



Partecipazione e Conflitto

<http://siba-esu.unisalento.it/index.php/paco>

ISSN: 1972-7623 (print version)

ISSN: 2035-6609 (electronic version)

PACO, Issue 18(3) 2025: 587-605

DOI: 10.1285/i20356609v18i3p587

Published 15 November, 2025

Work licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non commercial-Share alike 3.0 Italian License

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Changing Face of Palestinian Resistance: Hamas and the Defence of Palestine

Martin Kear

University of Sydney

Abstract: The scale and audacity of Hamas's attacks against Israel on 7 October 2023, surprised many and has generated intense debate about their causes and consequences. This article employs arguments from the critical terrorism and resistance literatures to argue that a series of critical junctures between 2017 – 2023 narrowed the range of viable alternate paths for Hamas to resist the increasing political, military, and societal asymmetry between Palestinians and Israelis. This asymmetry caused Palestinians to fear that the growing permanence and normalisation of Israel's occupation made the prospects of a state chimerical. The article demonstrates how these junctures changed the meaning and intent of Hamas's resistance, using the attacks to transform the *status quo* in the Occupied Territories and place resolving the Palestinian Question at the forefront of international consciousness. By unravelling the complex interplay between the causal conditions, configurations, and mechanisms surrounding these junctures, this article provides an alternate explanation of these terrorist attacks that stands in tension with more orthodox explanations and their causal reliance on Weberian and Hobbesian norms about non-state actor violence.

Key Words: Hamas, resistance, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Critical Terrorism Studies, critical junctures

Corresponding author: martin.kear@sydney.edu.au

1. Introduction

The scale and audacity of Hamas's attacks against Israel on 7 October 2023, surprised many and has generated intense debate about their causes and consequences. The dominant narrative about these attacks from the international community is that they are acts of terrorism driven by Hamas's enmity towards Israel (Margolin and Levitt, 2023; Bauhn, 2024; Cronin, 2024; Lupovici, 2024).

However, this narrative assumes that Hamas is ontologically stable – that is, there is only one version of reality for Hamas, that of a terrorist movement, making this the only lens through which the attacks should be analysed. Doing so raises lines of inquiry that are premised by the question “What is Hamas?” In most of the

international relations and terrorism literature, answers to this question are shaped by pervasive Weberian and Hobbesian norms that classify non-state actor violence as illegitimate because it represents a threat to the power and security of the state (Weber, 1947; Arendt, 1970; Tilly, 1985; Hobbes, 2009).

However, more critical literature demonstrates that the ontology of movements like Hamas is not necessarily stable, emphasising that their reality can be manipulated to reveal multiple versions that knowledge practices and discourse help to enact in a “process of ongoing critical interpretation” (Haraway, 1988, 590; Law, 2008). Pointedly, while these versions of reality may be different, they should not be analysed independently because they concern the same object of analysis (Mol, 1999; Phillips and al-Dawsari, 2024).

A different answer to the question “What is Hamas?” is that it is a resistance movement, which is what, as Belhaji shows in his work in this special issue, Hamas itself projects to the world to be. This alternate reality produces different lines of inquiry to explain why Hamas conducted the 7 October attacks that supplement and compliment the ontology of Hamas as a terrorist movement by opening analytical space for questions and perspectives that are excluded by more orthodox positivist and rationalist explanations (Jackson, 2007). Accordingly, Hamas’s 7 October attacks cannot be divorced from its other acts of resistance and *vice versa* because they are different ontologies of Hamas. Crucially though, using resistance as an explanatory framework means that Hamas’s own discourse and knowledge systems about its resistance, including its rationale for using violent and non-violent strategies, gain an agency that can be observed, analysed, and contextualised.

