political Speeches (November 1914-August 1923)*, Fertig: New York, 1976, 132.

But the Italians were not alone in their glorification of violence and perpetual war. The Romanian fascists, known as the Legionaries of the Archangel Michael,<sup>199</sup> were even more extreme in their lust for violence than their Italian counterparts. The Legionaries, named after the Archangel Michael (the leader of the army of God), capitalized on their colonial legacy as an Ottoman vassal in order to forge a new Romanian identity that would challenge their perceived historical weakness and secure a sense of national pride for another latecomer to the nation-state system. Structurally, the Legionaries were comprised mostly of university students who were divided into ‘nests’ of no more than thirteen members who each took an oath declaring:

We bind ourselves before God and men to remain closely united around our leaders, to obey and carry out orders received, to work for the ever deeper popular penetration of the new spirit of Work, Honesty, Sacrifice, and Justice, in a world where we want to convert all with whom we come into contact into Legionaries, that is sharers in these beliefs. We believe in God and in the Legion’s victory. We believe in Jesus Christ and through integral nationalism, acting through the country’s Legions.<sup>200</sup>

Nests each had their own individual leader and were connected to the larger movement through an extremely thorough guide book. The book’s rules covered such things as: discipline (follow leader through good and evil), labor (work every day), silence, (“you act, let others talk”), education (“You must become another. A hero. Let the nest provide all your education. Know the Legion well.”), mutual help (do not

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<sup>199</sup> The group is also commonly referred to by the name of their paramilitary wing—the Iron Guard.

<sup>200</sup> Weber, Eugene. *Varieties of Fascism* (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand, 1964) p. 100.

abandon a fallen brother), honor (“It is better to fall fighting with honor than to win through an infamy.”)<sup>201</sup>

Unlike the Italian case, the communal celebration of violence was not largely ceremonial. Two key moments in the life of the Legionaries became mythic rallying points for the movement and helped to propel them to become one of the main home grown fascist movements to assume power during World War II. The first moment occurred in the summer of 1936. Mihai Stelescu was a prominent leader within the Legionaries movement serving as Lieutenant to the movement’s founder Corneliu Codreanu, with whom he would eventually fall into disfavor, and represented the party in the Romanian parliament. By 1935 Stelescu split with the Legionaries and formed his own far-right party known as the Crusade of Romanianism. Codreanu, angry with the challenge of splinter party and the threat of defection, formed a death squad of young Legionaries with orders to kill Stelescu in a ritualistic fashion. The squad found their opportunity while Stelescu was undergoing an appendectomy and while in the hospital four of the squads members broke into his room, fired 120 bullets into his body, chopped his body in a sign of desecration and danced around it while kissing each other.<sup>202</sup> The extreme brutality of the crime showed not only what could happen to those who left the group, but more importantly, it none so subtly alluded to the story of the Archangel Michael who struck down with his sword all the enemies of the Lord.

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 100-101.

<sup>202</sup> Zev Barbu, “Rumania,” in S. J. Wolf, *Fascism in Europe*, Meuthen: London, 1981 p. 163.

The second mythic point for the movement happened between April and December 1939 which is known as “The Year of Martyrdom.” By 1939 the threat of the Legionary movement coupled with an unstable royal dictatorship by King Carol led the King to outlaw the Legionaries and on the Orthodox Palm Sunday Codreanu and other leaders of the movement were arrested on charges of libel. Their cases were eventually inflated to acts of sedition where they were summarily convicted and—according to the official statements at the time—upon finding Codreanu and a number of his followers attempting to escape the prison they were shot. By the end of the summer some 1200 Legionari were arrested and killed by the police and the perceived brutality only served to end King Carol’s short dictatorship and cement the public’s support for Codreanu and the Legionary as folk heroes thereby catapulting the remaining party members to power in 1940.

Shortly after WWII, the war to defeat fascism and Nazism, a young Egyptian University student will find himself studying abroad in Greeley, Colorado where he will see firsthand the victory celebrations, the reunions of homecoming soldiers and the excesses of victory, and will begin to formulate in his own mind a challenge to modernity and Enlightenment liberalism. Sayyid Qutb, as Mussolini did before him, will question how his once great civilization now lags behind a culture that centuries ago his civilization helped preserve and define. Qutb and his followers will construct their own vision of the past and will reach into their cultural narratives to articulate a challenge to modernity for the developing world and the symbolic figure who will

head the call of their belligerent fundamentalism is at once newly politicized and yet all too historically familiar—the martyr.

### **The Spectacle of Martyrdom and Construction of the Fascist Myth**

Fascism and martyrdom are not static concepts and the narrative of martyrdom as well as its methods of dissemination evolves over the life of the movement. Borrowing the language of Renzo de Felice, we can conceptualize fascism in terms of “fascism as movement” and “fascism as regime.”<sup>203</sup> There is a basic temporal aspect to each of these categories. Fascism as movement refers to the period when fascists attempt to build public support as an opposition party to their consolidation of power within government. Fascism as regime refers to the period after they have assumed power until the regime falls. Exploring the development of martyrdom and spectacle in terms of phases within the movement allows us to explore the evolution of martyrdom as a political concept and offers insight into the nature of these illiberal regimes both in and out of power.

In this section, I argue that both the Italian and German strategies behind martyrdom spectacles evolved from one of moral justification in the movement phase to a mechanism for mass mobilization and disciplining in the regime phase. To accomplish this I first; show how the concept of martyrdom evolved through the two phases of the German and Italian fascist parties; second, analyze the role martyrdom played in the phases of the movements; and third, describe the various forms of

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<sup>203</sup> See Renzo de Felice’s *Interpretations of Fascism*. Cambridge: Harvard, 1977. Other scholars have used similar language to illustrate fascism’s two phases such as Emily Braun’s use construction of “first hour” and “second hour” fascism. See Braun, *Expressionism as Fascist Aesthetic*. *Journal of Contemporary History* 1996 31:273-292.

spectacle used to celebrate martyrdom and the role they were intended to serve for the party. This section is divided into the following parts: the first part looks at Italian and German uses of martyrdom within their movement phase. In this section I argue that martyrdom is largely about what I call blood martyrs, or actual deaths, and that the early accounts of martyrdom construct the foundation for the legitimacy claims that the parties make as they move to the next phase. The second section deals with spectacle and the narrative of martyrdom in the regime phase. In this section, through three different examples of martyrdom spectacles I argue that martyrdom in the movement phase is largely a narrative meant to connect the regime to the people through communal ritual.

**Fascism as Movement: On the Historical Significance of the Movements' First Martyrs**

“Upon this rock I will build my church...”<sup>204</sup>

The Biblical account of the founding of the Catholic Church and the Christian faith rests on Peter, one of the Twelve Apostles, who would serve as head and spiritual advisor of the faith after Christ's death. Peter would later die in Rome, and upon the literal foundation of his grave, the Holy See would rise and serve as a beacon to the faithful throughout the world. Mussolini would steal this page from history and build his vision of a faith—a religion of the state—on the same Roman soil that Peter once walked. This faith, however, would not be one concerned with Christian salvation but one where Mussolini would assume the role of Peter as head and spiritual advisor,

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<sup>204</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:11.

sending his armies of faithful to spread his perverse message of fascist superiority. The narrative of the March on Rome would serve as the rock on which Mussolini built his secular faith just as the failed Beer Hall Putsch would serve a similar role for Hitler's Germany. Mussolini and Hitler will both argue that their rise to power would never have been possible if not sanctified by the blood of the movements' earliest martyrs. The image of the martyr will play a pivotal role in the fascism as movement phase of the parties and will be used to create a notion of martyrdom that is one of supreme sacrifice reserved for an extraordinary few.

### ***Avanti! Attack and the Italian March on Rome***

The movement phase of in the Italian case is roughly between 1919 with the formal establishment of the fascist party through 1928. Mussolini became Prime Minister in October 1922 but it was not until 1928 when the outlawing of all oppositional parties destroyed any remaining vestiges of parliamentarianism. During the early years of this phase, street violence between different partisan groups was rampant throughout Italy, especially in the more heavily industrialized north that had strong worker's movements. Groups of fascist and socialist partisans, largely youth, would clash in the streets or attack each other's various newspapers and printing presses. One such significant example was the death of two fascist youth killed while attacking the offices of a major socialist newspaper, *Avanti!*<sup>205</sup> Ironically enough,

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<sup>205</sup> Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi. *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, p. 35.

Mussolini had been editor of the newspaper in 1915 while he was still a socialist. The two fascist killed in the attack were memorialized in a 1922 speech in which he said:

The two Fallen that we remember here and all the squads of the Milan Fascio assailed the *Avanti!* as they would assail an Austrian trench. They had to pass walls, cut barb wire, break doors down, face red-hot bullets that the assailed launched with their arms. This is heroism. This is violence. This is the violence of which I approve and which I exalt. This is Milan Fascism's violence. And Italian Fascism—I speak to all Italian fascist—should adopt it. Not the little, individual, sporadic, often useless, but the great, beautiful, inexorable violence of decisive hours. ...Our friends have been heroes! Their gesture has been warlike. Their violence has been saintly and moral. We exalt them.<sup>206</sup>

This is one of Mussolini's earliest speeches in which we can trace the beginnings of a fascist concept of martyrdom. The reference to the Austrian trench connects those of the 1919 attack with the Italian soldiers of the First World War which imparts and idea of national sacrifice while at the same time he describes their actions as "saintly," "moral" and the two men people to be "exalted."

Shortly after this speech, the most significant spectacle of the movement phase occurred, the March on Rome. The name might imply that a thunderous march to seize power actually did occur, but do despite the name; it was more a march that never was. Mussolini came to power in the most benign of ways, through the legal and constitutionally mandated mechanisms of being invited by King Victor Emmanuel III to form a government on October 29, 1922.

The March did have a very real potential to become violent. Galvanized by Mussolini's call recent calls to action, fascist partisans had coalesced around the city

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid. 35.



of Perugia some hundred miles from Rome to begin the (likely) violent March against sitting Prime Minister Luigi Facta's Liberal government.<sup>207</sup> Facta served as Italian prime minister from February 1922 through July of the same year where he was removed from office for not effectively dealing with the rise of the fascists. With no other party successfully forming a governing coalition, he was reinstated Prime Minister by the King and was determined to deal effectively with the rising fascist threat.

The growing tension that existed between the liberal, fascist and socialist camps made full-scale armed conflict between the parties appear inevitable. Mussolini tried to capitalize on the growing lack of legitimacy of the Facta government organizing a sizeable contingent of fascist partisans (Blackshirts as they were known<sup>208</sup>) to organize around the outskirts of Rome and lead by Mussolini they would march into Rome and violently overthrow the Facta regime if he refused to surrender power on his own.

Surprisingly, in terms of the later narrative, Mussolini worked behind the scenes to prevent just such a violent confrontation. These backroom negotiations were likely because both he, and the Italian military generals, saw a potential fascist insurrection as one easily put down. On October 27, Facta declared martial law and

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid., pp. 1-11.

<sup>208</sup> The Blackshirts were formally known as the *Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale* which translates to the National Security Volunteer Militia. These were nearly identical to the Nazi "Brownshirts" also known as the *Sturmabteilung* or the "Storm Troopers" which were a paramilitary organization that helped to propel both leaders to power through the use, or in some cases threatened use, of violence.

ordered in the Italian military to prevent the seize on Rome, yet King Emmanuel refused to sign the order and the Facta government dissolved before the march had occurred. What was ultimately described as the March on Rome was little more than Mussolini and his partisans riding into the city on a train with an invitation from the king to form a new government.<sup>209</sup>

During fascism's movement phase, the deaths of the two squadristi and their attack on the *Avanti!* press came to epitomize martyrdom for the movement.

However, these were not the only deaths Mussolini described as martyrdom. In a speech delivered in Sardinia, Mussolini argued;

Nobody can ever dream of wrenching from us the fruit of victory that we have paid by so much blood generously shed by youths who offered their lives in or to crush Italian Bolshevism. Thousands and Thousands of those who suffered martyrdom in the trenches, who have resumed their struggle after the war was over, who have won—all those have ploughed a furrow between the Italy of yesterday, of today and of tomorrow.<sup>210</sup>

In this early phase, martyrdom served two key roles. The first is linking the post-war deaths of the fascists with all Italian deaths in World War I to connect the idea that the fascist struggle is really part of Italy's struggles. And the second, to use these deaths, these acts of sacrifice, to justify the legitimacy of the Fascist's claim to government—specifically for their defense of Italian nationalism against the socialists. In the Italian movement phase, martyrdom has a more practical function of

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<sup>209</sup> Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi. *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1997, pp. 1-5.

<sup>210</sup> From a Speech entitled "Men Pass Away, Maybe Governments Too, But Italy Lives and Will Never Die," delivered at Cagliari Sardinia on June 12, 1923. Benito Mussolini. *Mussolini: As revealed in His Political Speeches November 1914-August 1923*. London: J.M. Dent, 1923. pp 323-324

demonstrating supreme sacrifice, and a connection to the Italian past, in order to validate the legitimacy claims of party.

### ***Blood Martyrs and The Beer Hall Putsch***

The Nazis called their movement phase the *Kampfzeit*, which roughly translates to the “period of struggle” and lasted from 1919-1933. Inspired by Mussolini’s success in Italy, Hitler attempted something similar for Germany on November 9, 1923 known as the Beer Hall Putsch.<sup>211</sup> Hitler galvanized the power of the Brownshirts to function as a paramilitary force by which to challenge the German army, the socialists and communists. The plan called for the takeover of Munich (and by default all of Bavaria) and using it as a launching point for a march on Berlin. Unlike his Italian counterpart, the Bavarian Prime Minister Eugene von Knilling, was able to successfully declare a state of emergency and appointed Gustav von Karr as Bavarian Commissioner (one of three leaders who now effectively served as a triumvirate running all of Bavaria). On November 8, 1923 while von Karr was giving a political speech at the Bürgerbräukeller, a Beer hall in Munich, Hitler and around six hundred Brownshirts stormed the hall declaring that the Nazi revolution had begun. The reaction to Hitler’s putsch was swift and decisive. Within two days he was arrested and charged with treason.<sup>212</sup> Talking about the Putsch some years later Hitler claimed, “I was following Mussolini’s example too closely. I had meant the Munich Putsch to be the beginning of a ‘March on Berlin’ which would carry us

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<sup>211</sup> A ‘putsch’ is a German term that refers to a coup d’état. While in the US we refer to this as the Beer Hall or Munich Putsch, Germans refer to it more commonly as the Hitlerputsch.

<sup>212</sup> Richard J. Evans. *The Coming of the Third Reich*. (New York: Penguin, 2003) pp. 177-206.

straight to power.”<sup>213</sup> After his conviction, Hitler would spend eight months in prison constructing his own narrative surrounding the putsch and formulated his political ideology in what came to be known as *Mein Kampf*.

Hitler argued in the succeeding years that despite the Putsch’s failure it was a necessary step in the eventual rise of the Nazis. Unlike Mussolini’s March, real blood spilt, and the sixteen Nazis who died in the attempt became the martyrs on whose blood Hitler will argue sanctified the movement. In 1924, during the closing statement of his trial, Hitler first tried to cast the failed Putsch as divinely inspired arguing:

... from our bones, from our graves will sound the voice of that tribunal which alone has the right to sit in judgment upon us. ... You may declare us guilty a thousand times, but the Goddess who presides over the Eternal Court of History will with a smile tear in pieces the charge of the Public Prosecutor and the judgment of the Court: for she declares us guiltless.<sup>214</sup>

The emphasis on the divine nature of the act was further bolstered by Hitler’s determination to have his martyrs considered ‘Blood Witnesses.’ In the *Nazi Heilgeseschichte* literally translated as “Nazi salvation history,” a song was sung annually to remember the fallen and to connect their blood as possessing a redemptive quality for mankind. “We feel enriched / By the blood of those who fell / So that their banner pure and bright / Shall give us revelation of the Reich / (...) /

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<sup>213</sup> G. Ward Price. *I knew These Dictators*. London: Harrap, 1937, p. 79, quoted in Norman Baynes’, ed. *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler: April 1922-1939*. London: Oxford, 1942, pp. 159-160.

<sup>214</sup> Norman Baynes, ed. *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler: April 1922-1939*. London: Oxford, 1942, pp. 86-87.

With your flame our life begins.<sup>215</sup>” In another poem to celebrate the Putsch martyrs, Boehme wrote: “The earth came to an end with your death, but your Glory our life began.”<sup>216</sup> True to the concept of *Heiligeschichte*, the first martyrs for Nazi Germany were seen as offering up their sacrificial blood so that the nation may be saved. This created something of a two tier notion of martyrdom in the Nazism as regime phase where later martyrs will still be important and revered but only the original sixteen opened the way for salvation and they will be held in higher regard.<sup>217</sup>

### **The Spectacle of Martyrdom within the Fascism as Regime Phase**

The second phase of fascism is that of regime where the party has now solidified their control over the government and lasts until the regime falls. For the Italians this phase lasted from 1928-1943<sup>218</sup> and for the Nazis it lasted from 1933-1945. Now that the parties were actually in power and they had the entire apparatus of the state at their disposal the spectacle of martyrdom emerged as a powerful way to connect the party with the people. With the regime phase, fascist movements also

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<sup>215</sup> Herbert Boehme, ‘Kantate zum 9 November,’ in H Boehme, *Gesaenge unter der Fahne: Vier Kantaten*, Munich, 1935, pp. 38, 44. Quoted in Guenter Berghaus’s, *The Ritual Core of Fascist Theatre: An Anthropological Perspective*,” in Roger Griffin and Matthew Feldman, eds. *Fascism: Critical Concepts in Political Science*, Routledge, London, 2004. P. 93.

<sup>216</sup> Quoted in Simon Taylor’s, *Symbol and Ritual under National Socialism*, *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (December, 1981) p. 510.

