

Introduction a real danger to the us



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Introduction

The United States has been faced with the challenge of having to understand and deal with Islamic fundamentalism in the past decade. The US has found it difficult to come up with a comprehensive foreign policy to address the issue. However, policymakers have been able to comprehend the ideological tenets behind these fundamental groups or at least they have been able to establish justification for the actions of these fundamental groups. Islamic fundamentalism has been referred to as the successor of the infamous Red Scare during the Cold War era. In some quarters, this has been referred to as the Green Menace whereas some analysts have regarded these groups as social movements that emphasizes on religion.

Generally, it can be agreed that the issue of Islamic fundamentalism requires special attention. This is because of the fact that these fundamentalist groups have resorted to terrorist tactics in advancing their position (Levitt and Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2006). Hamas is regarded as one of the Islamic fundamentalist organizations which have resorted to terrorist tactics in advancing their course of action. Hamas uses child-soldiers and suicide bombers to launch attacks against their target. The group does not have discretion for targets; it targets innocent civilians, political party members and any opposing military forces. This group has also resorted to guerilla tactics which pose a real danger to the US Homeland Security. Hamas has a strong support system from other organizations such as the Hezbollah, as well as from nations such as Iran and Lebanon. The support system of Hamas provides financial aid and training ground to the group (Levitt and Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2006).

This paper aspires to provide a detailed analysis of one of the Islamic fundamentalist group known as the Hamas. In addition, the paper will provide analyses of various United States policies towards the Hamas group and other external terrorist organizations.

The Emergence and ideology of Hamas

Hamas is an Arabic word which means ‘zeal’ and is derived from the verb ‘hamisa’ which signifies the idea of supporting a cause without any reservations. The term Hamas acquired a distinctive meaning during the formative stage of the Palestinian intifada which begun in December 1987.

During this time, Hamas engaged in a military activism against the Jewish state of Israel. Hamas is an acronym that stands for Harakat al-muqawama al-islamiyya which translates to mean the ‘Islamic Resistance Movement’. Hamas was started in Gaza during the fall of the year 1987. The organization served as a political as well as a military arm of the group, Muslim Brotherhood Society, which had been established in 1928 in Isma’iliyya, Egypt.

After its formation, the Muslim Brotherhood Society spread its influence in the Arab world establishing branches in Palestine in the period 1936-39 when the country was experiencing an uprising (Muslih, 1999). There are various reasons which are advanced to explain the formation of Hamas. It is believed that Hamas emerged owing to the mood of active resistance that had been established by the Palestinian intifada. The group was also influenced by the success of the Iranian Islamic Revolution. In addition, the emergence of Hamas was influenced by the loss of political initiative of the Palestinian

Liberation Organization (PLO) during the Palestinian revolt of 1983-87. The military activism of the Islamic Jihad that was established in 1979, having been spearheaded by members of the Muslim Brotherhood who were disgruntled, acted to motivate the emergence of Hamas. The Islamic Jihad group begun its activities in 1980 and was led by Fathi Shiqaqi in conjunction with Abd al-Aziz Audeh (Muslih, 1999). The 1980s saw the emergence of numerous changes in the structure and outlook of the Muslim Brotherhood society.

The Muslim Brotherhood Society stressed upon reforming the society and religion together with the education morals in fighting Israel. However, the youthful members of the society did not agree to the position adopted by the senior members of the society in dealing with Israeli occupation. These young members emphasized on the adoption of armed resistance in fighting for the rights of the Palestinians (Council on Foreign Relations, Inc, 2012). Due to increased pressure from the young members of the society, the Muslim Brotherhood began to get involved in politics during the 1980s. At the time when Palestinians called for armed resistance against Israel in December of 1987, the society rose to the occasion through its political wing, the Hamas.

Hamas carried out violence using its expansive network of mosques, students and professional organizations as well as charitable organization. They also achieved their mission of violence through underground cells and command centers (Council on Foreign Relations, Inc, 2012). At first, Israel did not do anything to stop Islamist organizations when the Palestinian intifada was just starting. They in fact seemed to be pleased that the Palestinians

were getting divided, leading to the creation of a rival rank to the Palestinian Liberation Organization.