Choosing to view Hamas in this way also means that the 7 October attacks cannot be separated from the Palestinians’ demand for statehood. Hamas is a manifestation of Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation and the Palestinians’ concomitant demand for statehood, meaning how it expresses this resistance is not immutable. Because the causal relationships between the various actors in this conflict are reciprocal, events/intentions concerning Israeli occupation impact Palestinians, and influence the meaning and intent of Palestinian resistance. This causes Hamas and the other Palestinian resistance factions to adapt their own resistance strategies, narratives, and goals to reflect these changes. Therefore, to understand why Hamas conducted the 7 October attacks it is necessary to understand what events may have triggered changes to Palestinian resistance and then how and why Hamas responded to these changes. It is to these questions that this article turns its attention to.

The article uses arguments from the critical terrorism and resistance literatures to provide a conceptual framework to analyse the pressures, incentives, motivations, and decision-making processes surrounding a series of critical junctures between 2017 – 2023. This framework provides a clearer and deeper understanding of the causal factors that contributed to these attacks and reveals the trajectories of change that resistance creates to drive the evolution of Hamas’s political behaviour (Bennett and Elman, 2006; Blatter and Haverland, 2014).

The article shows how these junctures changed the meaning and intent of Palestinian resistance, and thus of how Hamas’s resistance manifests itself. While there are a myriad supplementary factors/forces that have also contributed to these attacks, the article focuses on these critical junctures because they are times/areas of significant change in Hamas’s resistance. This happens because in *toto* these junctures reveal the growing political, military, and societal asymmetry between Palestinians and Israelis, causing Palestinians to fear that the increasing permanence and normalisation of Israel’s occupation made the prospects of a Palestinian state chimerical. The product of this fear was the 7 October attacks.

This makes Hamas’s resistance trajectory post-2017 path dependent. This is not to say that Hamas’s decision to attack Israel was inevitable, merely that the growing asymmetry narrowed the range of alternate paths available to Hamas to resist Israeli occupation and advance Palestinian demands for statehood. This narrowing impressed upon Hamas the prohibitive costs to its legitimacy of not conducting the attacks versus the positive

benefits to its legitimacy to be gained from advancing Palestinian claims to statehood (Bennett and Elman, 2006).

The first critical juncture occurred in 2017 when Hamas published its Declaration of Principles (DoP). The DoP codified the multidimensionality of Hamas's resistance by acknowledging the legitimacy of both its violent and non-violent resistance actions, opening alternate pathways through which it could legitimately resist Israeli occupation. The second critical juncture was the 2018/19 "Great March of Return" protests. The protests highlighted the righteousness of Israel's violent responses to Palestinian protests and the unwillingness of international community to hold Israel accountable for human rights abuses and recognise Palestinian claims to statehood.

The third critical juncture was the collapse in public support for the Fatah-controlled Palestinian Authority (PA). Fatah's persistent governance shortcomings alongside its perceived failure to resist Israeli occupation and further the Palestinians' claim to statehood caused its legitimacy amongst Palestinians to plummet. This created a leadership vacuum that would see Hamas gradually assume a more prominent role in determining the course of Palestinian resistance.

The fourth critical juncture concerned events surrounding the 2021 war with polling revealing that Palestinians considered Hamas the "defender of Jerusalem", and thus of a Palestinian state. The growing political, military, and social asymmetry between Palestinians and Israelis meant that Palestinians feared what the permanence and normalisation of Israel's occupation meant for a Palestinian state. The final critical juncture occurred in 2022 with the swearing in of an ultra-nationalist Israeli government bent on pursuing Israeli sovereignty over the Occupied Territories.

The article demonstrates how these junctures created an environment where Hamas was faced with a choice: either keep the existing *status quo* in the Occupied Territories thereby diminishing any chance of achieving a state or conduct a horrific attack to compel Israel to react disproportionately thereby exposing the power and inhumanity of its occupation and efforts to thwart a Palestinian state. By doing so, Hamas wanted to "get rid of Israeli occupation and reclaim Palestinian rights on the way [to] liberation and independence" (HAMAS, 2024).