<sup>217</sup> This is really not unlike the Christian notion of Christ’s martyrdom and the eternal salvation that they believe it provides being seen as a more essential or higher form of martyrdom than those of the other saints.

<sup>218</sup> I chose 1943 because this was when most of Italy fell to the Allied powers and the fascist party removed Mussolini from power. Technically he did still govern a puppet (German) regime in the north of Italy known as the Salo Republic between 1943-1945.

expanded the opportunity of martyrdom to the average person. Martyrdom was transformed from an act to a narrative. As a narrative, the martyrdom story I retold through celebratory rituals constructed to integrate the participant into the narrative itself.

A simple example is Christian communion. The story is that of the Last Supper and the celebratory ritual is the taking of the literal (in the Catholic tradition) of the blood and body of Christ. In this way the Christian congregants are being indoctrinated into an ideological discourse (Christ died for you) and being invited to participate in the process to reaffirm the connection between the sacrifice, the Church (who administers the sacrifice) and the congregant. In a very similar way, the martyrdom spectacles present narratives designed to both tell the public a story and invite them to actively share in the sacrifice. The following are examples of three different spectacles and each serving to tell a slightly different martyrdom narrative.

The first narrative of martyrdom connects the themes of physical transformation with extraordinary (supererogatory) sacrifice. These two themes fit into fascism's tenet that violence would produce order and that out of that new order men would emerge who would now make sacrifices not out of egoistic interests but for the glory of the state. A common thread linking both the historic and contemporary examples of martyrdom within totalitarian movements is the evolution of martyrdom as a concept borrowed from local traditions but then re-imagined to take on characteristics that the totalitarian parties advanced as exemplary. These spectacles of martyrdom serve as grand displays to alter the physical makeup of the

world, institutionalize ritualized practices to allow opportunities of communal participation and as celebrations of individual sacrifice as witness to the greater good of the cause..

The second narrative is a theatrical performance called 18BL (which refers to the model number of the truck that is the main character of the play) and tells a story of a how a work truck who diligently performs his duty and works hard give becomes an eternal part of the nation itself. The production of 18BL was one of the most elaborate theatrical performances ever staged and was an attempt to create a fascist theater for the masses rooted in the operatic traditions of Italy's past. Yet, unlike the emotional power of an opera, the production of 18BL was so vast and overwhelming that it was impossible to become absorbed in what appeared so distant and left the average observer with a sense of cold detachment. Nevertheless, 18BL did have one important legacy; it elevated the idea that a life in service to the state, doing one's duty, connected the citizen directly to the greatness of the nation.

The third spectacle is that of the Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista (Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution) which exemplifies the sacralization of the state and the elevation of the fascist martyr as its disciple. The exhibition came 10 years after the March on Rome and was designed to remind the people of the regime's accomplishments. At the center of the exhibition was a sacrarium whose narrative story was one of awe and devotion both to the martyrs and to the successes of the state that their martyrdom afforded. The sacrarium borrowed heavily from Catholic imagery and architecture both in the content and style of its cathedral to the martyrs,

but instead of the named or photographed martyrs, the fascist martyrs in the sacrarium are faceless, nameless voices inviting all the visitors passing through to join them in their call of ‘presente’ with the regime.

The final spectacle is the dedication of the Temple of Honor to the Blood-Witnesses (the sixteen Putsch martyrs) also known as the Resurrection of the Dead. The martyrdom narrative here was one of divine fulfillment of the promised salvation brought about by the sacrifice of the sixteen martyrs in 1923. One of the first acts Hitler did when he became Chancellor was to order the erection of a giant Temple of Honor to house the remains of the Putsch martyrs. The construction project took two years to complete and was finished in time for the 1935 remembrance. The center of this annual celebration was a reenacting of the failed coup with the blood stained *Blutfahne* (blood flag) at the head of the procession for everyone to see the blood and sacrifice of the martyrs.<sup>219</sup>

### ***Physical transformation and the Battle of the Swamps***

“What more energetic affirmation of the value of life than the voluntary sacrifice of the citizen who dies for his country. Fascism has reestablished a love of martyrdom for the ideal of our country.”<sup>220</sup>

French fascist and Sorelian disciple Pierre Andreu in the journal *Combat* argued “violence calls for order like the sublime calls for beauty.”<sup>221</sup> Mussolini

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<sup>219</sup> Simon Taylor’s, Symbol and Ritual under National Socialism, *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (December, 1981) pp. 507, 520.

<sup>220</sup> Giovanni Gentile, quoted in T.V. Smith’s, “The Ethics of Fascism,” *International Journal of Ethics*. Vol. 46, No. 2 (January 1936) p.155.



strived for both order and beauty in one of his government's first major public works project known as the "Battle of the Swamps" or the *Bonifica integrale*. The Battle of the Swamps is arguably one of the few positive developments emerging for the fascist era. Prior to the 1928, the Pontine marshes just outside Rome had been a relatively poor performing agricultural area that was prone to constant flooding, poor crop yields, and more troublesome—malaria.

The Romans were the first to try to drain the Pontine Marshes but lacked the technological resources to successfully reclaim the land. This became a recurrent theme throughout the middle ages and well into the Nineteenth century as subsequent governments sought to control the marshes as a physical representation of the greatness of their regime. Six years after Mussolini came to power he too tried to tackle the swamp and his plan called for one of the largest and most ambitious public works projects of the time.

The fascist party faced significant challenges in 1928 on the domestic and foreign policy fronts. Six years in power had produced very few tangible economic or cultural successes for the fascists and the party that had assumed power on the pretext of the March on Rome seemed to have stopped marching once it got there. Economic recovery from the First World War was slow and the industrialization of the north had yet to trickle down to the southern part of Italy. The northern cities were overpopulated and rising unemployment made these centers for communist fervor. In

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<sup>221</sup> Mark Antliff. *Avant-Garde Fascism: The Mobilization of Myth, Art and Culture in France 1909-1939*. (Durham: Duke, 2007) p. 204.

1926 Antonio Gramsci, the head of the Communist Party of Italy, was arrested and sentenced to 20 years in prison under emergency laws enacted after a failed assassination attempt on Mussolini.<sup>222</sup> These laws had the affect of removing the last vestiges of parliamentary democracy and allowed a fascist dictatorship to be established.

The regime, now without any real opposition, sought a way to integrate the masses into one party under the state. Arguably the most significant accomplishment for the fascists—the draining of the Pontine Swamp—creates a narrative arc that links directly to one of the largest spectacles of martyrdom even produced, the play entitled 18BL. But, in order to fully explore the power of the play, the relevance of the Pontine Swamps must first be explored. Envisioning the Pontine Swamp as his way to create an everlasting monument to fascism that would physically transform the countryside, provide jobs for the unemployed, relieve the growing overpopulation in the north and accomplish a feat that even the great Roman Empire had failed to do, Mussolini established the Battle of the Swamps. In October of 1926 Mussolini declared, “It is our task to change beyond all recognition the physical and spiritual face of our country within the space of ten years.”<sup>223</sup> The project was massive even by today’s standards. In 1930 when the reclamation actually began 41,500 workers were

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<sup>222</sup> Antonio Gramsci. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. Edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. (International: New York, 1999) pp.xvii-xviii.

<sup>223</sup> Carl Schmidt. “Land Reclamation in Fascist Italy.” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (September, 1937) p. 345.

employed and that number more than tripled by 1933 with 124,211 workers and took over eight years to complete.<sup>224</sup>

The selection of the Pontine Marshes had a significant demonstrative aspect to it. By being in such close proximity to Rome, it was a concrete and visual indication to the entire national population. The urbanites from Rome could physically see the draining and construction underway, the rural peasants from the South were part of the army of workers, families in the north were being relocated into the former swamp land for resettlement and in case there were any Italians who were not aware of the project, newsreels, films and even plays were created to broadcast the spectacle to the nation. The two most important of these propaganda films were *Camicia Nera*<sup>225</sup> (1933) and *Dall' acquitrino alle giornate di Littoria*<sup>226</sup> (1935).

*Camicia Nera* was directed by Givacchino Fozano and is an allegory of the ideal worker and fascist. The story's protagonist is a wounded (and this is key because much is made about his physical sacrifice in war and the physical transformation it leaves behind) World War I veteran who comes home from war only to find himself betrayed by the liberal government of Italy who failed to win anything out of her 'mutilated victory.' Disgusted by the decadence and individualism that he sees pervading Italian society he joins the fascist party and decides to help build a new Italy by joining the Bonifica integrale work force. After working to

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<sup>224</sup> See table 6.1 "Workers Employed in the Pontine Marshes" in Frank Snowden's *The Conquest of Malaria: Italy 1900-1962*. (Yale: New Haven, 2006) p. 156.

<sup>225</sup> Translates to 'Black Shirt' which is what the Italian fascist partisans were known as.

<sup>226</sup> Translates to 'From the Marshes to the Days of Littoria.'

reclaim the swamp he then moves his family to the new city of Littoria which he helped to build.<sup>227</sup> The message here is anything but subtle, good fascists make physical sacrifices for their nation (wounded veteran) and it is those who sacrifice who can build the new nation and will reap the rewards of their contribution.

The symbolic resonance of Littoria cannot be understated for fascist propaganda during this period. Littoria was a city literally forged from the marshes. Mussolini was not interested in just taming the swamps or controlling malaria, he also wanted to forge new cities for the nation that would be built from their very foundation on fascist principles, architecture and indeed by self-proclaimed fascists. These cities represented a complete break from the past and were grand spectacles to the power of the movement to forge something new and deliver to the people. Italy was a latecomer to the nation-state system and had missed the window for colonial expansion. Yet, the Italian people had the example of the Roman Empire and they too sought colonial conquests. With their perceived portrayal at Versailles still fresh in their minds, and the failures of the Liberal and Socialist parties to deliver external territorial expansion, the reclaiming of the Pontine Swamp offered a literal internal colonization. If Italy failed to conquer lands abroad, she could conquer them at home and colonize the new parts of Italy on the fascist model from the ground up. This principle was affirmed when Mussolini turned the former sparsely inhabited Pontine region into a full fledged Italian province.

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 163-164.

The city of Littoria played a central role in fascist director Alessandro Blasetti's *Dall' acquitrino alle giornate di Littoria*. While the Black Shirts presented the story of the model fascist and notions of physical transformation and sacrifice, Blasetti's story is one meant to highlight the wonders of the new fascist model for life. Gone in the new city plans were the giant cathedrals, bell towers and baptisteries. Instead, the center of each town was a large public square more akin to the ancient Rome than the medieval models and casting its shadow over each public square was the municipal office. Surrounding the town centers in neat and orderly grids were row after row of simple modern homes for former peasants to dwell surrounded by now arable land on which to grow crops and live a life of order.<sup>228</sup> The center of the new fascist cities, as well as the center for the fascist themselves, would be the state.

Journalists at the time hailed Littoria and its surrounding cities a 'fascist utopia.'

In this kind of reporting, the biblical myth of Genesis was replaced by the journey to a Fascist paradise. Littoria was a new Eden.... The rapidity of the appearance of the new settlements in Italy struck every visitor as astonishing, but, as one commentator observed, Fascism had accustomed Italians to the experience of witnessing one miracle after another.<sup>229</sup>

Indeed the Pontine marsh would be the scene for one of the grandest theatrical spectacles the fascists ever conducted and its call to martyrdom to the faceless masses will evolve from one of sacrifice in the physical transformation of Italy to a

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<sup>228</sup> Federicco Caprotti. *Mussolini's Cities: Internal Colonialism in Italy 1930-1939*. (Cambria Press: Amherst, 2007) pp. 163-165.

<sup>229</sup> Charles Burdett. "Italian Fascism and Utopia," *History of the Human Sciences*. Vol. 16, No. 93, 2003 p. 101.

supererogatory sacrifice for the state—and all of this emerges out of the story of a truck named 18 BL.

***Spectacle as Extraordinary Sacrifice through Theater and Film: 18 BL***

The spectacle of 18BL was the first attempt at creating a theater for the people in Italy and of bringing the narrative of martyrdom to the masses. 18 BL was one of the most expansive, expensive and over the top productions ever to have been staged. It was directed by director Alessandro Blasetti the director of *Dall'acquittrino alle giornate di Littoria*. The play was the central event of the fascism's youth Olympics for culture and theater (only in Italy would an entire Olympics be dedicated to culture and theater).

The collaborative creation of seven young writers and a film director, 18 BL brought together two thousand actors, fifty trucks, eight bulldozers, four field and machine gun batteries, ten field radio stations, and six photoelectric brigades in a stylized Soviet-style representation of fascism's past, present and future.<sup>230</sup>

With a production of this magnitude, it should come as little surprise that the setting for the staging of this mass spectacle had to already embody a sense of sacrifice, accomplishment and modernity and Mussolini found just such a spot in the reclaimed fields of Pontine just outside its new capital the city of Littoria.

18 BL was the model number of the story's protagonist, a Fiat truck. While not human, it was in many ways the perfect archetype for the ideal fascist man—modern, powerful, and most importantly, Italian. There is a tremendous significance

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<sup>230</sup> Jeffrey Schnapp. 18 BL: Fascist Mass Spectacle. *Representations*. Number 43 (Summer, 1993) pp. 91-92.

in the hero being not a man, or even something identifiable with a name, rather they act as part of a greater whole. In being identified solely with a serial number, 18 BL would serve as the representation of the mass man who finds themselves not in their pursuit of individuality but through the glories and emotions of the community. In addition, there is perhaps one less obvious and perhaps more sinister reason for the hero to be a piece of machinery.<sup>231</sup> Trucks are working tools, items to be used and driven in the pursuit of a greater good or end. They are not sentient beings and blindly follow the will of their master (a narrative aimed squarely at the fascist youth who, while they did not know it in 1934, would be fighting for Italy on the fields of World War II in just short years).

The production was intended to be the first real mass theater that would connect the audience to the actors, the set and the story in such a way as to “achieve an actualized mystical experience closing the gap between representation and reality, art and life, actors and audiences.”<sup>232</sup> To this end, the theater was a giant open air spectacle with 20,000 spectators spread throughout the marshes not facing a clearly defined stage but experiencing the action unfold at different vantage points to really allow the audience to be enveloped by the story and become one with the drama.<sup>233</sup>

The play was conducted in three acts, each representing key aspects of the party’s history. Act I opened on the battlefields of World War I. The play is

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<sup>231</sup> Schnapp also refers to 18 BL as a ‘metalized man.’ Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Cinzia Artini Bloom. “Fascist Temples and Theaters of the Masses,” *South Central Review*. Volume 13, Number 3 / 4 (Autumn-Winter 1997), p.53.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., pp. 53-55.

contrived, ironically enough, in the Soviet vein of choppy sequences of event and bright flashes of light to portray to the spectators a sense of movement and progress. The scene is one of artillery fire all around and soldiers running around barbed wire fences storming up a hill. In the distance a caravan of 18 BL model trucks is bringing fresh soldiers to the front lines and by the end of the third scene the entire procession are climbing up three different hills where in the middle of which the Italian flag rises signaling her victorious conquest of the cities of Trento and Trieste.<sup>234</sup>

Act II opens in the years immediately after World War I with the audience being blanketed by red fireworks overhead to represent the rise of socialism and labor disputes in Italy following the war. At the center of the display is no longer the Italian flag but instead a large table filled with fat, lazy men, hoarding money and arguing furiously with one another. The sign on the table reads “parliament.” One of the men at the table gets up to make a speech and representing Prime Minister Facta who lost power to Mussolini in 1922 uttered Facta’s words: “But what do these fascists want?” Just at that moment one of the 18 BL’s barrels down from the hillside and smashes the table marked parliament and a civil war ensues between the socialists and the fascists on stage. Scene three opens with a factory on fire and one of the trucks charging ahead to help fight the socialists alongside 300 fascists. By the time the 18 BL arrives the fighting is over, and while victorious, the fascist casualties are so

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<sup>234</sup> Jeffrey Schnapp. 18 BL: Fascist Mass Spectacle. *Representations*. Number 43 (Summer, 1993) pp. 106-107.



numerous that the truck is now used for a funeral procession to transport the dead. As the ascend the hill top again,

From out of the light, a ‘metallic and clear voice’ (Mussolini’s) interrupts the funeral silence and, calling out: “Heroes of the war and martyrs of the revolution.” “Presente,” they answer. “To whom does Italy belong, to whom Rome?” “To us,” they answer. But the chorus of voices is no longer isolated. Black shirts shout out “to us” from all sides of the auditorium and stage. Led by a truck convoy, they parade out across the landscape and converge over the horizon line, where their silhouettes vanish into the light. Act 2 has ended; the March on Rome has begun.<sup>235</sup>

This revision of the actual history of the March on Rome aside, the symbolic resonance of Act II is clear, even if you were not part of the March on Rome and the founding of the fascist revolution you can experience its sense of glory and collectively connect to a mythic past. This is the turning point in the spectacle narrative in which the audience is not merely invited to join the procession but they are literally enveloped by the actors all around them and thus the production itself sweeps the audience into the play and connects them with the story. The transition to spectacles for mass mobilization for the regime phase is embodied in the play; all that is lacking now is a martyr.

The play’s final act returns to the scene of its production, the Pontine swamp. In this scene ten years have passed since the March on Rome and there are numerous allusions to fascism’s progress (school children singing the party’s praises, order in the streets, etc.) but most importantly the commander overseeing the land reclamation process indicates that the road to the Fascist Italy’s new town Litorria would be built

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 107.

in three days. With these words, he then orders the clearing of the land and the carving of the roads. Off to the side of the performance area the old 18 BL that has now served through World War I, the March on Rome and now the reclamation process dutifully begins to carry its load when the engine suddenly dies in the middle of the stage. After frantic attempts to revive it, 18BL is a martyr to the cause and it is decided that she will be pushed into the open pit the road will ride over and will continue to serve the Italian state even in her grave. As the play is ending 18 BL's driver says to the crowd: "She has fought the war, the revolution and the battle for land reclamation. Now she will support the highway to Littoria. ... In three days she will return to her duties anew, my old lady. Forever!"<sup>236</sup>

The less than subtle reference in these final lines aimed directly at the legacy of Catholic culture within Italy. 18 BL is ultimately a martyrdom narrative about the salvation of the mass man through his willingness to do his duty. Just as Christ rose three days after his great sacrifice and martyrdom, 18 BL would rise exactly three days too. As Christ's resurrection would allow him to spend an eternity in heaven (except for that brief moment known as the second coming, but that's always been a bit more of a protestant doctrine), 18 BL will spend her eternity in a similar heaven—not the Garden of Eden, but a fascist utopia in the former Pontine Swamps here on earth.