It was believed that with the emergence of the radical Hamas, the power of the PLO was going to be weakened. This was a false move by Israel since following the outbreak of the intifada; Hamas resorted to armed violence making them to be regarded as Israeli's fiercest enemy compared to the PLO. The Hamas group did not just threaten Israel, but also the PLO. The PLO had embraced diplomatic strategies in dealing with Israel. Hamas on the other hand embraced violence in dealing with Israel and this enhanced their popularity among the Palestinians (Council on Foreign Relations, Inc, 2012).

Hamas came up with its charter in the year 1988 which was distinctively different from the nonviolent ethos of the Muslim Brotherhood Society. The group resorted to violence against Israel and adopted terrorist strategies in fighting Israeli occupation. The maiden suicide bombing by the Hamas was executed in the year 1993. When the Hamas came up with their charter, the situation in West Bank and Gaza was ready to explode. This is because of the despair and anger that had accumulated among residents of these regions, and Hamas brought an avenue upon which active resistance against Israel was to be carried out (Council on Foreign Relations, Inc, 2012).

This section of the Palestinian territory was engulfed in a defiant mood in which civic disintegration was eminent and that Hamas members and sympathizers were very active and most warrior-like. The Hamas group expanded to include Islamist intellectuals and members of other groups apart from those of the Islamic Brotherhood Society. In addition, Hamas

spread its influence beyond the Palestinian borders to include the Arab and Islamic nations bordering them. This necessitated the creation of two leadership organizations including qiyadat al-kharij and qiyadat al-dakhil. Qiyadat al-kharij is the leadership of Hamas in foreign countries whereas qiyadat al-dakhil is the group's leadership within the Palestinian territory (Muslih, 1999). Hamas has been regarded as a terrorist organization by Israel, the United States and the European Union. This has been done basing on the fact that this group is greatly involved in terrorist activities. Hamas has a paramilitary wing known as the Izz al-Din al Qassam Brigade which has launched scathing violent attacks on Israel and to some extent, within the Palestinian territories.

The group has engaged in suicide bombings which have claimed numerous lives against civilians both in Israel and Palestinian territory. In addition, Hamas uses makeshift explosives that are planted by the road side and launches rockets into the Israeli territory (Muslih, 1999). During the 2006 legislative elections that were conducted in the Palestinian territory, Hamas emerged victorious putting an end to Fatah's grip on the Palestinian Authority.

This was a great challenge to Fatah's leadership. Despite having been democratically elected in power, Hamas has been steadfast on renunciation of the existence of Israel and in calling for use of violence in the fight against Israeli occupation. The Hamas' charter is categorical on the use of violence in fighting against Israel occupation. Through the violence means that is common with Hamas, many civilians have been killed. This amounts to terrorism as terrorist activities can be described as those activities that

result in indiscriminate murder of people. Therefore, Hamas can rightfully be argued to be a terrorist organization. There are claims that Hamas is not a terrorist organization, and that it is a nationalist movement.

However, this can be rebuked since some Hamas elements have adopted both political and violent strategies, which include terrorism, in their pursuit of their goal of ensuring the establishment of an Islamic Palestinian state (Davidson, 2006). It has been established that Hamas is known for its countless attacks which claim innocent lives. Due to its terrorist activities, the United States has declared Hamas as a foreign terrorist organization. It is alleged that Hamas gets financial support from other countries such as Iran, Syria and Lebanon. The United States and the European Union member states vowed not to offer any financial assistance to the Hamas unless they renounce their violence approach and recognized the existence of Israel. For a long time, Hamas has been regarded as a terrorist group; however, the 2006 election produced dramatic victory to the Hamas which broke the dominance of the PLO's dominance in Palestinian politics. This led to western powers led by the United States and the European Union coming to an agreement that no more funding would be directed towards Hamas. The change of political guard in the Palestinian territory is attributed to the rampant corruption within the PLO leadership.

It is noted that Hamas leadership is often considered to be efficient and does not entertain corruption as the PLO. The election of Hamas to power made the group to be regarded as the most dominant in Palestinian political affairs (Levitt and Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2006). Hamas terrorist activities are said to have led to the death of many innocent individuals. It is

claimed that over 500 people have perished in more than 300 terrorist attacks that have been launched by Hamas since the early 1990s.