2. Hamas, Terrorism, and Resistance

Hamas acts as an ideological bridge between Palestinian nationalism and Islamism meaning resistance and national liberation form core tenets of its ideological narrative (Kear 2019). While there are studies that analyse Hamas and its revolutionary use of violence solely through the terrorist lens (Levitt, 2006; Davis, 2016; Milton-Edwards and Farrell, 2024) others situate Hamas and its use of violence within the broader milieu of Palestinian resistance and the concomitant demand for statehood (Gunning, 2006; Tamimi, 2009; Baconi, 2018; Kear, 2019).

This literature advances the argument that the reason Hamas resists is to advance Palestinian statehood, with the ideal of a state serving as both an aspiration and inspiration for Palestinians and Hamas (Sen, 2015). When Hamas was launched in 1987 its goals were twofold: end Israel's occupation of the OPT and challenge Fatah's control of the Palestinian national narrative and strategic goals and means (Mishal and Sela, 2009). Hamas considers the latter necessary because controlling the Palestinian national narrative means controlling the methods and rationale for attaining statehood.

Nevertheless, since 9/11 in the international relations and terrorism literatures there has been a homogenisation of the analyses of radical Islamist movements, like Hamas. A combination of essentialist claims and a refusal to move away from Weberian and Hobbesian norms concerning non-state actor violence means they are analysed solely as violent, anti-systemic actors. This has normalised a stark analytical dichotomy between

the illegitimacy of non-state actor violence (terrorism) and the legitimacy of state violence (counterterrorism) (Ahmed, 2025). The broad analytical intent of this homogenised literature is to investigate how to solve/mitigate terrorism's threat to state security (Gunning, 2007). However, this obscures and minimises the myriad historical, political, and socio-economic causes and conditions that exist in the political environments that groups like Hamas operate in that can motivate them to direct violence against the state (Gunning, 2006).

Critical terrorism studies (CTS) seeks to address this analytical blind spot. Drawing on non-positivist approaches CTS-styled analyses situate non-state actor violence into historical, political, and socio-political context, reducing its analytical importance to being just one facet of a myriad (re)actions undertaken as non-state actors seek ways to challenge the existing political *status quo* and the accompanying power asymmetry between them and the state (Gunning, 2007). Additionally, CTS-styled analyses challenge the pervasive legitimacy/illegitimacy dichotomy in the orthodox literature by viewing terrorism as a strategy or tactic than can be employed by state and non-state actors alike (Jackson, 2007) (Toros, 2012; Ahmed, 2020).

The study of resistance in orthodox international relations and terrorism studies also suffers from similar analytical constrictions and misnomers. Again, Weberian and Hobbesian norms shape these analyses meaning that they often become a study of the contest between power (the state) and counterpower (resistance) (PoReSo, 2023). This means that characterisations of resistance as terrorism, insurgency, and/or rebellion are prevalent but conceptually limiting because they again focus almost exclusively on non-state actor violence without addressing how the state might contribute to the resistance of such actors (Brown, 2020; Asal, Phillips and Rethemeyer, 2022; Milton-Edwards and Farrell, 2024).

However, in the resistance literature, it is generally accepted that power and resistance are co-constitutive meaning that the presence of resistance is a reaction to the presence of power, and *vice versa*. This makes resistance an act – not an intent or effect (Baaz et. al, 2016). Chandra (2015: 565) defines resistance as something that “minimally apprehend[s] the conditions of one’s subordination, to endure or withstand those conditions, and to act with sufficient intention and purpose to negotiate power relations from below to rework them in a more favourable or emancipatory direction”. This makes resistance a complex, multidimensional, and subaltern practice that non-state actors conduct to challenge, negotiate, and undermine power and to find alternatives to the existing political/social *status quo* (Baaz et. al., 2016). Resistance is also temporal, meaning that as a state’s socio-political power changes over time so too does resistance and how it manifests itself (Mikael et. al., 2023). This has implications for the arguments proffered in this article. As the meaning and intent of Israel’s occupation and Fatah’s hegemony change so too does the meaning and intent of Hamas’s resistance.