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<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 109.

***Spectacle through the Creation of the Ideal Man and the Sacralization of the State: Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista and the Temple of Honor and the Resurrection of the Dead***

On October 29, 1932, the tenth anniversary of the Fascist Party's March on Rome, Mussolini marked the occasion with the opening of the elaborate Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista. The Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution was billed as an opportunity to showcase to the world a burgeoning fascist generation and to create a national shrine, linked to the glories of Imperial Rome and Catholic Church yet a distinct political and social identity in its own right. By 1932, there was a significant debate within Italy and the party as to what fascist 'culture' was, and if it even had one. Plays like *18 BL* and propaganda films like *Camicia Nera* were designed to develop and display a fascist culture, one that would actually be a third way between liberalism and communism. The religious aspect of culture, particularly in the Italian context, was a more difficult task for Mussolini to handle. In 1929, he had signed the Lateran Accords which gave sovereign power to the Holy See and gave the Pope Vatican City and nullifying any residual claim to Rome the Pope may still have had. Now Mussolini sought something more, as a totalizing ideology, fascism had little room for a religion outside of the state. From this foundation Mussolini would absorb smatterings of Catholic ritual, architecture and symbolism in attempt to create a sacralization of politics with a congregation of the masses and a long list of martyred saints.

Mussolini, never known for his subtlety, borrowed heavily from Catholic imagery as he stood before the crowd on that October morning flanked by twelve

young fascist disciples each singing stanzas of “Giovanezza” (Italian for youth), the official song of the Fascist Party. The palace itself was redesigned for the exhibition to embody a cathedral with a floor plan carefully constructed to lead visitors through a nave (depicting the history of the movement), a crossing (housing relics of fascist martyrs) and the climax of the tour—an altar named the Sacrarium of the Martyrs.

The overall ritual structure closely paralleled the organization of a Mass, with an introitus (the hymn sung at the opening ceremony), a credo (the reciting of the creed), followed by the symbolic re-enactment of the Passion, which sometimes took the form of a procession, and the communion or concluding sacrificial rite.<sup>237</sup>

Upon entering the Sacrarium visitors would be struck by a bath of red light to symbolize the blood of the fallen. The large cylindrical room (standing in stark contrast to the rectangular rooms throughout the exhibition) was constructed of six prominent metal rings running horizontally around the perimeter, each repeatedly inscribed with the word “Presente!” (a fascist phrase that play a similarly important role in 18 BL to make the sacrificial martyrdom one in which they can connect to) while in the walls recorded voices in every direction repeat the phrase again, “Presente!” At the center of the room stands an enormous metal cross with the words “For the Fatherland” while surrounding the exterior were pennants displaying squads of fascists both marching to victory and in the heat of battle.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Libero Andreotti, “The Aesthetics of War: The Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution.” *Journal of Architectural Education* Vol. 45, No. 2 (February 1992), 76-77.

<sup>238</sup> Mark Antliff, “Fascism, Modernism and Modernity.” *The Art Bulletin* Vol. 84, No. 1 (March 2002), pp.156-157.

The intricate detail of the staging of the Sacrarium (even in choosing to use this Latin term) was intended to connect fascism within Italy's long political and cultural legacy. The six circular columns hark back to the Roman Coliseum which itself had a large cross at its center to pay homage to the Christian martyrs who died there.<sup>239</sup> The pennants on the wall are metaphors for the Station of the Cross. The circular design of the room gives the visitor the feeling that the fascist revolution has no beginning or end but is a constant presence, and the disembodied voices ringing in all directions is a reminder that everyone, the faceless masses, are all part of the revolution and the revolution is a part of everyone. The martyrdom narrative was one of devotion and adoration for faceless, nameless martyred saints allowing the individual spectator to wander the halls and contemplate the sacrifices made on their behalf.

### **The Temple of Honor and the Resurrection of the Dead**

The Resurrection of the Dead ceremony was the first major martyrdom spectacle for the Nazi party and it would establish themes of salvation, divine calling and sacrificial blood that Hitler returned to time and again throughout his Chancellorship. The spectacle itself had three parts: something of a Passion play style reenactment of the failed Putsch replete with the blood flag, the internment of the Putsch martyrs into the Temple of Honor and the national celebrations and parades throughout the rest of the country. The martyrdom narrative also had three

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<sup>239</sup> At least it had the cross until Mussolini removed it just months before the opening of the Exhibition on the grounds that 'excavation' needed to be done but was probably designed to symbolically show the shift from the monuments of Rome's mythic past to its fascist future.

purposes: to affirm the necessity of the martyr's sacrifice, to demonstrate to the people that the Third Reich is the fulfillment of that sacrifice, and to bestow salvation to the German people through the sacrifice of the dead and the rule of the party.

Hitler had two years earlier began celebrating the November 9 anniversary of the Putsch by starting to espouse his reading of almost Hegelian notion of the movement of history in what he labeled the "Holy History." Germany under the Nazi party was the end of this holy history, which consisted of the 1923 Putsch deaths as the necessary sacrificial blood, and the 1933 assumption of power as the divine manifestation of this historic inevitability.<sup>240</sup> He laid the groundwork for this idea in a 1933 commemorative speech in which he said:

In very truth , the cerecloths of these sixteen dead have celebrated a resurrection which is unique in the history of the world. ...[F]rom their sacrifice arose this mighty unity in Germany, this victory of a Movement, of an idea, and to this the whole people is pledged. ... For if at that time I had found no one to step forward to champion the cause of the Reich at the cost of their bodies and their lives, then in after years, too, this would have become impossible. For all those who later sacrificed their blood were inspired by the sacrifice of these first men.<sup>241</sup>

Here for one of the first times Hitler connects their sacrifice as essential to the movement's electoral success.

Hitler made the Resurrection of the Dead celebration a dramatically elaborate event. The day began with the introduction of the Blood Flag—the actual flag that the martyrs marched with during the Putsch. The flag itself was stained with the blood of

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<sup>240</sup> Simon Taylor's, Symbol and Ritual under National Socialism, *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (December, 1981) p. 514.

<sup>241</sup> Norman Baynes, ed. *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler: April 1922-1939*. London: Oxford, 1942, p. 137.

the dead and the Nazis revered it was such tenacity that Hitler would touch the Blood Flag next to new flags at large ceremonies so that the blood would in essence pass through and each person who owned the new flag would be connected to the original martyrs.<sup>242</sup> With the flag at the head of the procession, the marchers in Munich would assemble at the beer hall and the march to the ground where Hitler and the martyrs were fired upon. After this remembrance of their death, a celebration of their resurrection occurred at the Temple of Honor where all sixteen martyrs were laid to rest.<sup>243</sup>

The Temple of Honor was a large square open roofed structure that allowed light to shine through and had twenty large columns (sixteen—one for each martyr—and four supporting columns), four flames (one in each corner) and two permanent guards. The Temple was filled with Hitler Youth and as part of the ritual all sixteen names were read aloud with the Hitler Youth responding “here!” to each name in order to symbolize the resurrection of the dead. Afterwards sixteen cannon shots were fired and speeches, songs and celebrations for their bestowed salvation occurred through Germany.<sup>244</sup> In his speech before the crowd at the Temple Hitler said:

These sixteen men, who twelve years ago gave their lives as a sacrifice for their people and their Fuehrer, are today raised from the grave. Who does not feel the truth of this resurrection? Who does not see the glint of their eyes in

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<sup>242</sup> Klaus Vondung, “National Socialism as Political Religion,” *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 6, No. 1, June 2005 pp. 88, 92.

<sup>243</sup> Guenter Berghaus’s, “The Ritual Core of Fascist Theatre: An Anthropological Perspective,” in Roger Griffin and Matthew Feldman, eds. *Fascism: Critical Concepts in Political Science*, Routledge, London, 2004, p. 92.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, 90-92.

the newly-raised Wehrmacht? And the Reich, which is itself upon this consecrated ground, is it not their kingdom? The kingdom of their 'will' and victory?<sup>245</sup>

Hitler left little room for subtle interpretations of the meaning behind this spectacle of martyrdom, but that is the point. In the regime phase of the movement the martyrdom narrative speaks to the entire population and begins the process of connecting the individual into the fascist ideology of the state.

### **Summary Remarks**

This chapter explored the development of martyrdom spectacles among fascist movements in the interwar period. In arguing that the use of spectacle changes depending on whether the movements were in power or vying for it, I demonstrated the essentially political nature that such spectacles play in building popular support. The next chapter expands this argument and applies it to contemporary belligerent fundamentalist movements today, arguing that rather than seeing any significant evolution in martyrdom spectacles over time, today's groups still rely on the same basic narratives of sacrifice for the community and a demonstration of political will as is seen in the fascist model.

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<sup>245</sup> Simon Taylor's, Symbol and Ritual under National Socialism, *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (December, 1981) p. 8.



## **Chapter Three: The Resurgence of Fascism-like Movements: Martyrdom in the Contemporary World**

The following chapter explores the use of martyrdom spectacles among contemporary cases of belligerent fundamentalism—specifically, Hamas and Iran. Building from the previous chapter, I argue that the use of spectacle fulfills similar political aims as it did historically. Hamas, for example, organized itself in direct response to a more secular version of Palestinian nationalism. In order to create a movement that would be fundamentally Islamic, they borrowed conceptions of martyrdom and social obligation to create a militarized religious nationalism that could directly challenge both Fatah and the Israelis. The integration of martyrdom spectacles served as a mechanism for demonstrating just how different Hamas was from its competition and to demonstrate the degree of devotion its members had to the cause of Palestinian liberation. Yet, just like those before them, spectacles based on symbolic martyrdom replaced those based on physical martyrs.

### **Introduction: The Cases of Iran and Hamas**

On October 23, 1983 a suicide bomber driving a truck laden with explosives attacked French and American Marines based in Beirut as part of an international peacekeeping force (the Multinational Force in Lebanon). The bombings introduced

the American public to both radical Islam (Islamic Jihad laid claim to the acts) and a new form of combatant, the suicide martyr. The phenomenon of the suicide martyr is an important piece, but only one piece, of an overall story of the secularization<sup>246</sup> of martyrdom that began with the rise of fascist movements in the 1920's and has continued since as a means for penetrating into the private sphere and creating a new image of citizen that ignores the public/private distinction. But are contemporary martyrdom movements significantly different than their historical counterparts? And do new mechanisms of dissemination allow for a society seemingly saturated by martyrdom myths to actually increase the incidents of blood martyrs and transformational martyrdom from an aspirational act into a defining element of the new body politic?

This chapter explores the political and economic conditions that allow for the resurgence of martyrdom in the contemporary world specifically in the case of Hamas and how the use of martyrdom and spectacle have evolved to address the same the sorts of legitimacy claims that were faced by earlier historical movements. The Iranian Case introduces the contemporary emergence of modern fundamentalist movements and the manifestations of martyrdom they use. While the Shah promoted rapid modernization and embraced Western cultural and economic norms, Iranian Islamists viewed the Shah as little more than a Western puppet regime and looked at the decline of the Islamic world vis-à-vis the West trying to understand how the once

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<sup>246</sup> By secularization I mean that martyrdom is transformed from a primarily ecclesiastical concept and integrated into the body politic.

mighty Persian and Islamic empires could fall so far behind them. Their answer was not in the poor adoption of Western models but in the decay of Iranian culture itself, which had become decadent and economically divided between the haves and the have-nots. The Islamists argue that if Iranian society would return to Islam then it would be able to restore itself to its rightful prominence in the world.

Their advocated return to Islam is one that embraces all the technological and military advancements of the West but rejects the notions of individualism, political liberalism and the secular state. The movement originally looked to the martyrdom of Husayn Ibn Ali, the grandson of Mohammed, and who Shiite Muslims believe is the true heir to Islam. His death began the ascendancy of Sunni Islam and the corruption of the faith. For Iranian fundamentalist, this marked the turning point in Islam, and for them to regain the level of dominance they had historically, they must return to the purity of the early faith. This narrative of martyrdom is exacerbated by the invasion of Iran by Sunni led Iraq that forced Iranian leaders to create one of the bloodiest spectacles of martyrdom. The Basij, a youth comprised martyrdom force, walked the front lines detonating landmines with their own footsteps so the Iranian military could counter-attack. The Iranian regime conceptually linked the Basij directly to the martyrdom of Hussein Ibn Ali by arguing that they too were defending the true faith against imposters.

An important legacy of the Iran-Iraq War was that it solidified the Iranian public around the theocracy and as they entered the regime phase the call to martyrdom is again transformed into a communal celebration of sacrifice rather than

for individual blood martyrs. In a manner similar to Italy, numerous Museums of the Martyrs were built around Iran containing fountains with water dyed red to symbolize the martyr's blood.<sup>247</sup> The political leaders continue to use the rhetoric of martyrdom but generally did so in a rhetorical way (there are some exceptions when martyrs are urged to join international conflict but again this is largely rhetorical). The significant differences in the contemporary cases from their historical counterparts is the degree of commercialization around martyrdom and the near total saturation of the martyrdom myth that permeates in the modern age. In Iran, young entrepreneurs sell t-shirts with their favorite martyrs above headings that read "my hero" and in Gaza and the West Bank Palestinians children buy and trade martyrdom cards with the picture, statistics and death stories of various martyrs along with calendars and DVDs showing their last will and testament.<sup>248</sup>

The second case in this chapter is that of the Palestinian Hamas. The Palestinians are living under an Israeli occupation stemming from 1967 onward (and before them the Jordanians, British, Ottomans, etc.). Their sense of national humiliation is rooted in a unique blend of occupation by their Israeli neighbors, poor treatment by their Arab neighbors, extreme economic hardship in Gaza and a legacy of corrupt leadership within Fatah and the PLO. Hamas has been able to capitalize on

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<sup>247</sup> See Faegheh Shirazi, "Death, the Great Equalizer: Memorializing Martyred (Shahid) Women in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Visual Anthropology* 25, no. 1–2 (January 2012): 98–119; and, Kamran Scot Aghaie, *The Martyrs of Karbala: Shi'i Symbols and Rituals in Modern Iran*, 1st ed. (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2004).

<sup>248</sup> Anne Marie Oliver and Paul F. Steinberg, *The Road to Martyrs' Square: A Journey into the World of the Suicide Bomber* (Oxford University Press, 2006).

these frustrations by providing social services or arm supplies (often funded by Iran), businesses, education and civic facilities when the Palestinian and Israeli governments have been either unwilling or unable to provide them. By developing a reputation of honesty and delivering basic goods and services, Hamas has been able to challenge the dominance of its chief political rival, Fatah.

Hamas' relationship with martyrdom runs deep in its history. As an offshoot of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas has largely been concerned with the corrupting influence of the West and on the continued occupation. After the failures of the First Palestinian Intifada and given the extreme asymmetrical power relationship with Israel, Hamas turned to suicide martyrdom tactics against Israeli citizens and children. Much like in the Iranian case, these acts of martyrdom were self-inflicted (and for Hamas they were also homicidal) and they were portrayed as extraordinary acts of sacrifice for the nation and the faith.

All of the world's major religions, Islam included, places a premium on the preservation of life, so Hamas had to very early on create a language around suicide martyrs (bombers) that would frame their acts to fit under the rubric of martyrdom. More importantly, they had to rush to create parades, memorials, and celebrations that would build public support for their bombings and not have them conceptualized as murder. For Hamas, the most important role of martyrdom spectacles was to justify the validity of the act rather than connecting it to a historical example.

Hamas is currently in the regime stage ever since its 2006 electoral victory in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections and its assumption of power within

Gaza. Ironically enough, even though the Palestinians still lack a sovereign state or even a unified occupation territory, Hamas has fit the same general pattern in the use of martyrdom that is present in the other cases. The assumption of power deterred Hamas' use of martyrdom operations and they have not engaged in such a campaign since gaining power in 2006. They have hinted and even threatened on occasion to resume suicide operations against Israel and even Fatah in the West Bank but this has been little more than political posturing. What has happened however is that the narrative and rhetoric surrounding martyrdom in the Hamas case now permeates at almost all levels in Gaza. The local newspapers and Internet sites run stories of that day's martyr. Rap songs describing how to make a dirty bomb play on the radio and even popular children shows are filled with Mickey Mouse characters who self-martyr for Palestine. This is really the commercialization of martyrdom at its most extreme going beyond the selling of t-shirts or trading of martyrdom cards and bordering on the very sort of Western influence and decadence the movement in the beginning tried so desperately to destroy.

### **Suicidal Martyrdom and Islamists Movements: A Discussion on Terms**

The distinction between a Muslim and an Islamists is that "Islamists seek not merely stricter religious observance or a change in political leadership but a revolutionary transformation of their societies."<sup>249</sup> Islamists movements have sprung up across the

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<sup>249</sup> Sheri Berman, "Islamism, Revolution and Civil Society," *APSR* June 2003, vol. 1, no. 2 p. 257. A similar description of Islamists is that they "tend to the often educated but displaced, lower and middle-class victims of urbanization. Their influences are anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism and anti-Westernism fused in symbiotic fashion with Western leftist ideologies and grafted onto a radicalized

Middle East and with few exceptions they have been unable to successfully assume state power.