Apart from suicide bombers, Hamas uses mortars, rockets and small arms. When recruiting the suicide bombers, Hamas mainly targets youthful male individuals who are deeply religious. Most of these suicide bombers are not desperate individuals, and in fact, they have paying jobs. However, it can be noted that the suicide bombers have an intense hatred towards Israel and this is what drives them to volunteer as suicide bombers.

The United States' policy on Hamas

The United States has been concerned with the activities of Hamas which is adamant about its charter that emphasizes on violence in the fight against Israeli occupation. This has seen the group be regarded by the United States authority as a terrorist group which should be renounced for its activities. Though Hamas has avoided direct confrontation with the United States, its activities against Israel are an indication that the same can happen to the United States citizens.

In addition, since the United States is determined to fight terrorism on the international front, it is imperative to take measures that will enhance homeland security and combat terrorism in all its forms. The United States has put in place various policies which are aimed at combating terrorism as well as enhancing homeland security. The immigration policy for instance is set to help in the identification of any illegal entry of terrorist and blacklist them. On the other hand, the border security policy is aimed to enhance the country's border security, blocking any illegal entry of terrorist elements

including Hamas. The policy on combating terrorist use of explosives in the United States will prepare the government agencies on combating and identifying the types of explosives that Hamas operatives might use in attacking the United States. The maritime security policy and aviation policy shall also protect innocent civilians from unprecedented attacks. The aviation policy shall enhance aviation security whereas the maritime security policy shall help in the identification of any illegal entry or tampering of shipping containers that might contain explosives, or even possibly 'dirty bombs'.

The immigration policy adopted by the American government is aimed at establishing criteria of admission of aliens into the United States. The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) clearly stipulates admission requirements and exclusion criteria for immigrants who come to the United States. It is stipulated that any person coming to the United States should not have any links with terrorism. In this case, anyone who participates in terrorist activities or represents a terrorist organization or is a member of a designated foreign terrorist organization like the Hamas is not eligible to be granted permission to visit the United States. Following the September 11th attack, the INA was enhanced to include the denial of entrance of foreigners who are perceived to represent groups that endorse terrorist activities, individuals who embrace terrorism and to some extent, the close family of individuals who are associated with terrorism. The Immigration and Nationality Act also provides ground for refusal to admit someone in the United States basing on foreign policy issues.

Essentially, the INA is meant to screen foreigners who would wish to come to the United States to ensure that they do not have any association with a terrorist organization. In this way, members of foreign terrorist organizations such as Hamas are blocked from coming to the United States to accomplish their heinous terrorist activities (Garcia and Wasem, 2010). There is no doubt that security and economic growth of the US is dependent on the aviation system in a significant way. Owing to the importance of the aviation industry in the prosperity of the United States, terrorists have identified the industry as a prime target for attack and which they can take advantage of. The case in point is the dreadful September 11th attack of 2001 and the Heathrow plot of 2006 where terrorists exploited the aviation industry to launch their attacks. The United States president issued a directive that aimed to ensure the establishment of an accomplished National Strategy for Aviation Security which would guarantee the protection of the US and its interests from terrorist attacks in the Air Domain. The National Strategy for Aviation Security enhances the alignment of Federal government aviation security programs and initiatives to come up with an all-inclusive and consistent national security effort involving all sectors concerned with security issues. The stakeholders in the security issues include the “ Federal, local, and tribal governments and the private sector” (U.

S. Department of Homeland Security, 2007, para 3). These efforts are meant to enhance aviation security and promote the defense of the United States from terrorist activities. The National Strategy for Aviation Security adopts a collaborative inter-agency approach and has developed various plans to counter threats and challenges facing the aviation domain. The various plans

are intertwined and strengthen each other. plans include the Aviation Transport System Security Plan; the Aviation Operation Threat Response Plan; the Aviation Transport System Recovery Plan; Air Domain Surveillance and Intelligence Integration Plan; International Aviation Threat reduction Plan; Domestic Outreach Plan; and the International Outreach Plan (U. S. Department of Homeland Security, 2007).