Daase and Deitelhoff (2019) also contend that resistance is relational and cannot be analysed in isolation because it only becomes visible and gains meaning and intent through its relationship with other concepts/objects at which it is directed. Therefore, power makes resistance visible by providing it with meaning and intent. This is because the exercise of power always involves some coercion meaning the more illegitimate power is perceived to be, the easier it is to identify resistance (Daase and Deitelhoff 2019). Conversely, resistance makes the meaning and intent of power visible by bringing power relations to light, locating their positions, finding out their point(s) of application, and the methods used. Resistance questions power and lays the foundation for (re)constituting legitimate rule (Foucault, 1982).

This means that the way groups like Hamas resist varies depending upon the degree to which these groups accept or reject the rules of the political game. Daase and Deitelhoff (2019) argue that the former can be classified as an opposition mode of resistance because the resistance group accepts/tolerates the current political *status quo* and seeks change according to the system’s rules/norms. The latter they classify as a dissidence mode of resistance because the group either rejects the current *status quo* and/or deliberately violates the system’s rules/norms. Instructively, resistance groups like Hamas can alternate their modes of resistance from

opposition to dissidence and *vice versa* depending upon the character of the system and the changes it undergoes.

Thus, the meaning and intent of Hamas's resistance to Fatah's hegemony is related to its evolving relationship with Fatah. There are behavioural norms and limits associated with Hamas's resistance that are guided by it wanting to gain a legitimate voice in Palestinian politics to determine how Palestinian resistance manifests itself. Here Hamas primarily adopts an opposition mode of resistance. Since signing the Cairo Declaration (2005), Hamas accepts/tolerates the rules/norms of the OPT's political system and advocates for change(s) in Palestinian resistance according to these rules/norms.

Similarly, Hamas's resistance to Israeli occupation is guided by its own set of behavioural norms and limits that are determined by its goal of advancing Palestinian statehood claims. Here Hamas's mode of resistance is primarily dissidence because its methods lie outside of the existing rules/norms of the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) as it looks to challenge the permanence of Israeli occupation. This makes Hamas's use of violence instrumental because it is calculated to produce change. As Crenshaw (2001: 14) notes, "the non-state organization using [violence] is assumed to act on the basis of calculation of the benefit[s] to be gained from the action, the costs of the attempt and of its failure, the consequences of inaction, or the probability of success." Despite their differences both forms of resistance are voices against the existing *status quo* and look to advocate alternatives to existing power structures – in Hamas's case to Fatah's hegemony and Israel's occupation.

An additional facet to Hamas's multidimensional resistance is the notion of resistance legitimacy. According to Hroub (2010b), for Palestinians the notions of legitimate and legitimacy are linked inextricably to resisting Israeli occupation and advancing Palestinian claims to statehood. Thus, for Palestinians who is considered a legitimate leader of resistance reflects that person's or organisation's willingness to do both. If Palestinians view anyone as being non-resistant this will have a dramatic effect on their legitimacy.

This differs from more orthodox understandings of legitimacy that concern a government's claim to being believed and supported, and from this society's acquiescence for the government to exercise authority over it (Weber, 1947). Influencing this belief and support, and thus decisions of legitimate and illegitimate, is society's determinations as to whether its values match the government's values (Lipset, 1959). For Palestinians, their values reflect an integration of this orthodox understanding of legitimacy with the legitimacy of resistance (Hroub, 2010b). Palestinians use this combination to judge the legitimacy of PA/Fatah and Hamas, with questions asked of both factions about how they are resisting Israeli occupation.

This conceptual framework opens the analytical space to investigate more comprehensively how the following series of critical junctures changes the meaning and intent of Palestinian resistance and how Hamas's response to these changes led it to conducting the 7 October attacks.

3. Hamas's Declaration of General Principles and Policies

The first critical juncture came in 2017 when Hamas published its DoP that superseded its much-maligned Charter (MEE, 2017). It is a product of the political environment that Hamas found itself in after a decade under siege, three wars, and with increasingly fractious relationships with Fatah and key regional actors. It was also published at a time of leadership change with Isma'il Haniyeh replacing Khaled Meshaal as Chairman of Hamas, and Yahyah Sinwar replacing Haniyeh as the Head of Hamas in Gaza.