In her piece, *Islamism, Revolution and Civil Society*, Sheri Berman focuses on the case of Egypt<sup>250</sup> to explore the role of Islamism within Arab countries more generally.<sup>251</sup> Berman argues that such revolutions are essentially political standoffs with the Islamists unable to defeat the political power of the state and the state unable to control or define civil society.<sup>252</sup> Unlike the revolution from above thesis,<sup>253</sup> Islamist revolutions adopt a bottom-up civil society strategy that first instantiates itself among the population, relying on existing religious institutions and networks (mosques, religious schools, social networks and the legitimacy of religious leaders).

Using these preexisting platforms, Islamists move into the political, social and economic arenas left behind by a retreating or ineffective state and integrate themselves into the lives of the average citizen, especially the poor who are most dependent on state resources. By providing these resources, the Islamists have been able to foster subtle but important behavioral changes. For example, in the Egyptian

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and politicized religious world outlook. Unlike the [traditionalists] they are not rejecting the ideas and symbols of modernity, they are adopting and using them.” Michael Whine, “Islamism and Totalitarianism: Similarities and Differences,” *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* Autumn 2001, vol. 2, no. 2 p. 57.

<sup>250</sup> It should be noted that this role has changed since the overthrow of the Mubarak regime in February 2011.

<sup>251</sup> Egypt was the birthplace of the Muslim Brotherhood which is the largest Islamist group in the Middle East and Hamas is one of its offshoots.

<sup>252</sup> Sheri Berman, “Islamism, Revolution and Civil Society,” *APSR* June 2003, vol. 1, no. 2 p. 257-272.

<sup>253</sup> See Barrington Moore’s, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966) pp. 433-452.

case, they provide minibuses to transport female students from home to their universities. As the service increased in popularity and demand, they began only transporting women who wore the veil, thus they were able to change the behavior of female students by providing a desirable service in exchange.<sup>254</sup>

An additionally important tool within Islamist rhetoric are martyrdom myths which are “a myth not because [they are] fiction or never occurred, but rather in the analytic sense of a heuristic device.”<sup>255</sup> These myths are framing devices aimed directly at mass mobilization by creating a context through which the larger world can be defined. The world that emerges out of these myths is one where those who live in the darkness have robbed the people of their true destiny and greatness. Islamists argue that through martyrdom they can regain the strength and promise that they should possess and that martyrdom can become the means by which this celestial imbalance can be set right. Certain conditions, however, must be met for martyrdom to have any societal resonance: there must be a historic or religious connection with the concept of martyrdom (cultural);<sup>256</sup> a profound sense of national defeat or vulnerability (asymmetric military position vis-à-vis perceived enemies); and a lack of faith in the prevailing political institutions (crisis of legitimacy). In other words, martyrdom myths are not an exportable practice without preexisting conditions that

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<sup>254</sup> Sheri Berman, “Islamism, Revolution and Civil Society,” *APSR* June 2003, vol. 1, no. 2 p. 260-261.

<sup>255</sup> J. D Swenson, “Martyrdom: Mytho-Cathexis and the Mobilization of the Masses in the Iranian Revolution,” *Ethos* 13, no. 2 (1985): 122.

<sup>256</sup> For example, see in the Quran surās’ al-Baqarah (2:207), āl-‘Imrān (3:140, 3:157, 3:169, and 3:196) and al-Nisā (4:68, 4:74 and 4:99).



make a population more willing to accept it as a practice in the first place. Absent these conditions, one would expect to see a decline in the willingness—or outright rejection—of the general population to accept martyrdom operations.<sup>257</sup>

The role of the martyrdom myth is thus threefold: it serves as a means of framing the current order and providing a means of countering it, challenges the efficacy of the oppressive state, and provides a means for mass mobilization by linking the average citizen to the martyr's sacrifice (as part of the collective population) or more directly through a personal relationship with the martyr or their family. Shrouded in religious dogma the martyrdom act obtains a reverential quality while simultaneously challenging the inadequacy of the governing institutions to strike out against perceived enemies. Even the parades, posters, trading cards, and religious celebrations reaffirm the idea that these martyrs really come from the people and are a powerful image of the community's latent strength.

## **Martyrdom Spectacles in Iran**

### **The Foundation: Karbala**

Like the fascists before them, contemporary Shiite based Islamist movements root their narratives of martyrdom in a historical example (the Battle of Karbala 680 A.D.) that they claim models the characteristics of the “ideal” martyr while at the same time providing political justification for their suicide martyrdom operations. The tradition of martyrdom within Iran has pre-Islamic roots that directly influence

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<sup>257</sup> The PKK's failed suicide martyr operations for example.

contemporary conceptions of martyrdom and the Battle of Karbala. The first influence was that of the Persian prophet Mani (from whose beliefs sprouted the Manichaeism) who argued that the way to achieve spiritual purification was through an ascetic life and sacrifice. The second major contributor was a political culture of tragedy within Iran.<sup>258</sup>

A culture whose art, literature, and popular myth are deeply imbued with tragedy, perceives martyrdom as dramatic expression of tragedy. In such a social context, martyrdom is not an aberration but the manifestation of a culture of tragedy personified.<sup>259</sup>

The legacy of this combination of a celebration of an aesthetic life coupled with a culture of tragedy provided the context to read the Battle of Karbala and the death of Hussein ibn Ali as the symbolic bridge between pre-Islamic and Islamic manifestations of martyrdom.

After the death of Mohammed in 632 A.D., there was a line of four successors each of which were part of Mohammed's inner circle. These first four Caliphs were known by Sunni Muslims as the Rashedin (or righteous) caliphs. However, with the assassination of Mohammed's son-in-law, Ali ibn Abu Talib (656 A.D.-661 A.D.), a struggle for who would rule the Islamic world ensued.<sup>260</sup> With Ali's death came the leadership division between Sunni and Shiite Islam with each sect claiming their own Caliph.

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<sup>258</sup> Manochehr Dorraj, "Symbolic and Utilitarian Political Value of a Tradition: Martyrdom in the Iranian Political Culture," *The Review of Politics* 59, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 491.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> Aghaie, *The Martyrs of Karbala*, 6-7.

Sunnis supported Caliph Yazid while the Shiite faction believed that Ali's son, and Mohammed's grandson, Hussein ibn Ali was the rightful heir to the Muslim world. The power struggle between them was short lived as Yazid's forces vastly outnumbered Hussein's. In 680 A.D. the final battle between the two sides occurred at Karbala where Hussein and his followers were cut off by Yazid's army and massacred.<sup>261</sup> The defeat was brutal with the victors decapitating Hussein, murdering most of his family, and taking his severed head back to Yazid as a trophy.<sup>262</sup> The massacre is the first story of martyrdom for Shiite Muslims and will become the rallying point for contemporary Shiite movements as they reference back to the shadows of Karbala as the first blood spilt in the effort to restore the "true" leadership of the faith to the world. The echoes of Karbala will serve for Shiite fundamentalists the same rallying call that the *Avanti!* deaths and the Beer Hall Putsch served for Fascists.

The following section explores the use of martyrdom spectacles within the movement and regime phases of the Iranian Revolution. Recalling from the previous chapter, the movement phase refers to the period when fundamentalists attempt to build public support as an opposition party to their consolidation of power within government. The regime phase refers to the period after the groups have assumed power until the regime falls. Exploring the development of martyrdom and spectacle

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<sup>261</sup> Andrew Silke, "The Role of Suicide in Politics, Conflict, and Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18, no. 1 (March 2006): 41.

<sup>262</sup> Syed Akbar Hyder, *Reliving Karbala: Martyrdom in South Asian Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

in terms of phases within the movement allows us to explore the evolution of martyrdom as a political concept and offers insight into the nature of these illiberal regimes both in and out of power.

### **The First Iranian Blood Martyrs: the Black Friday Massacres**

The legacy of Karbala runs deep in the imagery of the first martyrs adopted by both the Iranian Revolution and the Hamas. In both instances the groups will argue that the martyrs share with ibn Ali the same sort of ferocious dedication to a just cause; and as he did that they stood their ground in the face of overwhelming forces. For Iran, the foundational martyr spectacles are the Black Friday Massacres that contrasts the spirit of the revolution with the oppression of the Shah and the Basij, which demonstrates the resolve of the youth to defend the fledgling revolution against the Iraqi invasion. Hamas, on the other hand, appropriated the death of Sheik Muhammad Izz al-Din al-Qassam in 1935—some fifty years before the group was even founded—to connect themselves to a decades old struggle for Palestinian liberation against first the British and then later the Israelis.

### **The Black Friday Massacre**

As early as 1963, the leader of the Iranian Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, had already started laying the foundation for martyrdom within the revolution by comparing the Shah of Iran to the Yazid Caliphate and the oppression of the Iranian people to that of al Hussein.<sup>263</sup> On September 8, 1978, thousands of Iranians filled

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<sup>263</sup> Sciolino, *Persian Mirrors*, 174.

Jeleh Square in Tehran to protest against the Shah's regime and they would become the martyrs that Khomeini alluded to fifteen years earlier. The protestors were met by the Shah's military forces and ordered to disperse. When the crowds refused, the military opened fire and at least 88 civilians<sup>264</sup> were killed.<sup>265</sup>

The Black Friday massacre marked a turning point for the protests in that it showed that a peaceful resolution with the regime was not possible while at the same time providing a stimulus for mass general strikes to cripple what was left of the Shah's regime. Khomeini used the massacre as a way to sanctify the revolution by arguing that "Our movement is but a fragile plant. It needs the blood of martyrs to help it grow into a towering tree."<sup>266</sup> He further argued that the Black Friday massacre was the "victory of blood over the sword."<sup>267</sup>

### **Black Friday in Context**

The relevance of the Black Friday Massacre is perhaps best understood by considering the historic relationship between Western nations and the overthrow of Iran's democratically elected government. The roots of the Iranian revolution can be traced back at least to the ouster of Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh by American forces in what was known as "Operation Ajax." Mossadegh embodied a stringently anti-colonial, anti-Western political rhetoric and went so far as to

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<sup>264</sup> The actual number of those killed is debatable depending on which side you believe, but 88 is on the low end and coincides with the government's tally.

<sup>265</sup> Wagner, *The Iranian Revolution*, 62–63.

<sup>266</sup> Sciolino, *Persian Mirrors*, 174.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

nationalize the oil fields of Iran then under the control of the British corporations. This image of nationalism and of standing up to colonial powers was seen as a significant threat to the Western world and British and US forces (specifically the MI6 and the CIA) staged a coup against the Mossadegh regime, removing him from power and installing a pro-Western Prime Minister in his place.<sup>268</sup>

Operation Ajax's long-term legacy was to portray, however accurately, the degree to which the Shah responded to Western influences for twenty-six years, rather than the national sentiments of the Iranian people. This would be the foundation upon which Khomeini justified the Islamic revolution (1979)—the revolution would present a nationalist, socialist, Islamic model standing in direct contradiction to the Western, secular capitalism that dominated the Shah's regime. The Shah's military response to Iranian protestors on Black Friday only served as a reminder of how much power Western powers still wielded over the regime and became the turning point for the revolution.

### **The Basij**

By February 1979 the Shah had fled Iran and Khomeini returned from exile in Paris. In the early days of the revolution dissatisfaction with the Islamic regime was starting to grow as secular Muslims and communists who had joined Khomeini were disenchanted with the direction in which the regime was moving. Saddam Hussein, who was just elected President of Iraq in July of 1979, saw the Islamic regime as a

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<sup>268</sup> Stephen Kinzer, *All the Shah's men: an American coup and the roots of Middle East terror* (John Wiley and Sons, 2008), 3–10.

direct challenge to the Pan-Arabism of the Baathist party. Hussein believed that he could capitalize on fledgling nature of the Iranian regime and quickly capture the oil rich fields in western Iran. However, rather than a quick victory, the conflict escalated into a nearly eight year war of attrition.<sup>269</sup>

The Iraqi army was significantly more advanced and better trained than their more numerous Iranian counterparts. But what the Iranians lacked in armaments they tried to compensate for in terms of raw manpower. The Basij (meaning “mobilization”) is a paramilitary organization created by Khomeini in November 1979 with a threefold mission of: one, providing an outlet for working class youth to join in the revolution; two, securing the revolution’s success domestically by literally fighting off opposition groups and taking to the streets in protest; and three, defending the revolution internationally against Western (read Iraqi) forces.<sup>270</sup>

The Basij served an important role on the battlefield serving as an expeditionary force for the trained Iranian soldiers who were too valuable to risk losing. Recruits for the Basij were divided into groups based on age (14-30) and based on what Farhad Khosrokhavar calls “martyrography.” Martyrography is a state of mind in which the individual sees martyrdom as something desirable that should be actively pursued to achieve the dignity and legitimacy that they lack in society.<sup>271</sup> In

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<sup>269</sup> Malik Mufti, *Sovereign creations: pan-Arabism and political order in Syria and Iraq* (Cornell University Press, 1996), 217–222.

<sup>270</sup> Daniel Byman and National Defense Research Institute (U.S.), *Iran’s security policy in the post-revolutionary era* (Rand Corporation, 2001), 38–44.

<sup>271</sup> Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers: Allah’s New Martyrs* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 77–85.

the case of the Basij, the youth groups were sent to the front lines with metal keys (and later in the war once metal was scarce, plastic keys from China) around their necks that were intended to remind the young person that as a martyr they possessed the keys to heaven. The Basij role in the conflict was what became known as “human demining” in that they literally walked in front of the Iranian army clearing a path for them by physically detonating mines with their own bodies.<sup>272</sup> As the war raged on it became increasingly difficult to find recruits who possessed a high acceptance of martyrdom and the Iranians had to shift their tactics from relying on a desire for martyrdom to promising social and economic mobility for any Basij who survived the front lines<sup>273</sup> while developing a narrative of the Basij that showed them as heroic figures willing to embrace martyrdom in the name of the revolution.

The Basij were seen as so important, especially in terms of their efforts on the front lines in the Iran-Iraq War that two major institutions were developed to oversee them. The first is the *Pasdaran* or the Revolutionary Guard, which was commissioned with the job of transforming the Basij into a military worthy fighting force for their life and service here on earth. In other words, dealing with the logistical issues of organization, war, etc. for those in the present life. The second body is known as the Shahid foundation that is responsible for “providing support and compensation for the

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<sup>272</sup> Jahangir Arasli, “Obsolete Weapons, Unconventional Tactics and Martyrdom Zeal: How Iran Would Apply its Asymmetric Naval Warfare Doctrine in a Future Conflict”, no. 10, George C. Marshall European Center For Security Studies (April 2007): 14.

<sup>273</sup> Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers*, 83–85.



Shahid families and managing the affairs of the veterans of the war, now called *Janbaz*, sacrifices to the revolution;”<sup>274</sup> thus looking out for those in the afterlife. As an effort to symbolize the potential reward for a Basij sacrifice, “these boy soldiers would walk through mine fields with a symbolic key around their necks. The key was for opening Heaven’s gate, an entry promised to them should they die as martyrs.”<sup>275</sup>

### **The Basij in Context and the legacy of Behesht-e Zahra and the Central Martyr’s Museum in Tehran**

The end of the Iran-Iraq War dramatically limited the need for the Basij as a relevant fighting force in Iranian society. That was, however, until Iran’s contested Presidential election in the summer of 2009. The street demonstrations throughout Tehran elevated the role of the Basij again as they were sent into the streets to disrupt the protests. Their role is becoming increasingly greater as calls for democratic change have spread through the Arab world after the fall of the Tunisian government to protestors. The Basij are generally not in uniform and mingle with the protestors only to commit acts of violence to break the protests up.<sup>276</sup>

Iran’s involvement in the Iran-Iraq War, rather than leading to a quick collapse as Hussein had imaged, actually solidified national sentiment around the

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<sup>274</sup> S. Gerami, “Mullahs, Martyrs, and Men: Conceptualizing Masculinity in the Islamic Republic of Iran,” *Men and Masculinities* 5, no. 3 (January 1, 2003): 268.

<sup>275</sup> Shirazi, “Death, the Great Equalizer,” 101.

<sup>276</sup> The New York Times, “Iranian Opposition Leader Missing as Tensions Rise,” *The New York Times*, February 17, 2011, sec. World / Middle East, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/18/world/middleeast/18iran.html?scp=2&sq=basij&st=cse>, (accessed March 20, 2011).

leadership and secured the transition from the movement phase to the regime phase of the Islamic republic. Today, the government's focus on martyrdom transitioned to transformational symbolic uses in a way parallel to that of Italy and Germany before it. The spectacle of martyrdom now surrounds the major memorial sites like the Behesht-e Zahra<sup>277</sup> and the Central Martyr's Museum in Tehran.

The cemetery is the largest in Tehran and is the burial site of those who died in the Black Friday massacre. Tying into the symbolism of martyrdom for the regime, one of the significant acts of Khomeini when he returned from exile in Paris was to give his first speech to thousands of spectators at the graves of the Black Friday martyrs.<sup>278</sup> During the war, he then transformed the cemetery into a memorial for martyrs constructing giant fountains that flowed blood red water and celebrating the example of the sacrifice of the Basij. As the revolution transformed from the movement phase to the regime phase, the institutionalization of martyrdom spectacles, as seen in the Italian and German cases of the previous chapter, became an important tool for galvanizing public support and demonstrating the power of the regime.

A prominent example is that of Hosein Fahmideh who died at the age of thirteen after strapping an explosive belt around his chest and crawling under an Iraqi tank. It is said that as he crawled under the tanks to the boy cried out:

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<sup>277</sup> This translates roughly to "Paradise of Zahra" named after a nickname of Muhammad's daughter and a venerated female martyr.

<sup>278</sup> Sciolino, *Persian Mirrors*, 175.