The Secretary of Homeland Security has been given responsibility to ensure close coordination of the Federal government activities that encompass national aviation security programs. With the enhancement of the aviation security, terrorist organizations such as the Hamas shall be thwarted in their mission to launch attacks on the aviation industry which is vital to the American economy (U. S. Department of Homeland Security, 2007). As for the border and maritime security policies, the United States has taken considerable measures aimed at enhancing the protection of the United States from attacks emanating from foreign terrorist organizations.

There are various projects that have been put in place by the Department of Homeland Security to ensure maximum protection of American borders. Among these projects is the Advanced Container Security Device (ACSD) Project which is aimed at the development of an enhanced sensor system to screen the veracity of the containers in the maritime supply chain. The ACSD device is usually attached to one side of the container and is able to screen the container, reporting intrusions on the container as well as the availability of human cargo that may be contained in the containers. This will act to enhance security measures thereby thwarting any means that could be used

by terrorist organizations such as Hamas to launch attacks in the United States (U. S. Department of Homeland Security, 2011).

In addition, there is the Automatic Target Recognition (ATR) Project which is aimed at coming up with an automatic imagery detection ability to expose unusual content in various cargo categories. This has enhanced the American security as terrorist groups like Hamas may resort to sneak their terrorist elements disguised as cargo. The Border Detection Grid (BDG) Project is also an essential component of security measures taken by the United States.

This project is said to provide “ a grid of advanced sensors and detection, classification, and localization technologies to detect and classify cross-border movement” (U. S. Department of Homeland Security, 2011, para 5). Such technology is set to boost border surveillance where one Border Patrol officer will have the capability of monitoring over ten miles of the border.

This will enhance keeping vigil on the border to ensure that terrorist activists such as members of the Hamas group do not sneak into the United States (U. S. Department of Homeland Security, 2011). There is also the CanScan Project which is geared towards the development of a next generation non-intrusive inspection (NII) system that shall be used in the detection of terrorist materials and contraband goods. This project is set to enhance cargo screening to ensure that all cargo coming to the United States is free from terrorist threat posed by groups like the Hamas (U. S.

Department of Homeland Security, 2011). There are other projects which include the Container Security Device (CSD) Project; the Hybrid Composite
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Container Project; the Marine Asset Tag Tracking System (MATTS) Project; Secure Carton Project; Secure Wrap Project; and the Sensors and Surveillance Project among many other projects. It is worth noting that the various projects aim at enhancing the security status of the American borders and waterways from foreign terrorists without affecting trade and those people who are travelling (U.

S. Department of Homeland Security, 2011). The Department of Homeland Security has also enhanced its mission to protect the United States and its citizens from terrorist attacks. The Small Vessel Security Strategy Implementation Plan has been put in place to address risks related to the possible manipulation of small vessels by terrorists who may want to target the American maritime. This ensures that terrorist organizations such as Hamas are blocked from advancing their attacks on the American people. The US-VISIT is known to support the Department of Homeland Security in its mission to guarantee protection to the American citizens. To achieve this mission, the Department of Homeland Security provides biometric identification services that are critical in the identification of individuals to determine whether these individuals may present a risk to the United States. This is important as it will ensure that members of terrorist organizations such as the Hamas will not penetrate the boundaries of the United States and pose a security threat without being noticed.

Also, there is the Container Security Initiative (CSI) which focuses on the enhancement of security for container cargo that comes to the United States from around the world. The CSI is concerned with aspects of border security

threats and threats to global trade from terrorist groups like Hamas which could use the maritime container in delivering a weapon (U. S.

Department of Homeland Security, n. d.).

Conclusion

Hamas has been known to resort to violence and terrorist tactics in its fight against Israeli occupation. Though this group does not pose a direct threat to the United States, it has been regarded as a foreign terrorist organization by the United States. Even after Hamas was democratically elected to provide political leadership to the Palestinian people, the group has continued with its terrorist tactics and launched attacks within the Palestinian territory and in Israel. The United States and the European Union urged the group to denounce its terrorist activities so as to continue to benefit from their financial aid all in vain. Having recognized Hamas as a terrorist organization, the United States has put in place various policy frameworks that are aimed at thwarting any potential terrorist organization from launching its attacks on the American soil.

Through the various policies, terrorist organizations such as the Hamas will find it difficult to penetrate the United States or sneak arms and explosives in the US to be used in terrorist activities.

Reference List

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