The DoP provides Hamas with what Said (1984) claims is the "permission to narrate", that is to be able to articulate and promote its own narrative about the meaning and intent of its resistance. The DoP signifies a notable change in how Hamas presents itself as a resistance movement by codifying the multidimensionality of its resistance and acknowledging the legitimacy of both its violent and non-violent resistance actions.

As Meshaal (cited in Younes, 2017) explains,

“[The DoP] is intended to function as a guiding principle for Hamas to deal with new emerging realities in our Palestinian society, our conflict with Israel, and in the outside world. This document shows that we are a dynamic and adaptive organisation and that we are eager to change if it is in the interests of our people.”

The DoP moves away from the binary and closed ideological positions of the Charter, to positions that are, at times, ambiguous, particularly concerning the key issues of resistance, Palestine, and recognition of Israel, allowing for both external interpretations and internal justifications (Hroub, 2017). Thus, the DoP does not just outline a new vision of Hamas and its evolving interpretation of its role in Palestinian resistance, it provides the movement with a refashioned ideological foundation to change its political environment by challenging, negotiating, and undermining Fatah’s and Israel’s power.

Concerning resistance, the DoP advocates for an ambiguous mixture of opposition and dissidence resistance, noting that,

“Resisting the occupation with all means and methods is a legitimate right guaranteed by divine laws and by international norms and laws. At the heart of these lies armed resistance, which is regarded as a strategic choice for protecting the principles and the rights of the Palestinian people” (MEE, 2017: Art. 25).

However, the DoP also states that,

“managing resistance, in terms of escalation and de-escalation, or in terms of diversifying the means and methods, is an integral part of the process of managing the conflict but this should not be at the expense of the principle of resistance” (MEE, 2017: Art. 26).

The term “managing resistance” is instructive because it signals that Hamas is no longer welded to dissidence resistance. While its resistance principles stay constant, the ambiguity surrounding how its resistance manifests itself provides Hamas with increased operational and ideological flexibility that it can use to explain any lulls in its dissidence resistance thereby keeping its legitimacy amongst Palestinians (Legrain, 2021).

This ambiguity is displayed again when the DoP deals with perhaps the most contentious of issues – the two-state solution, declaring:

“Without compromising its rejection of the Zionist entity and without relinquishing any Palestinian rights, Hamas considers the establishment of a fully sovereign and independent Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as its capital along the lines of the 4th June, 1967, with the return of the refugees and the displaced to their homes from which they were expelled to be a formula of national consensus” (MEE, 2017: Art. 20).

While the principle of a Palestine “from the river to the sea” is never relinquished, Hamas appears willing to acknowledge the practicality of a Palestine consisting only of the OPT as a formula for national consensus (Adwan, 2017). Explaining Hamas’s position further, Meshaal states, “Even though we accept and welcome that eventuality [the two-state solution], this does not mean we would have to recognise Israel or surrender our principle that all of Palestine belongs to the Palestinian people” (Meshaal, cited in Younes, 2017). While Hamas had been advocating this position publicly since 2007, its willingness to acquiesce to a political pathway to the liberation of a truncated Palestine became a defining feature of its refashioned ideological narrative.

From a purely oppositional perspective the DoP also outlines Hamas’s domestic political positions via its promotion of key democratic norms such as free and fair elections, political pluralism, acceptance of the other,

and adopting dialogue to resolve disputes (MEE, 2017: Art. 27 – 34). The re-assertion of these norms is about Hamas resisting the increasingly authoritarian nature of Fatah's rule of the OPT via its control of the PA. It also about challenging Fatah's hegemony of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) that is recognised internationally as the sole legitimate representative of Palestinians. A more democratic PA and politically pluralistic PLO would mean Fatah relinquishing control of these key institutions allowing other resistance factions, like Hamas, to gain a legitimate political voice in how Palestinian resistance manifests itself and the political decisions affecting the OPT. By doing so, Hamas aimed to, "bolster the unity of ranks and joint action for the purpose of accomplishing national goals" (MEE, 2017: Art. 28).