Labayka, ya Khu- mayni!’’ (Here I come, O Khomeini!).<sup>279</sup> Of Fahmideh’s death Khomeini said, “The value of his little heart is greater than could be described by hundreds of tongues and hundreds of pens.... He drank the sweet elixir of martyrdom.”<sup>280</sup>

On November 20, 1986, in celebration of the Universal Children’s Day, a commemorative stamp of Fahmideh was issued to memorialize his martyrdom.<sup>281</sup> Fahmideh’s relic case at the cemetery actually contains such boyish items as a jump rope and children’s clothing; but it contrasts those rather innocent symbols with that of a replica of a tank and a hand grenade<sup>282</sup> to remind visitors that even a young boy can obtain the ultimate reward of martyrdom and demonstrate selfless sacrifice for the revolution. The memorial cases like Fahmideh’s are actually more in line with the German Temple of Honor that humanizes the individual dead and remember the names and actions of each of the dead than it is of the Italian Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista which is filled with faceless voices in the Sacramentum. This may be in part reflective of the fact that there were obvious “blood martyrs” in these two cases that was a less contrived than the *Avanti!* attacks for the Italians.

Today the cemetery has become one of the central memorial sites and is still overseen by the Shahid Foundation.<sup>283</sup> A key aspect of the organization’s strategy to

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<sup>279</sup> Christiane Gruber, “The Martyrs’ Museum in Tehran: Visualizing Memory in Post-Revolutionary Iran,” *Visual Anthropology* 25, no. 1–2 (January 2012): 76.

<sup>280</sup> Sciolino, *Persian Mirrors*, 176.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> Gruber, “The Martyrs’ Museum in Tehran,” 77.

<sup>283</sup> A picture of the site is in the appendix.

keep these acts of martyrdom interesting and believable is to venerate the human traits of the dead. By emphasizing the martyrs as real people they invite viewers to see aspects of themselves in the lives of the dead. The focus of humanizing the martyr is perhaps best expressed in the construction of the memorials themselves. The cemetery is filled with glass-enclosed shrines that showing pictures of the martyr both in life and at their time of death. Watches, knives, their copies of the Koran or even blood soaked clothing often fill these cases which are intended to simultaneously demonstrate their humanity and their sacrifice.

Another example of Iranian regime stage martyrdom spectacles is the *Muza-yi Shuhada'* or the Central Martyr's Museum which in many ways replicates the purpose and experience of Mussolini's Sacralium to the Martyrs though the actual execution of the Iranian museum rejects the fascist's faceless image of martyrdom and instead maintains the trend of humanizing martyrs and emphasizing the relevance of the actual body in the act. Along the lines of Foucault's account of the guillotine, the physicality of the act is on full display. In addition to the Central Martyr's Museum there are also twelve *ganjinaha-yi shuhada'* or "martyrs' treasuries" throughout the country and each of these function as both a memorial and a museum many of which constructed on former battle fields from the Iran-Iraq War to serve as a physical reminder to the post-revolutionary generations of Iran.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Christiane Gruber, "The Martyrs' Museum in Tehran: Visualizing Memory in Post-Revolutionary Iran," *Visual Anthropology* 25, no. 1–2 (January 2012): 70.

The museum is strategically, and not perhaps very subtly, across the street from the former US embassy infamously known as the setting for the US hostage crisis following the revolution. The actual structure of the museum lacks the grandeur of Mussolini's Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista. The actual structure of the building is designed to be very drab, in pale white<sup>285</sup> and grey tones in a sepulcher design to highlight both the sacredness of the space in comparison to other spaces within Tehran but to also mimic a coffin like design to further bolster the idea of sacrifice.<sup>286</sup> The Museum itself has three main groups of martyrs it commemorates and each symbolizes a different historical aspect and audience of the Iranian regime. The first group continues on the theme of the Black Friday massacre and those martyrs from the revolutionary struggle itself. The second group is the largest and includes those who died in the Iran-Iraq War. Finally, the newest wing of the library focuses exclusively on female martyrs and focuses on granting female martyrs equal status to that of their male counterparts. There is, however, an arguably more cynical way to look at the women's wing of the museum. For one, it is exclusive on its own and not integrated with earlier male martyrs, even though many of those labeled as martyrs actually died in the Iran-Iraq War. Second, the new wing was created in 2006 at the same time as the One Million Signatures Campaign (also known as the Campaign for Equality) that fought for ending discriminatory laws against women.<sup>287</sup> While it is

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<sup>285</sup> White being the traditional burial color.

<sup>286</sup> Gruber, "The Martyrs' Museum in Tehran," 72–73.

<sup>287</sup> Shirazi, "Death, the Great Equalizer," 109.

possible that the timing of the events may be purely coincidental it is at the very least interesting that at the same time women were pushing for nondiscrimination in Iranian society they were, after 16 years of not being included in the Martyr's Museum, finally granted equal representation. Ironically enough, there is equality in death in that the inclusion Iranian women were being denied in life were granted, at least to a select few, in death.<sup>288</sup>

### **Martyrdom Spectacles in the Internet Age—the Case of Hamas**

The institutionalization of martyrdom operations in the Iranian example followed more closely the path of physical memorials seen in Italy and Germany. Hamas, however, has utilized a strategy of spectacle that is more widely disseminated and receives significantly more attention in the West. By focusing on a strategy of parades, television shows (especially those targeting children) as well as public celebrations and viewing of the videotapes last will and testament of would be martyrs, Hamas is in effect creating “living” martyrs whose voice and stories are not told through inscriptions on marble monuments but by their very selves.

Hamas' prolonged engagement in suicide bombings, and its refusal to recognize Israeli's right to exist, has led to its ostracism within the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the international community more broadly. Were their long-term goal limited to becoming a legitimate political party within the Palestinian Authority then the impact of their bombing strategy would appear self-defeating, but Hamas'

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<sup>288</sup> Images of the Martyr Museum are in the appendix.

has a more revolutionary agenda—the transformation of Palestinian society and a restructuring of the political order. What then is the relationship between martyrdom and Hamas’ long-term objectives in Palestine?

This section argues that for Hamas martyrdom is a mechanism for mass mobilization and that the symbol of the martyr serves as a conduit linking the average Palestinian to the party and to its larger vision of Islamic nationalism. The spectacle of the martyr is as much a symbol of their idealized conception of man and a connection to a mythic past as the Aryan was for Nazi Germany. The section is subdivided into three parts: a) Hamas’ “First” Martyr and the spectacle of Sheikh Izz ad-Din al-Qassam, b) the social and economic context of Hamas’ formation, and c). martyrdom spectacles in the Internet age.

### **Hamas’ “First” Martyr: the spectacle of Sheikh Izz ad-Din al-Qassam**

Hamas was a relative latecomer to the drive for Palestinian liberation and because of that it had to struggle to justify itself within this broader movement. Perhaps not all that ironically given that he died some fifty years before the founding of Hamas, they choose to root their claim in the martyrdom of Sheik Izz ad-Din al-Qassam an early leader in an Islamic based variant of Palestinian nationalism. The Inter-War years saw a push against British colonialism and Zionist interest within Palestine and al-Qassam rose to relative prominence by advocating for the plight of the poor, a return to Islamic tradition and Palestinian independence.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> Burke, Yaghoubian, and Schleifer, Abdullah, “Izz al-Din al-Qassam: Preacher and Mujahid,” 148.

The story of al-Qassam's martyrdom was rather shocking at the time and took on almost mythic proportions as it was told and retold among Palestinians at the time. In November, 1935, after leading a group of a dozen followers in the ambush and murder of a Jewish soldier with the British forces, al-Qassam and his men fled to the mountains near Jenin where they were pursued and surrounded by British forces. Seeing that they were surrounded the British demanded their surrender. Rather than surrender, however, al-Qassam "told his men to die as martyrs, and he opened fire. Al-Qassam's defiance and the manner of his death (which seemed to stun the traditional leadership) electrified the Palestinian people."<sup>290</sup> The al-Qassam model (the al-Qassam Brigades was name adopted by Hamas for its military wing) is foundational with Hamas for three reasons. First, it introduces the idea of jihad and martyrdom as a way to confront overwhelming military or political odds. Second, while violent, it still maintains core Islamic teachings of charity, honesty, piety and morality that Hamas saw lacking in a corrupt Palestinian leadership. Third, martyrdom even in the context of suicide operations was another option to continued oppression.

Ironically, the relationship between charity and violence is not as contrived as it sounds. Hamas has created an entire network of aid agencies and charity institutions that are as relevant for logistics and recruitment purposes as they are for aid. Ahmad Saltana is a Jenin bomb maker and used his position on a zakat (charity) committee to

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<sup>290</sup> Ibid., 138–139.



recruit suicide bombers. Sheikh Yassin even discussed the role that charity plays in building support for the group: “We gave them 1,200 shekels (\$300). Sometimes it’s a sack of flour, or at the very least the taxi fare home.”<sup>291</sup> These rather small amounts of charity pay huge dividends as Hamas seeks to build support within the broader Palestinian population. Moreover, this network of supporters provides ample opportunities to hide weapons (sometimes under the playgrounds of schools built and funded by Hamas) or smuggle fugitives after an attack.<sup>292</sup>

### **The Social and Economic Context Leading Up to the Adoption of the al-Qassam Model: From Israeli Occupation to Semi-Autonomy**

#### **Six-Day War**

There is a complex back-story to the Israeli-Palestine conflict that looms in the shadows of current events, but this story is about life under the Israeli occupation—particularly in Gaza which is the geographical base for Hamas—and so my focus will be on four key events: the Six-Day War (1967), the First Intifada (1988-1990), the founding of Hamas (1987-1988) and the Oslo Accords (1993). Israel’s victory in the Six-Day War dramatically changed the political and economic landscape for Palestinians as they assumed a military occupation over Gaza and the West Bank. Learning from their brief occupation of Gaza following the Suez War (1956), Israel sought to immediately normalize conditions within the occupied territories in hopes that this would circumvent the international (particularly on the

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<sup>291</sup> Matthew Levitt, “Hamas from cradle to grave,” *Middle East Quarterly* (2004): 6.

<sup>292</sup> Matthew Levitt and Washington Institute for Near East Policy, *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

part of the US) pressure to withdraw from these territories as they had done with Gaza and the Suez.<sup>293</sup>

The normalization of conditions within Gaza was an attempt by the Israelis to demonstrate that they could be adequate stewards of the Palestinians, create economic stability and protect their own military interests. Israeli's first task was to reestablish key services including the medical infrastructure, education, commerce and legal institutions.<sup>294</sup> But the realities of occupation proved to be less tenable and led to a growing dissatisfaction with the status quo and ultimately to the tension that led to the First Intifada.

### **The First Intifada**

The Intifada is one of those rare examples of an essentially spontaneous social movement, revolutionary in fervor, which manages to mobilize vast spectrums of the Palestinian population. Spearheading the movement was the United National Leadership: Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Palestinian Communist Party—just about every party except Hamas.<sup>295</sup> The political dilemma for the First Intifada was maintaining this fragile balance between such widely disparate groups while at the same time keeping alive revolutionary fervor.

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<sup>293</sup> Farsoun, Samih and Naseer Aruri, *Palestine and the Palestinians: A Social and Political History, Second Edition*, (Boulder: Westview, 2006), 108 and 178.

<sup>294</sup> Roy, Sarah, *The Gaza Strip* (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1995) p 103.

<sup>295</sup> Salim Tamari, "Limited Rebellion and Civil Society: The Uprising's Dilemma," *Middle East Report* 164/165 (May-August 1990): 5.

The Intifada developed in six key phases. The first phase, lasting approximately three weeks, consisted of spontaneous uprisings within the refugee camps. The second phase saw the institutionalization of the movement under the command of the United National Leadership (January through March 1988). The third phase (February through June 1988) involves a key period of civil disobedience aimed at undermining the administration of the Israeli occupation—specifically involving the resignation of tax collectors and police officers. The fourth phase involved a declaration of Palestinian statehood and the consolidation of all internal and external movements (November 1988). The fifth phase (throughout 1989) saw an Israeli counter-offensive. Marking the final phase (June 1989-1990) was a Palestinian “anti-collaboration campaign.”<sup>296</sup>

This brief history of the First Intifada illustrates four key trends. First, there was development of a new Palestinian consciousness. Schlomo Brom goes as far as to argue that this emerging Palestinian consciousness radically impacted Israel security thinking and spawned a realization on the part of the Israelis that even though the majority of them had lived their entire lives under Israeli occupation, they were not willing to do so indefinitely.<sup>297</sup> Second, there was a reinvigoration of Palestinian civil society manifesting itself in new communal organizations particularly at the local level. Third, there was a sustained movement towards political unification under the

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<sup>296</sup> Ibid., 4-8.

<sup>297</sup> Shlomo Brom, “From Rejection to Acceptance: Israeli National Security Thinking and Palestinian Statehood.” United States Institute of Peace Special Report Number 177, February 2007, 1-5.

secular leadership of Yasir Arafat. And the most important lesson, the realization that ending the Israeli occupation through nonviolent means (a key goal of the Intifada<sup>298</sup>) is untenable. It is within this gelatinous political and social context that Hamas begins to emerge. In direct response to this secular vision of Palestinian nationalism, Hamas initiated a political and social movement that would be fundamentally Islamic in nature and would borrow conceptions of martyrdom and social obligation to forge a doctrine of a militarized religious nationalism that would directly challenge Fatah and the Israeli authorities. In this way, Hamas builds off the religious roots of martyrdom and transforms it into part of their narrative of national liberation as a way to solidify their power and build popular support both within and without.

### **Founding of Hamas**

In the world of Palestinian politics, Harakat Al-Musqawama Al-Islamiya—Hamas—is a relative newcomer. Based primarily in Gaza, Hamas was formally founded on December 14, 1987 by a group of Islamist fundamentalists led by Sheikh Ahmad Yassin.<sup>299</sup> Yassin envisioned Hamas as a Palestinian offshoot of the Egyptian based Muslim Brotherhood—an Islamic fundamentalist organization known for its charity and social services. This ideological legacy manifests itself not only in Hamas' continued commitment to social services<sup>300</sup> (schools, youth groups,

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<sup>298</sup> Sara Roy, "Gaza: New Dynamics of Civic Disintegration." *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Summer, 1993), p. 23.

<sup>299</sup> Wolfgang, Freund, *Looking Into Hamas and Other Constituents of the Palestinian-Israeli Confrontation*, (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002), 29-39.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

gymnasiums, health care facilities and economic aid) but also in its conceptions of an Islamic Palestinian state.

Prior to its assumption of power, Hamas had four main political goals: destruction of the “Zionist entity” (through jihad), the replacement of all of Israel by a Palestinian Arab state, Islamic Palestinian nationalism, and a violent opposition to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.<sup>301</sup> These latter two positions are what really separate the Hamas from its chief political rival, the Fatah (formerly known as the Palestinian Liberation Organization or the PLO). Hamas was able to present itself as an honest, religious alternative to the corruption and their perceived failures of Fatah as leaders and representatives of the Palestinians<sup>302</sup>—a task made easier with the death of long time PLO leader and the first president of the Palestinian Authority, Yasser Arafat in 2004.

### **Oslo Accords**

By the time the Oslo Accords were signed fundamental shifts had occurred within the Palestinian leadership. The dominance of the Palestinian diaspora based in Tunis declined relative to the power of the PLO faction internal to the occupied territories and Hamas emerged as a major political player (although still far from real broad-based support). Despite having limited political possibilities under the Israeli occupation following the Six-Day War, the PLO was the dominant group within

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<sup>301</sup> Yonah, Alexander. *Palestinian Religious Terrorism: Hamas and Islamic Jihad*, (Ardsey: Transnational Publishers, 2002), 3-7.

<sup>302</sup> Wolfgang Freund, *Looking Into Hamas and Other Constituents of the Palestinian-Israeli Confrontation*. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002), 65.

Palestinian politics and sought to secure their position by actively seeking international recognition as the sole, legitimate voice of the Palestinian people. This recognition was achieved on a regional level by the 1973 Arab summit in Algiers, and at the international level in 1974 when the United Nations granted the PLO permanent observer status and invited Arafat to address the General Assembly.<sup>303</sup> Their official position became institutionalized under the Oslo Accords (1993) when the Rabin government formally recognized the PLO and their quasi-governmental status as head of what would become the Palestinian Authority.<sup>304</sup> This was a significant blow for the wide-range of opposition groups within Palestine including the Communists, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the most potent challenger for domestic dominance, the Hamas. Once recognized—and institutionalized—as the legitimate voice of the Palestinian people, the PLO was the in group and all other parties were out. They now had the task to deliver upon years of promises.

Israel's recognition of the PLO did not come without its price. Four days before the more nuanced Declaration of Principles were released, Arafat provided Prime Minister Rabin one of the most important diplomatic coups in Israeli history—recognition by the representative of the Palestinian people of Israel's legitimate right to exist. This pivotal moment elevated Arafat into a partner that Israel could negotiate with and it dramatically altered Israel's standing within the international community

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<sup>303</sup> Farsoun, Samih and Naseer Aruri, *Palestine and the Palestinians: A Social and Political History*, second edition. (Boulder: Westview, 2006) 188-189.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, 246-250.

whereby after Oslo forty states resumed or established diplomatic relations with Israel the most important of which was Jordan the former Arab occupier of the West Bank pre-1967.<sup>305</sup> The political ramifications of this ‘mutual’ recognition was that Israel now had Palestinian approval of their right to exist whereas Israel *only* recognized Arafat and the PLO as the representatives of the Palestinians for limited self-governance but did not go so far as to recognize or endorse a two state solution.