Overall, the DoP reframes the *raison d'être* of Hamas's resistance. It provides Hamas with a more multidimensional and nuanced ideological framework to match an increasingly complex and evolving political environment and by doing so positions Hamas as the natural party of Palestinian resistance (Legrain, 2021). The DoP's occasional ambiguity also opens potential alternate resistance pathways, especially concerning the two-state solution and its management of resistance to Israeli occupation.

4. The "Great March of Return" Protests

The second critical juncture occurred with the 2018/2019 Great March of Return (GMR) protests. The genesis of these protests was two significant anniversaries in Palestinian history. 2017 marked fifty years of Israeli occupation of the OPT and the tenth anniversary of Gaza's siege, while 2018 marked the seventieth anniversary of *al naqbah*. These anniversaries led Palestinians to openly question the function of Palestinian resistance and why they had not achieved statehood.

While Hamas was not responsible for organising the protests they were within the remit of what it forecast in its DoP of wanting to manage resistance. As Sinwar explained, "It is true that the form of resistance changes from time to time in keeping with subjective and objective circumstances. This method is appropriate for this stage, but circumstances might change, and we might have to return to armed struggle" (MEMRI, 2018).

In early 2018 the Higher National Committee for the March of Return and Breaking the Siege was formed, consisting primarily of members of Gazan civil society, alongside members of Hamas, Fatah, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Importantly, it was the Committee who directed the protests, deciding that they should be non-violent and occur all along the Separation Fence (HRC, 2019). The protests' principal goal was to "expose and confront Israel's occupation and draw world attention to the plight of Gazans" (Thrall, 2018).

Viewing resistance relationally provides the GMR with meaning and intent outside of them being simply commemorations/protests. They are examples of Palestinians demanding their "permission to narrate" (Said, 1984) by collectively expressing their subaltern resistance to Israeli occupation by exposing the myriad ways the occupation and siege deprive them of their fundamental human rights and breach international humanitarian law.

The protests began on 30 March, known by Palestinians as "Land Day", which commemorates events in 1976 when Israeli police killed and wounded Palestinians protesting the expropriation of Palestinian land (Abusalim, 2018). According to the UN, tens of thousands of Gazans from various social and political groups regularly attended the protests, throwing stones, burning tyres, waving Palestinian flags, and later launching incendiary kites into Israel (HRC, 2019). As one marcher stated, "...we stood against all the powers telling us to break and die in silence and decided to march for life. It is a protest of a people who want nothing more than to live in dignity" (Abu Aretema, 2018).

The protests became expressions of Palestinian nationalism with the Committee organising poetry readings, seminars, lectures, and cultural and sporting events to coincide with them (HRC, 2019). The protest arena also extended online, with Majeed and Abushbak (2024) showing how hashtag activism during the protests

facilitated nationalist discourses among Palestinians, giving a fragmented polity the opportunity to act and to be seen collectively.

Despite the UN (HRC, 2019) declaring the protests civilian in nature, they unmasked the meaning and intent of Israel's power – to crush these expressions of Palestinian nationalism and defiance. Israel quickly framed the protests as illegitimate by linking them to Hamas, declaring in advance that its military would violently disperse any protesters (B'tselem, 2021). Exemplifying Israel's position, Defence Minister Liberman stated, "there are no innocent people in Gaza. Everyone has a connection to Hamas. Those who try and challenge us belong to Hamas's military wing" (Lazaroff, 2018). PM Netanyahu went further claiming, "They're organizing a violent assault into Israel with the view of destroying us, which they openly proclaim in order to break the fence and kidnap and murder Israelis" (Netanyahu 2015, cited in B'tselem, 2021).