The key organizational document coming out of Oslo was the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements 1993 (DoP) which outlined the principles for Palestinian self-governance (these would become largely reaffirmed in President Bush’s The Roadmap). The main tenet of the DoP was to transfer authority for governing the territories from Israeli military administration to a newly formed Palestinian Authority (PA) comprised of a President and a Legislative Council. However, this transfer of power was not without reservations. The PA did not have jurisdiction over Israeli settlements, military bases, or any crime committed by an Israeli citizen within the territories. Moreover, the Israeli’s retained the right to secure the Palestinians from external threat and to defend Jewish settlements internally, thus ensuring at least a limited military presence within the territories.<sup>306</sup>

### **Martyrdom Spectacles in the Internet Age**

Their professed long-term goals as outlined in their Charter are one thing, but have these fundamentally changed in light of their electoral victory and de facto civil

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<sup>305</sup> Parsons, Nigel. *The Politics of the Palestinian Authority: From Oslo to al-Aqsa*. (Routledge: New York, 2005) 86-90.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, 90-100.

war with Fatah? In April 2008 talks between Hamas leaders and former President Jimmy Carter indicated what—at least Carter—saw as a shift in Hamas’ willingness to recognize Israel’s right to exist. According to Carter, Hamas leaders agreed to accept the 1967 borders (meaning Gaza and the West Bank) of a Palestinian state *if* the Palestinians through a referendum approved such a decision.<sup>307</sup> This position, if indeed accurate, is a long way from Arafat’s letter of recognition to Rabin and highlights the possibility of a bargaining position that does not seem to accept the asymmetrical power relations that Arafat acquiesced to by not securing a mutual recognition.

Hamas’ ideological position is summarized by the organization’s motto: “Allah is its Goal. The Messenger is its Leader. The Qur’an is its Constitution. Jihad is its methodology, and Death for the sake of Allah is its most coveted desire.”<sup>308</sup> This highlights three main ideological precepts of Hamas: 1) the desire for a theocratic state, 2) jihad as the means (meaning both violence and education) and 3) martyrdom as a desired pursuit in order to fulfill the will of God, which is sovereign over the state and mankind.

Islamist nationalism is perhaps best summarized by Article 12 of the Charter of Hamas which argues that:

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<sup>307</sup> See Ethan Bronner “Cater Says Hamas and Syria Are Open to Peace.” *The New York Times*, April 22, 2008, World Section, Web Edition. accessed on April 22, 2008.

<sup>308</sup> Muhammad Maqdsi, “Charter of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) of Palestine,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 22 (Summer 1993) 123.



if other nationalisms have material, humanistic, and geographical ties, then the Islamic Resistance Movement's nationalism has all of that, and, more important, divine reasons providing it with life and spirit where it is connected with the originator of the spirit and life giver, raising in the heavens the divine Banner to connect earth and heavens with a strong bond.<sup>309</sup>

The explanation here is fairly clear—there is no distinction between the state and God, yet their conception of state still incorporates all the familiar material and territorial attributes of nationalism. God's word, delivered divinely through the Prophet, is the very foundation for both the state and society with Shari'a (or religious law based primarily on the Qur'an) as the fundamental law of the land.<sup>310</sup>

The legal structure of a Hamas governed state would probably look something akin to the Iranian system in which laws are not made, per se, but interpreted in light of existing Shari'a law.

Until 2006, Hamas did not participate in Palestinian Authority elections. This is in part because of the legacy of Oslo and the domination of the PA by Arafat and the Fatah. Arafat's death and a decade of 'autonomous rule' without independence or statehood provided Hamas a rational for standing in elections. But the potential democratic nature of Hamas is questionable. Their founder, Ahmad Yasin, argued that one cannot divorce the political process from Islam and that within Islam, only *shura's*, or consultations, are allowed.<sup>311</sup> This permits Hamas' decision making bodies to consult with regards to policy formulation, but ultimately this is not a vote,

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<sup>309</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid., The discussion on the role of shari'a law is found in Article 11.

<sup>311</sup> "Document and Source Material," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 27 (Winter, 1998) 137-164.

because voting assumes some degree of autonomy for actors within the political process—it assumes to one degree or another that the actors are sovereign. Only God is sovereign within Islamic political culture so while the people may be consulted the ultimate decisions have already been expressed by God through the Prophet, the Qur‘an and the Shari‘a.

The second prominent ideological position of Hamas, jihad, is the struggle—the personal, the psychological, even the physical—individuals engage in to be closer in harmony with God.<sup>312</sup> Certainly this struggle can be on a grand social scale in which it is the active fight against foreign influence and domination, but it can also be an individual struggle, a fighting of one’s own demons. For Hamas, jihad comprises both dimensions. Again returning to the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas believes that education in Islam and jihad is essential to reforming society and rejecting Western influence. This is not purely rhetorical; Hamas argues that the infidels win only when Muslims lose the ideological battle—when the infidels attempt to confuse Muslims about Islam.<sup>313</sup>

Education is only one aspect of jihad. The second, violent struggle, not only receives a greater amount of attention, but also confronts us with a new form of political and religious engagement—the martyr. Islam advocates martyrdom both in the text of the Koran and in the hadīth (the sayings of the Prophet Mohammed).

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<sup>312</sup> Ira Zepp, *A Muslim Primer: Beginner’s Guide to Islam*, (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), 95.

<sup>313</sup> Muhammad Maqdsi, “Charter of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) of Palestine,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 22 (Summer 1993) 126.

Islamic revivalists, both Sunni and Shiite, borrow from this tradition by emphasizing individual jihad. Rather than viewing jihad as a struggle of the Islamic people against non-believers, it is reconceived as an individual duty<sup>314</sup>, advocating what in Arabic is *istishhadi*<sup>315</sup> —one who martyrs themselves. Martyrdom for religious nationalists does not distinguish between the state and the will of God, their sacrifice being in deference to both.

### **Justifying Martyrdom**

There is of course a glaring theological paradox for religious-oriented group like Hamas approving or advocating for self-martyrdom: how can religious ideologies that generally promote the sanctity of life be reconciled with a group advocating its adherents to destroy it? Aware that their conception of jihad and self-martyrdom runs counter to traditional interpretations Hamas developed a fairly advanced theological rationale based on the writings of the father of contemporary Islamists ideology Sayyid Qutb. Qutb was an Egyptian born Sunni Muslim and early affiliate of the Muslim Brotherhood. Somewhere between 1948-1950 during his travels to the United States (a nation with a long history of religious conservatism) and seeing what he considered extreme decadence his religious views became radicalized.<sup>316</sup> He was heavily influenced by the French author Alexis Carrel. Themes from Carrel's *Man*

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<sup>314</sup> Daniel Brown. "Rethinking Tradition in Islamic Thought" in Margaret Cormack's *Sacrificing the Self: Perspective on Martyrdom and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford, 2002), 108.

<sup>315</sup> Joyce Daxie. *Martyrs: Innocence, Vengeance and Despair in the Middle East*. (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 6.

<sup>316</sup> Paul Berman, "The Philosopher of Islamic Terror," *New York Times Magazine*, March 23, 2003; *New York Times*, pp. 24-67.

*and the Unknown*, are especially visible in Qutb's *Islam and the Problem of Civilization and Milestones*. Like Carrel, Qutb saw modernization as beneficial for progress, but negative in terms of the impact it had on society. Rather than "reason," which they believed robbed man of his soul (through technological rather than analytical skills); Qutb and Carrel argued that "mysticism" should "regulate the dynamics of civilization building."<sup>317</sup> Reason assumes that mankind is God. For Qutb, God and the state are fused, man plays a part in the play, but is never author of the script.

His most important contribution was the reformulation of jihad. Qutb saw the world as being in a state of *jahiliyyah*. *Jahiliyyah* is an Arabic term that roughly translates into an "age of ignorance."<sup>318</sup> The term is traditionally applied to the period of history before the Prophet Muhammad and his divine revelations. Qutb, however, viewed the Twentieth Century with its liberal, capitalist West and atheistic, communist East as returning to a state of *jahiliyyah*. Even countries with Muslim majorities were no longer fulfilling their Qur'anic obligations. One of the most prominent characteristics of *jahiliyyah* is the rejection of sovereignty as vested in God for human or popular sovereignty<sup>319</sup>—a "rebellion against the sovereignty of Allah on earth [which] attempts to transfer to man one of the greatest attributes of Allah,

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<sup>317</sup> Frédéric Volpi's "Understanding the Rationale of the Islamic Fundamentalists' Political Strategies: A Pragmatic Reading of Their Conceptual Schemes During the Modern Era," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Winter 2000), p. 81.

<sup>318</sup> William Shepard, "Sayyid Qutb's Doctrine of *Jahiliyya*," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35 (2003), 522.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, 524.

namely sovereignty, by making some men lords over others.”<sup>320</sup> To combat this trend there are essentially three options available: the *Hijra* or a physical migration to remove oneself from a destructive society, educating others in order to reform the population to its purist state, or violence as a means to attack and deconstruct the old society in the hopes of constructing a new social and political order. While the Muslim Brotherhood, follows the second of these three options in his later years, Qutb rejected such an approach and opted for violence, using

“physical power and jihad to abolish the organizations and authorities of the jahili system which prevent people from reforming their ideas and beliefs, forces them to follow deviant ways, and makes them serve other humans instead of their Almighty Lord.”<sup>321</sup>

The nexus for Qutb is the fusing of jihad as a personal duty with physical force in an actual fight against jahiliyyah.

This is a radical departure from quietist interpretations of jihad which were (and still are) prevalent in the Muslim world. Dating back to medieval times, jihad simply implied an individual’s “struggle for higher Islamic standards.”<sup>322</sup> Quietist interpretations of jihad are personal, internal efforts of purification and righteousness, with martyrdom—defined as an internal struggle—only one possible outcome of jihad. The relevance of intention, the spiritual value of an act rather than death was the main requirement of martyrdom. At the time, martyrs could include those who

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<sup>320</sup> Qutb, Sayyid. Translated with a foreword by Ahmad Zaki Hammad. *Milestones*, (Indianapolis: American Trust Press, 1990) p. 8.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>322</sup> Armstrong, Karen. *Islam*. (New York: Modern Library, 2002), p. 36.

testify to the truth of Allah even through written or oral arguments (implying even scholars could be seen as martyrs).<sup>323</sup>

Islamists, both Sunni and Shiite, utilize Qutb's interpretation emphasizing individual jihad nearly as importantly as the five pillars of Islam (of which jihad is not a part). Rather than viewing jihad as a struggle of the Islamic people against non-believers, it is reconceived as an individual duty<sup>324</sup>, advocating what in Arabic is *istishhadi*<sup>325</sup>—one who martyrs himself. This is the foundation for Hamas' theological justification for self-martyrdom. Dr. Abdul Aziz Rantisi showed just how relevant Hamas took not simply justifying the act of self-martyrdom but also the connected task of labeling these combatants when he chose the term 'istishhadi' which from Arabic translates into 'self-chosen martyr' to that of a 'suicide bomber' because it describes the impact of their mission and its specific significance—it was self-chosen.<sup>326</sup> Hamas founder, and spiritual icon, Shaykh Ahmad Yasin, further distinguishes between suicide and martyrdom arguing:

Suicide means that someone has become tired or despairs of life and takes his own life. This is prohibited in Islam. Those who are martyred while defending their land, country, and people under occupation, however, know where they are going and carry out this because they want to be nearer to God.

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<sup>323</sup> Brown, Daniel. "Rethinking Tradition in Islamic Thought" in Margaret Cormack's *Sacrificing the Self: Perspective on Martyrdom and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford, 2002), 108-109.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid, 108.

<sup>325</sup> Daxie, Joyce. *Martyrs: Innocence, Vengeance and Despair in the Middle East*. (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 6.

<sup>326</sup> Juergensmeyer, Mark. *Terror in the Mind of God: The Rise of Religious Violence*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) 74.

Consequently, what we are talking about here is martyrdom and not suicide operations.<sup>327</sup>

Through Yasin and Qutb, Hamas reconciles the contradictions of a martyrdom discourse with an Islamic discourse in terms of their ultimate goal—the liberation of Palestine.

### **Framing Martyrdom Spectacles in the Internet Age**

Hamas’ rise to power as well as its adoption of suicide bombing tactics has to be viewed contextually. As a child of the First Intifada, Hamas emerges from a period of burgeoning political solidarity and national identity, but the aftermath of the Intifada failed to secure this unity and deliver a Palestinian state. Two principle outcomes of the Intifada were the Oslo Accords and the subsequent influx of international aid into the Occupied Territories. These should have produced a two state solution with an economically viable Palestine. Instead, the Palestinians continue to live under the yoke of Israeli occupation with only a quasi-independent governmental structure and an economically deteriorating situation especially within Gaza. Since the beginning of the peace process, despite nine billion investment dollars (US)—the highest per capita amount of economic aid anywhere in the world—there has actually been a retraction of economic activity within Palestine.<sup>328</sup>

This two-fold failure of the Palestinian Authority, led by Fatah, to secure economic

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<sup>327</sup> Document and Source Material. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Winter, 1998), 151.

<sup>328</sup> Sara Roy calls this process ‘de-development’ defined as “the deliberate, systematic and progressive dismemberment of an indigenous economy by a dominant one, where economic—and by extension, societal—potential is not only distorted but denied.” Roy, Sara. *Failing Peace: Gaza and the Palestinian Israeli Conflict*. (London: Pluto Press, 2007) 31.

stability or peace, provided the political space for Hamas to demonstrate that it could be a party above corruption and one able to act forcefully against Israel.<sup>329</sup>

Hamas formed its military wing, the ‘Martyr ‘Izzidin al-Qassam Brigades’ in 1992 and it became “an important source of mass appeal and political legitimacy.”<sup>330</sup> As I outlined earlier, martyrdom operations are powerful because they actually speak to three different audiences simultaneously while requiring little in terms of financial and operational resources. For the would-be martyr there is an undeniable sense of power regardless of one’s personal motivations (secular or religious). The other two reference points are the more interesting. Hamas originally moved to only attack ‘legitimate’ military targets, but after the Hebron massacre (1994) in which Palestinian civilians were targeted; they began attacking Israeli civilians on the grounds of reciprocity.<sup>331</sup> What they discovered was that their suicide campaigns were able to create a “balance of fear” between the average Israeli and Palestinian civilian.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> Rashad, Ahmed. *Hamas: Palestinian Politics With an Islamic Hue*. (Washington DC: United States Association for Studies and Research, 1993) 1-7.

<sup>330</sup> Hroub, Khaled. *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice*. (Washington: Institute for Palestinian Studies, 2000) 242.

<sup>331</sup> It should be noted that Hamas did offer a mutual cease-fire to remove civilians from the military equation but Israeli rejected this move because Hamas still argued that Israeli settlers would continue to be seen as legitimate targets. *Ibid*, 246.

<sup>332</sup> For more on this idea of “balance of fear” also described as a “balance of terror” see Litvah, Meir, “Religion and Nationalist Fanaticism: The Case of Hamas” in Matthew Hughes and Gaynor Johnson’s *Fanaticism and Conflict in the Modern Age*. (London: Frank Casse, 2005) pp. 156-174 and Mohammed Hafez’s *Manufacturing Human Bombs: The Making of Palestinian Suicide Bombers*. (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2006) pp. 26-33.



This “balance of fear” doctrine is often seen as merely superficial. However, the vast majority of Palestinians have never known a life absent the occupation and all the economic, political and social detriments that arise from it. How can we possibly even begin to imagine what sort of impact that degree of powerlessness can have on our individual and communal sense of identity? Moreover, seeing a Palestinian based organization able to inflict a similar feeling of insecurity upon the Israelis likely provides a measurable sense of empowerment if not satisfaction. My earlier definition of martyrdom described the importance of sacrifice and the role of the community as the determiner of when a sacrifice has occurred and this becomes essential in understanding how martyrdom can be a tool for building political support—and ultimately, its own limits.

For a community to accept an action as a sacrifice it has to first believe that the sacrifice was necessary and second that the act itself has value. The nexus between necessity and value creates a continuum by which a constituent society will judge the value of martyrdom operations. The degree to which a population is marginalized will be positively related to its assumption of necessity while the aftermath of an operation and its subsequent alleviation of marginal status will influence the interpretation of the act’s implicit value. Moreover, the language by which these acts are framed will act as a third layer binding the ultimate utilization and judgment of martyrdom operations.

Hamas is keenly aware of the power of framing the language around suicide operations and is keen to define acts as “martyrdom” operations and quickly surround

the family of bombers providing aid and also ensuring that their reaction is not publicly negative. When it finds an eager advocate for its operations it can often elevate the person's profile. For example, while women play a powerful role in the grassroots mobilization of Hamas, they are wholly absent within its leadership structure with the possible exception of Miriam Farhat (a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council from the 2006 elections). Farhat has been used widely by Hamas for her support of her three sons being suicide martyrs. In one of her son's videoed will's she Farhat is shown in the background crying. When he indicates that perhaps he should abandon his mission she is heard in the tape stating: "I am your mother! It is not easy for me to ask you to leave, I cry for you day and night. Don't misinterpret my tears. ... You must obey your orders, and maintain your fight until the moment you meet your God."<sup>333</sup>

We can only speculate as to whether these words were truly her own or scripted, but they certainly are an effective propaganda tool. The passionate plea of a mother imbues the act with a sense of sacrifice especially when she insinuates that it is she who asks her son to undertake his mission. And, of course, the invoking of God assumes a sense of divine purpose. Ironically, this image of an intimate family moment where a son is preparing to sacrifice himself is far from the reality of how suicide bombers prepare. Generally, would-be martyrs are removed from their families, made to tape their wills in advance to shame them into not backing out of

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<sup>333</sup> Miriam Farhat's quote is taken from Zaki Chehab's *Inside Hamas: The Untold Story of the Islamic Militant Movement*. (New York: Nation Books, 2007) pp. 85-86.

their operations and preventing from seeing their families again so as not to allow them the opportunity to change their mind.<sup>334</sup>

The relationship between Hamas and martyrdom, however, has up to now been that of an oppositional party. Now that they have had their first taste of real power the question becomes—will anything change? Hamas is an exceptionally shrewd organization that is first and foremost a political organization that has now effectively transformed itself into an actual competitive party. This same phenomenon is occurring in Egypt in which the Muslim Brotherhood has today transformed itself into a political party now in control of the Egyptian government. We must not forget that the 2006 elections were the first time that Hamas actually entered the electoral process within the Palestinian Authority. In effect, rather than continuing to denounce the Palestinian Authority and the Oslo Accords from which it emerged, Hamas actually became *part* of the process—and not only that, it won. The sheer fact that they entered the political process is a huge step toward *potentially* moderating their behavior and rather than being isolated they are now opening up to the political process and increasing popular support and membership may ultimately serve to moderate their behavior. The ultimate reason Hamas won the elections had less to do with their political positions than it did with the fact that Palestinians felt that they could trust Hamas more than any other party, their belief that ultimately corruption would decline, and in part because they provided the social infrastructure

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<sup>334</sup> For a good overview of martyrdom indoctrinating and training take a look at Mark Juergensmeyer's *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) as well as Jessica Stern's *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2003).

in the poorest and most desolate areas that the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli state either failed or refused to.<sup>335</sup>

The problem with a Hamas led Palestinian Authority is really one of recognition (by Israel, the international community and Fatah) and of ends (the continuation of the peace process). Israel recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people at Oslo and pushed the peace process further with the creation of the Palestinian Authority. The semi-autonomous role of the PA creates a political space where the PLO is not the voice of the Palestinian people but whichever party the Palestinians actually elect into office as their representatives. The frustration on behalf of the US and Israel is that Hamas was able to win democratically and perhaps the PLO and the peace process itself did not have the undercurrent of widespread support analysts had expected.

In viewing the future of martyrdom and Hamas, we have to remind ourselves that the leaders are exceptionally politically savvy and quite attuned to the pulse of Palestinian public opinion. In 1998-1999 when they became acutely aware of the backlash surrounding their suicide campaigns they reduced both the number and the severity of such attacks<sup>336</sup> so they can be known to moderate their behavior to events at hand. And it may just be that the very fact that their martyrdom operations are

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<sup>335</sup> Exit polls show that 43% of those who voted for Hamas did so to end the years of corruption by Fatah, 18.8% percent did so for religious grounds, and only 11.8% for their political agenda. Similarly, 38.7% said they trusted Hamas more than any other party compared with 30.6% declaring a similar position to Fatah. For polling data visit <http://www.jmcc.org/publicpoll/results/2006/no57.pdf>

<sup>336</sup> Kim Cragin's, "Learning to Survive: The Case Study of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)" in James Forest's ed. *Teaching Terror: Strategic and Tactical Learning in the Terrorist World*. (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006) pp. 189-204.

rooted in religious justifications will limit the degree and brutality of its application as continued attacks will no doubt at some point appear too far apart from the teachings of Islam.

### **Martyrdom and the Internet**

Unlike the Iranian Martyr's Museum, there is less of an emphasis on brick-and-mortar institutions in the Palestinian territories. Instead, the Palestinians have adopted a sophisticated strategy of creating cyber museums, martyrdom commemoration websites, a television station and even a children's show all rooted in the al-Qassam sense of defiance that is at the center of their use of martyrdom. There are two influential martyr cyber museums in the Palestinian territories.

The closest thing to the Iranian Martyr's Museum would be the Abu Jihad Museum for the Prisoners Movement Affairs and is affiliated with Al-Quds University. With both a physical and cyber presence, the museum attempts

to reflect the will power and the challenge of the Palestinian people, the people who lived and continue to live the suffering and cruelty of the occupation that has turned his life into a big prison. This museum is the voice and image to tell the whole world about the suffering of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons and outside.<sup>337</sup>

The image of defiance is expressed not just through the pictures and stories of the museum but also in its overall structural design. The exterior of the museum is surrounded by a partial façade of what they label the "apartheid wall" that the Israelis have built to protect Israel from terrorist attacks. The image of the wall is intended to highlight that all Palestinians are in essence "prisoners" under Israeli occupation and

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<sup>337</sup> <http://www.aj-museum.alquds.edu/aboutus/about.php>, accessed May 10, 2012.

thus the personal martyrdom among Palestinian prisoners is extended as an image of defiance and sacrifice in the name of the Palestinian people as a whole.<sup>338</sup>

The idea of communal sacrifice continues in the Palestinian Holocaust Memorial Museum, which is simply a cyber-museum without a physical presence. Here the focus shifts away from prisoners to the children killed by Israeli forces and testimonials by those who survived such attacks. The webpages are structured more like expanded martyr posters. Each entry page begins with a picture and then brief biographical information such as name, age, martyrdom date, as well as the place and cause of death. Yet unlike posters, the limitless space of the Internet allows for a detailed account of the child's final hours as well as stories from families and friends as to the life of the child. And when available, death pictures and videos are also streamed on the website.<sup>339</sup> The museum's effort at defiance is two-fold. First, in using the name holocaust they are trying to label the Israeli's as hypocrites. Second, by memorializing dead children they are trying to cover over Palestinian suicide bombers whose justifications maybe questionable with children that portray the image of pure innocence.

A third and final example revolves around what could arguably be Hamas' most controversial use of martyrdom spectacles, the Pioneers of Tomorrow television show. Another example of child martyrdom spectacles, the Pioneers of Tomorrow is a children's television show broadcast on Hamas' own Al-Aqsa station. The show is in

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<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

<sup>339</sup> [http://palestinianholocaust.net/English/In\\_Depth/GazaHolocaustMuseum/index.shtml](http://palestinianholocaust.net/English/In_Depth/GazaHolocaustMuseum/index.shtml), accessed May 10, 2012.

many ways reminiscent of Public Broadcasting Shows in the US like Sesame Street with a young female host, costumed animal characters, a call-in feature and adults all designed to teach lessons to children. What separates it, however, from its more benign American counterparts is that the main lesson it portrays is to encourage martyrdom and defiance to Israel. The most infamous example of using martyrdom as an image of defiance is in the storyline that involved the Mickey Mouse cloned character of a Palestinian mouse named Farfour. The Farfour storyline assumes that he inherits land from a dying grandfather (who happens to not be a mouse, but putting that contradiction aside) and the Israelis want the land. When Farfour stands defiant and refuses to hand over the land an Israeli officer beats him to death in a dramatic camera scene that cuts back and forth between the death and the young female host who witnesses the action, while announcing to the viewers that they have just seen Farfour martyred for them.<sup>340</sup> Whereas the martyrdom of 18 BL in fascist Italy was designed for an adult audience, Farfour speaks to a younger audience but both rely on a storyline based on a non-human character sacrificing for their people and provide a way for the movements to present their narrative of martyrdom to the masses. Both examples show how the transition from the movement phase to the regime phase prompted the groups to open up martyrdom to faceless or nonhuman character as an invitation for the spectators to be able to relate with the martyr and perhaps even see themselves within the story.

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<sup>340</sup> The New York Times, " Hamas TV Snuffs Controversial Children's Character," *New York Times*, July 1, 2007, sec. World / Africa.

## Summary

The martyrdom spectacles for belligerent fundamentalist movements are presented in more modern ways but still maintain the same essential narrative and rationale as those of the interwar period. There are, however, three important implications that the move towards television and Internet based dissemination tactics might produce.

First, the message can be more directly controlled and produced. This is akin to the Nazi production of *Triumph of the Will* where the entire production can be meticulously designed for effect. Second, the preservation of the spectacle in digital form allows for the repetition of the spectacle again and again. 18BL is an infamous example here of a production so expansive that it could not adequately be filmed and too expensive and logistically problematic to ever be reproduced. Third, the audience can be much wider than with other dissemination forms and perhaps more importantly, the intimacy of being able to disseminate in the confines of a living room television or computer places the spectacles, and indeed the movement, into people's homes. The next chapter takes on the impact that the Information Age may have on martyrdom spectacles and considers what can be done to limit their power.



## **Concluding Chapter: The Spectacle of Violence and the Evolution of Martyrdom and Religious Extremism in the Information Age**

Guy Debord spoke of man as that “negative being who *is* solely to the extent that he abolishes being.”<sup>341</sup> While man’s individuality, for Debord, may have been lost in a consumer-based society, his depiction of man has resonance for spectacles of martyrdom as well. The martyr is analogous to the Middle Age Pilgrim who by removing himself from the larger society, rejects their decadence and claims a purer existence. Yet the seemingly altruistic image of the pilgrim or the martyr belies the political usefulness they can also represent. Martyrdom spectacles are a potentially valuable tool for legitimacy building and constituency solidification if a political movement is able to successfully disseminate their narrative of sacrifice and convert the act of martyrdom into a societal spectacle that transforms the individual martyr into a conduit between the movement and the society.

The *act* of martyrdom is a single moment, the particular event itself. However, the *spectacle of martyrdom* is the celebration and glorification of the act through mechanisms of mediation disseminated to the masses. In tracing the process of martyrdom within fundamentalist movements, I found the following pattern. The movements themselves are products of the unique political and cultural environments

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<sup>341</sup> Guy Debord. *Society of the Spectacle*. (New York: Zone, 1995) p. 92. Emphasis added.

in which they emerge. In each case, there is an inherent myth about martyrdom. These particular cultural myths formed the original foundation of the concept and informed the society as to how to interpret an act of martyrdom. The second stage of the process occurs when a movement integrates the myth of martyrdom into its ideology. It is at this stage that the movement reinterprets<sup>342</sup> the myth of martyrdom and imbues it with political resonance. The third stage occurs when the movement publicly recognizes a particular act as martyrdom and then performs acts of celebration to both revere the act and the movement's ties to its sacrifice. The important point is not *if* an act of martyrdom has occurred but rather that the movement *publically claims* that an act has occurred and presents that act as a means for celebration to the society. Finally, the society receives the spectacle and interprets the value of the act. In this way the society is not a passive actor but an actual agent within this process and society's response (whether positive, negative or neutral) will impact both the way the movement celebrates future acts of martyrdom and which of these acts it will publically recognize.

Within this process of politicization, I see two broad narratives of martyrdom emerging the heroic and the transformational. Heroic forms of martyrdom present the martyr as something to venerate, as an icon or heroic ideal similar to how the Nazis portrayed their members who died in the Beer Hall Putsch. Transformational visions of martyrdom are different in that they ask the masses not to simply venerate but

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<sup>342</sup> By reinterpret I mean integrates the original latent myth into their political narrative/rhetoric. Typically they do this in such a way that they modify the original interpretation to suit their own political purposes.

actually to become martyrs, exemplified by the Iranian Basij; or to emulate the spirit of martyrdom on a much smaller scale by venerating martyrdom through special museums and cemeteries to promote and celebrate willing sacrifice for the cause. Here the act of martyrdom becomes a purification process, a mechanism by which the individual sacrifices their individuality to become part of the utopian vision the movement promotes. That sacrifice can also serve as a conduit to promote and strengthen linkages between the movement and the friends and family the martyr left behind. This final chapter explores two main themes, the impact of technology on the dissemination of spectacle and a rereading of martyrdom as spectacle versus ritual, in order to present a case for how to end martyrdom and fascism in the modern world.

### **The Impact of Technology on the Dissemination and Power of Spectacle**

The Information Age has provided new, innovative ways for governments and opposition movements to reach into the lives of the modern citizen. Yet the evolution of these manifestations of encroachment is arguably no more nefarious than their predecessors. The modern age can be read as one in which the tension between the individual as an autonomous agent and an exclusive society is eroded as inclusion becomes universalized across all social strata. The individual becomes arguably lost in a mass society where leaders manipulate cultural norms as a means of forming and controlling mass consciousness.<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>343</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (Penguin, 1993), 198–210.

What has changed is not the effort or even the effectiveness of movements to enact these controls but that they have followed the people to where they are most receptive and approached them there. Rather than spearheading avenues for social control, movements have adopted already popular venues and entered into a common language with the people. The following section argues that in an attempt to appear modern, even revolutionary, fundamentalist movements embrace prevailing technologies and cultural norms as platforms for martyrdom spectacles. The emergence of modern manifestations of these spectacles may appear novel or even linked to a particular religious group or geographic locale, but as demonstrated in previous chapters it is a continuation of the same sorts of fundamentalist politics that emerged in the first half of the Twentieth Century. What does make these spectacle troubling is not the specific act itself but that the manifestations of these spectacles are even more isolating, more pervasive, and more totalitarian in nature than their historical counterparts. The vision of mass man espoused by Hitler and Mussolini becomes ever more possible in the modern world as avenues for escaping a spectacle's encroaching reach continue to wither in the face of mass society.

### **Technology and Dissemination**

The definition of spectacle is derived from the Latin of “to observe” or “to look” and as such spectacles are presentations that traditionally rely on two senses—sight and sound.<sup>344</sup> Just as the image of the scaffold raised high above the heads of the

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<sup>344</sup> Handelman, “Rituals/Spectacles,” 394.

crowds provided a focal point of the power of the state, and the shrill sounds of agony and moaning from torture and death made the public execution real and intimate even for those who could not bear to witness it, contemporary martyrdom spectacles have harnessed the most modern technologies of the day to both present and disseminate the narrative to their constituents. This section will explore three primary examples: the martyrdom spectacles of 18BL, Hamas' Farfour and the Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascist's Sacrament of the Martyrs in comparison to Iran's Martyr Museum. These three examples are illustrative of the major theme throughout this work; the spectacle of martyrdom is about the presentation of a narrative for political power, not the specific act of martyrdom. In two of these cases the "act" of martyrdom the spectacles revolve around are not only fictionalized but the characters themselves are fictionalized non-humans as well. Yet they are both powerful spectacles that each incorporates the prevailing technological advances of the day and both build on existing cultural norms to create a narrative that is at once spectacular and readily identifiable by the population.

### **The Spectacle of 18BL**

The spectacle of 18BL was the first attempt at bringing the narrative of martyrdom to the Italian masses through theater. 18BL was one of the most expansive, expensive and over the top productions ever to be staged. The play was the central event of fascism's Youth Olympics for Culture and Theater (only in Italy would an entire Olympics be dedicated to culture and theater).

The collaborative creation of seven young writers and a film director, 18BL brought together two thousand actors, fifty trucks, eight bulldozers, four field and machine gun batteries, ten field radio stations, and six photoelectric brigades in a stylized Soviet-style representation of fascism's past, present and future.<sup>345</sup>

With a production of this magnitude, it should come as little surprise that the setting for the staging of this grand spectacle had to already embody a sense of sacrifice, accomplishment and modernity and Mussolini found just such a spot in the reclaimed fields of Pontine just outside its new capital the city of Littoria. The goal of the production was to illustrate the political and technological sophistication of the Italian regime by using the most advanced equipment of the day and to do so in a grand spectacle. There are different ways to conceptualize grand, in the case of 18BL grand was not simply in the number of participants (thousands) but also in terms of audience and stage. Thousands more were expected to attend and the entire Pontine Swamp was the setting.

18BL was the model number of the story's protagonist, a Fiat truck. While not human, it was in many ways the perfect archetype for the ideal fascist man—modern, powerful, and most importantly, Italian. There is a tremendous significance in the hero note being a man, or even having an identifiable name. In being identified solely with a serial number, 18 BL served as the representation of the mass man who finds themselves not in their pursuit of individuality but through the glories and emotions of the community. In addition, there is perhaps one less obvious and perhaps more

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<sup>345</sup> Jeffrey Schnapp. 18 BL: Fascist Mass Spectacle. *Representations*. Number 43 (Summer, 1993) pp. 91-92.

sinister reason for the hero to be a piece of machinery.<sup>346</sup> Trucks are working tools, items to be used and driven in the pursuit of a greater good or end. They are not sentient beings and blindly follow the will of their master (a narrative aimed squarely at the fascist youth who, while they did not know it in 1934, would be fighting for Italy on the fields of World War II in just five short years).

The production was intended to be the first truly mass theater, connecting the audience to the actors, the set and the story in such a way as to “achieve an actualized mystical experience closing the gap between representation and reality, art and life, actors and audiences.”<sup>347</sup> To this end, the theater was a giant open air spectacle with 20,000 spectators spread throughout the marshes not facing a clearly defined stage but experiencing the action unfold at different vantage points to really allow the audience to be enveloped by the story and become one with the drama.<sup>348</sup> Here the emphasis was on both the sights and sound of spectacle. The presentation was designed in such a way that you would see the unfolding of the play moving before you but even once it passed over the horizon you could still hear the movement of the play even after you could no longer see it. This was a part of the narrative, that the even when you do not see the reach of the fascist party, it is still there and strong. The

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<sup>346</sup> Schnapp also refers to 18BL as a ‘metalized man.’ Ibid.

<sup>347</sup> Cinzia Artini Bloom. “Fascist Temples and Theaters of the Masses,” *South Central Review*. Volume 13, Number 3 / 4 (Autumn-Winter 1997), p.53.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid., pp. 53-55.

power of the scaffold for Foucault acted in a similar vein, even when not in use, the shadow of the scaffold represented a visual image of the power of the state.

The play was conducted in three acts, each representing key aspects of the party's history. Act I opened on the battlefields of World War I. The play is contrived, ironically enough, in the Soviet vein of choppy sequences of event and bright flashes of light to portray to the spectators a sense of movement and progress. The scene is one of artillery fire all around and soldiers running around barbed wire fences storming up a hill. In the distance a caravan of 18 BL model trucks is bringing fresh soldiers to the front lines and by the end of the third scene the entire procession are climbing up three different hills where in the middle of which the Italian flag rises signaling her victorious conquest of the cities of Trento and Trieste.<sup>349</sup>

Act II opens in the years immediately after World War I with the audience being blanketed by red fireworks overhead to represent the rise of socialism and labor disputes in Italy following the war. At the center of the display is no longer the Italian flag but instead a large table filled with fat, lazy men, hoarding money and arguing furiously with one another. The sign on the table reads "parliament." One of the men at the table gets up to make a speech and representing Prime Minister Facta who lost power to Mussolini in 1922 uttered Facta's words: "But what do these fascists want?" Just at that moment one of the 18 BL's barrels down from the hillside and smashes the table marked parliament and a civil war ensues between the socialists and the

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<sup>349</sup> Jeffrey Schnapp. 18 BL: Fascist Mass Spectacle. *Representations*. Number 43 (Summer, 1993) pp. 106-107.



fascists on stage. Scene three opens with a factory on fire and one of the trucks charging ahead to help fight the socialists alongside 300 fascists. By the time the 18 BL arrives the fighting is over, and while victorious, the fascist casualties are so numerous that the truck is now used for a funeral procession to transport the dead. As they ascend the hill top again,

From out of the light, a 'metallic and clear voice' (Mussolini's) interrupts the funeral silence and, calling out: "Heroes of the war and martyrs of the revolution." "Presente," they answer. "To whom does Italy belong, to whom Rome?" "To us," they answer. But the chorus of voices is no longer isolated. Black shirts shout out "to us" from all sides of the auditorium and stage. Led by a truck convoy, they parade out across the landscape and converge over the horizon line, where their silhouettes vanish into the light. Act 2 has ended; the March on Rome has begun.<sup>350</sup>

This revision of the actual history of the March on Rome aside, the symbolic resonance of Act II is clear, even if you were not part of the March on Rome and the founding of the fascist revolution you can experience its sense of glory and collectively connect to a mythic past.

The play's final act returns to the scene of its production, the Pontine swamp. In this scene ten years have passed since the March on Rome and there are numerous allusions to fascism's progress (school children singing the party's praises, order in the streets, etc.) but most importantly the commander overseeing the land reclamation process indicates that the road to the Fascist Italy's new town Litorria would be built in three days. With these words, he then orders the clearing of the land and the carving of the roads. Off to the side of the performance area the old 18BL that has

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<sup>350</sup> Ibid., 107.

now served through World War I, the March on Rome and now the reclamation process dutifully begins to carry her load when the engine suddenly dies in the middle of the stage. After frantic attempts to revive it 18BL is a martyr to the cause and it is decided that she will be pushed into the open pit the road will ride over and will continue to serve the Italian state even in her grave. As the play is ending 18BL's driver says to the crowd: "She [18BL] has fought the war, the revolution and the battle for land reclamation. Now she will support the highway to Littoria. ... In three days she will return to her duties anew, my old lady. Forever!"<sup>351</sup>

The less than subtle reference in these final lines aimed directly at the legacy of Catholic culture within Italy. 18BL is ultimately a martyrdom narrative about the salvation of the mass man through his willingness to do his duty. Just as Christ rose three days after his great sacrifice and martyrdom, 18BL would rise exactly three days too. As Christ's resurrection would allow him to spend an eternity in heaven (except for that brief moment known as the second coming, but that's always been a bit more of a protestant doctrine), 18BL will spend her eternity in a similar heaven—not the Garden of Eden, but a fascist utopia in the former Pontine Swamps here on earth.

The spectacle of 18 BL incorporates the most modern means of technology for the day and presented a narrative of martyrdom that advocated sacrifice not simply on the battlefield, but also in building the fascist economy and state.<sup>352</sup> By incorporating

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<sup>351</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>352</sup> Images of the 18BL production are in the appendix.

the cultural legacy of Roman attempts (and failure) of clearing the Pontine Swamp with some of the dogma of the Catholic Church, the complicated spectacle was still able to present an easily recognizable narrative that sacrifice for the state may not be figurative, but that the protection and perseverance of the state were worth it and that the citizen would share in the glory of the state.

### **The Spectacle of Farfour**

The spectacle of Farfour adopts a strategy similar to 18BL but do so on a much smaller scale (though arguably with greater impact). Farfour was the name of one of the main characters on a children's television show called *Pioneers of Tomorrow* broadcast and produced on the Hamas run Al Aqsa television station. The show is marketed to children between the ages of roughly nine to thirteen and is based on the model of skit children shows like *Sesame Street* in the United States with a mix of interactive talk-show format as well.<sup>353</sup> An 11-year-old Palestinian girl named Saraa Barhoum along with a fictionalized character known as Farfour hosts the show and field questions from callers and through email.

The character of Farfour is a large black and white mouse with a high squeaky voice and not coincidentally appears strikingly similar to Mickey Mouse. Farfour is intended to be a character that children will relate to and is simultaneously innocent of any wrongdoing because, after all, he is simply a Palestinian mouse. The personal history of Farfour is that he inherited a significant amount of land from his

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<sup>353</sup> Edidin, "A Mouse's Grisly Demise."

grandfather who left him the deed and keys to the property. The grandfather abandoned the property when Israel declared independence and left the estates to his grandson. The backstory in itself is not spectacular, nor is it intended to be. The producers wanted to ensure that the story was common enough that any young viewer could relate with the narrative. However, on Friday June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2007 the event does become a spectacle when Farfour is tracked down by Israeli agents (simply “Jews” as referred to on the show) and is asked to give Israel his deeds and keys. After repeated demands, Farfour continues to refuse and the Israelis beat him to death while the camera cuts back and forth between images of violence and the intense stares of Saraa Barhoum.<sup>354</sup>

The presentation of this “martyrdom” is packaged specifically in a way to attract children in the venues/mediums that children are most likely to be drawn—television, telephones and the Internet. Though the content is clearly disturbing, the visual representation still has an amateurish, cartoon like execution that is intended to keep the child engaged (not being so violent as to compel them to turn off the television or look away) yet realize that something significant is happening. The death of Farfour<sup>355</sup> is then reiterated and memorialized by Barhoum’s repeated calls

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<sup>354</sup> The New York Times, “ Hamas TV Snuffs Controversial Children’s Character.”

<sup>355</sup> Images of Farfour are in the appendix.

that she wishes one day to be a martyr for Palestine and is ready to embrace her fate.<sup>356</sup>

In an interview, Hazim el-Sharawi who played the Farfour character, made it clear that the goal of the program and the character was to present to children what he argues is the reality of Palestinian life. “We want to connect the child to Palestine, to his country, so you know that your original city is Jaffa, your capital is Jerusalem and that the Jews took your land and closed your borders and are killing your friends and family.”<sup>357</sup> Hamas and its ideology of confrontation with Israel are presented as the only hope for the Palestinian people—and one that the youth of Palestine will willingly sacrifice themselves for—a message that is aimed both at Israel and at Hamas’ primary domestic competition, the Fatah.

### **The Sacarium of Martyrs and the Museum of Martyrs Contrasted**

The Sacarium of Martyrs was the central piece of Mussolini’s attempt at memorializing the tenth anniversary of the fascist assumption of power in Italy. As part of the celebrations, the floor plan of a Catholic cathedral was converted to a site of worship and reverence for the fascist party and state. The actual design was a labyrinth that led visitors through grand rooms with vaulted ceilings and statues of faceless soldiers each one depicting traits of strength, yet each generic enough in their

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<sup>356</sup> Steven Erlanger, “In Gaza, Hamas’s Insults to Jews Complicate Peace,” *The New York Times*, April 1, 2008, sec. International / Middle East, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/01/world/middleeast/01hamas.html?scp=4&sq=pioneers%20of%20tomorrow%20farfour&st=cse>, (accessed July 31, 2011).

<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

composition as to be unidentifiable. The emphasis of the design was to focus on the archetypal image of a fascist soldier without actually personifying anyone in particular. The stark emptiness of the faces was intended to focus the mind on the glories of fascism and not on any specific human weakness. The final room in the procession was the Sacarium of the Martyrs. Here the visitor is presented with circular rings representing the glories of the ancient Roman Coliseum and is surrounded in darkness with only a few bright beams of white light as they walk through a circular room with cries of “presente!” echoing repeatedly all around them. The imagery is a powerful reminder that the martyrs—again facelessly represented with just the simple, undifferentiated word “presente” in a circular room to indicate that the revolution itself has no beginning or end and is connected to the glories of Italy’s Roman past.<sup>358</sup>

Contrast this spectacle with the presentation of martyrdom at the Martyr’s Museum in Iran. Where the fascists constructed a spectacle that highlighted the anonymity of the martyrs and used the technology of the day to provide a sense of losing the individual self into a mass collective, the Iranians created a museum that brings the actual body—sometimes literally—back into the equation and focuses on expressing the individuality of each martyr as a way of making the concept more accessible. The museum is actually filled with individual artifacts belonging to each martyr as well as videos and audio recordings of their voices and pictures of them as

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<sup>358</sup> Jeffrey T. Schnapp, “Fascism’s Museum in Motion,” *Journal of Architectural Education* (1984-) 45, no. 2 (1992): 87–97.

they were in life. For Iran, the personification of the martyr is seen as humanizing the individual actor and to connect post-revolutionary generations with those that died to secure the Islamic regime. The reverence of the individual martyr returns the body to the act of martyrdom and elevating it in the terms of Foucault to spectacle once again.<sup>359</sup>

### **Some Concluding Thoughts and Analysis: On the End of Martyrdom and Fascism in the Modern World**

Why this account of martyrdom spectacles? The standard reading of martyrdom denotes sacrifice and “sacrifice is a profoundly social action, essentially involving a network of relationships, typically ... actualized in terms of systems of social experience.”<sup>360</sup> When I started this work I envisioned a Ford like assembly line where young people were recruited, trained, programmed and then sent off to death (something akin to mindless robots). In my mind, would-be martyrs must have mindlessly embraced and responded to the stimuli presented them—the perfect dependent variable that would always detonate the bomb or glide the plane to its target. However, this is not the case. Martyrdom is not a sport to be trained for; it is a mentality to be embraced—and not just for the would-be martyr, but for the society who will interpret the act. Movements cannot make a person willing to die for their cause, but they can groom and train likely candidates. Ehud Sprinzak pointed out, “the task of recruiters is not to produce but rather to identify this predisposition [the

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<sup>359</sup> Images can be found in the appendix.

<sup>360</sup> Ivan Strenski, “Sacrifice, gift and the Social Logic of Muslim ‘Human Bombers,’ *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 15, No. 3 (Autumn 2003), p. 7.

willingness to die] in candidates and to reinforce it.”<sup>361</sup> The dilemma for researchers is how to separate the martyr as subject and spectacle of martyrdom.

The example of Hamas launching a suicide campaign on Israeli school children or Italy’s over-the-top portrayal of 18BL each in their own way became embarrassing objects of ridicule and forced the hands of the parties to abandon them in order to save public face. In this final section I conclude by offering suggestions for ending the allure of martyrdom spectacles and fascist movements in the modern world.

The scepter of fascism need not be as haunting a presence in global politics. Despite the images of uniformity and solidarity broadcast through martyrdom spectacles seem to crumble almost as quickly as they came. After the defeats of the Axis powers in World War II, Germany, Italy and Japan were able to transform themselves into stable, functioning democracies and eschew their fascist past. To conclude this work I would like to offer three interrelated policies positions for addressing the martyrdom and fundamentalism. First, deconstructing the monolithic approach around martyrdom movements. Second, resurrecting liberal politics and the de-radicalization of fascist movements. Third, letting go of martyrdom spectacle.

The treatment of fundamentalist movements as if they are all monolithic is a post-9/11 phenomenon created by the Bush administration and maintained at least thus far through Obama’s term. President Bush’s response to the Al Qaeda attacks

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<sup>361</sup> Ehud Sprinzak. “Rational Fanatics, *Foreign Policy* No. 120 (Sept. - Oct., 2000), p. 68.



was the construction of a rhetoric that espoused: "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists."<sup>362</sup> Bush's language began a significant policy change for the United States in that it identified anyone with sympathies towards terrorist movements to be grouped together with terrorists groups and at the same time began a policy of non-engagement with perceived terrorist organizations. Bush's position was further exacerbated by the idea of the "axis of evil" in which he identified Libya, Iran, Iraq and North Korea as either terrorist or terrorist supporting states.

The policy of the US prior to Bush was often one of engagement with terrorist groups, even those who committed attacks against American targets. The Reagan administration's response to the 1983 Hezbollah led suicide bombing that killed 241 US marines was exceptionally muted, and despite public calls for remaining in Lebanon the US peace keeping force was withdrawn without significant retaliation.<sup>363</sup> Reagan made a calculation that the cost of US involvement within the Lebanese conflict was too high and not in America's interest. A rational approach to terrorism is to determine which sort of attacks are significant and which ones can go without a direct response.

A second recommendation is to begin the process of engaging with fundamentalist groups and to actively seek out opportunities for communication in an effort to persuade fundamentalist groups to moderate their tone and embrace liberal

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<sup>362</sup> President George Bush's Address to the Joint Congress. September 20, 2001. <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>. Accessed October 10, 2011.

<sup>363</sup> F.E. Sprinzak, "Rational Fanatics," *Foreign Policy*, no. 120 (October 2000): 66–73.

political institutions. Despite how naïve this sentiment may sound, Fatah, the Irish Republican Army and even Gaddafi's Libya each espoused terrorism and transformed themselves into active members of their respective political institutions.<sup>364</sup> Creating an "us against them" world leaves little room for compromise or negotiation and it makes the historically false assumption that groups who engage in martyrdom or terrorist operations cannot change. Yet as this dissertation argued martyrdom itself is a politically constructed concept and anything that is constructed can simultaneously be deconstructed. The discussion on Hamas in chapter three outlined the transition from demonizing the Oslo Accords and the Palestinian Authority to actually participating and winning office in 2006. And while Hamas has not completely abandoned terrorism or violence the sheer volume and magnitude of their attacks has dropped dramatically. Assuming a place in competitive, multiparty elections requires that movements actually do more than acts of violence; they have to govern and govern well if they wish to maintain power.

Finally, spectacles need an audience and while the focus of this dissertation has largely been about the dissemination of these spectacles to the group's constituent masses, there is an overlooked secondary audience—the victims of these attacks and the larger world community. Every time images of the 9/11 attacks are shown on television, or episodes of Al Aqsa TV's *Farfour* are streamed online the spectacle of the scaffold is present again and again. The victims of these crimes will have no

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<sup>364</sup> Gaddafi of course would return to acts of terrorism but luckily without success.

choice but to face its ugly wrath, but the world must be careful not to constantly have their eyes gazed upon its blade. The end of spectacle is surprisingly easy; it is the turning off of the TV and the avoidance of the parade. Each small step away from the glorification of martyrdom is a blunting of its blade.

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## Appendix

Image 1, Hosein Fahmideh's Martyr Case at the Martyr's Museum in Tehran



Christiane Gruber, "The Martyrs' Museum in Tehran: Visualizing Memory in Post-Revolutionary Iran," *Visual Anthropology* 25, no. 1-2 (January 2012): 77.

Image 2, Entrance to the Women's Wing at the Martyr's Museum, Tehran



Faegheh Shirazi, "Death, the Great Equalizer: Memorializing Martyred (Shahid) Women in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Visual Anthropology* 25, no. 1-2 (January 2012): 112.

Image 3, Front Entrance of the Martyr Museum, Tehran



Christiane Gruber, "The Martyrs' Museum in Tehran: Visualizing Memory in Post-Revolutionary Iran," *Visual Anthropology* 25, no. 1–2 (January 2012): 72.

Image 4, 18 BL Advertisement Poster



Jeffrey T. Schnapp, "18 BL: Fascist Mass Spectacle," *Representations*, no. 43 (1993): 91.

Image 5, Farfour from the Pioneers of Tomorrow Children's Television Show



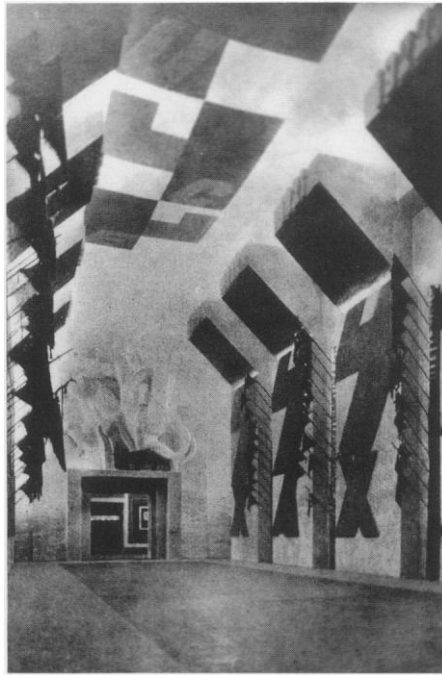
Screen shot image available at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Farfour.jpg>

Image 6, Main Entrance to the Martyr Museum, Tehran

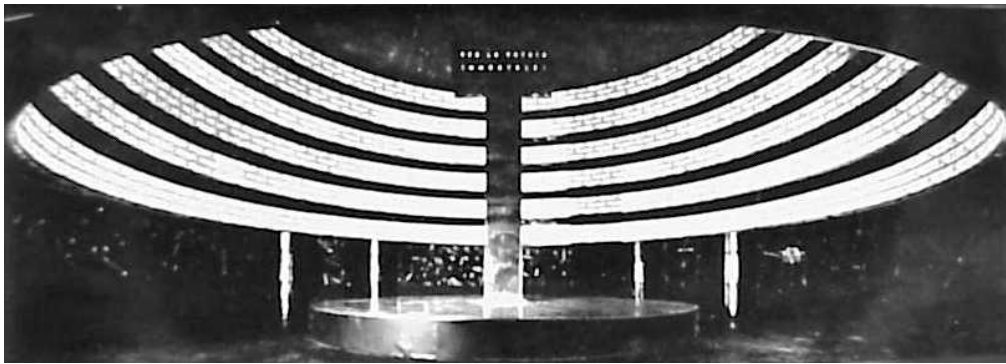


Faegheh Shirazi, "Death, the Great Equalizer: Memorializing Martyred (Shahid) Women in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Visual Anthropology* 25, no. 1–2 (January 2012): 111.

Image 7, The Interior of the Exhibition Hall at the Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista



Libero Andreotti, "The Aesthetics of War, The Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution,"  
*Journal of Architectural Education* 45, no. 2 (1992): 80.



The Actual Sacrum to the Martyrs

Ibid.