A B'tselem (2021) investigation revealed that Israel's military implemented an open-fire policy towards protesters claiming that they represented a clear and present danger to Israel. A UN Report stated that in 18 months the Israeli military killed 326 Palestinians and wounded 35,962 (UNOCHA, 2019). These figures illustrate Israel's power through its ability to maim, and inflict lasting harm – not just to the individual, but to their families, and by extension to Hamas and its resistance (Jones, 2021). Throughout the protests, Israel denied Palestinians "permission to narrate", by replacing the Palestinian narrative that challenged the *status quo* of Israel's occupation/siege with an Israeli narrative that delegitimated this challenge by propagating the narrative that Hamas, and by extension Palestinians, are terrorists and their "violence" constitutes a threat to the Israeli state.

Despite their intent, polling conducted in June 2018 reveals a sobering assessment of their usefulness, with 73.9% of Palestinians believing that they achieved little or none of their stated goals (PCPSR Poll No. 68). Abusalim (2018) argues that the reasons for this were firstly the unwillingness of western media to portray the protests as anything more than Palestinians rioting, and secondly the failure of the international community to hold Israel accountable for persistent breaches of international law concerning the deliberate targeting of civilians.

As with the DoP, the protests are examples of the path dependence of Hamas's resistance, this time with a narrowing of viable options through which it and Palestinians can express their resistance. Despite the civilian nature of the protests, Israel treated any expression of Palestinian defiance as dissidence resistance and responded accordingly. The failure of the protests to force any change either to the siege or to the opinions of key international actors led to a general disillusionment amongst Palestinians about the current *status quo* and the concomitant need for systemic change. As one Palestinian explained,

"On a political level this is an end of a phase. The program unveiled by the PLO in 1974, which eventually led us to Oslo, is gone. And with it the two-state solution. What will come after it nobody knows. But that moment has ended" (Issa, 2018: 53).

This feeling of disillusionment is supported by polling conducted during the protests with an average of 59.4% of Palestinians believing that the two-state solution was no longer viable, and by extension considered the MEPP useless for achieving statehood. Importantly, when asked the best way to end Israeli occupation an average of 39.3% favoured armed action, 32.5% favoured negotiations, with 21.6% supporting non-violent resistance (PCPSR Polls No. 68 – 74). The international response to the protests, alongside the expression of Israel's power, emphasised to Hamas which pathway was more likely to engender change in the OPT's *status quo* and by doing so advance demands for statehood.

5. The PA's Legitimacy Crisis

The third critical juncture is occasioned by the mounting resistance legitimacy crisis facing Fatah and the PA, with questions raised about what the institution is for and how it advances Palestinian demands for statehood, especially in the wake of the GMR protests. While analyses of the PA's failings are numerous (Leech, 2016; Pace and Sen, 2019), they concentrate mainly on examining the causes of the PA/Fatah's governance and state-building failures. Considering the contest for legitimacy provides a deeper understanding of some of the forces that positioned Hamas on the path to the October 2023 attacks and the advantages Hamas has over Fatah from its multidimensional resistance narrative.

As mentioned previously, one of Hamas's core goals is to challenge Fatah's hegemony of Palestinian resistance. Fatah hold this hegemony by dominating the two key Palestinian political/social institutions: the PA and the PLO. Domestically, this domination has resulted in Fatah becoming synonymous with the PA and *vice versa* to a point whereby Fatah has lost its ability to survive outside of the power it exercises through the PA (Brown and Hamzawy, 2010). The problem here is that Hamas's resistance exposes how unwilling Fatah is to resist Israel's occupation outside of the constraints and compromises endemic to the MEPP.

The creation of the PA in 1994 as part of the Oslo Accords represented the first institutional basis for self-authority in the Occupied Territories, meaning that many Palestinians envisaged its primary function to be state building (Sen, 2015; ECF, 1993; ECF, 1995). This signalled a transition of Palestinian resistance from the PLO's dissidence mode to the PA's opposition mode. Consequently, the legitimacy Palestinians gave the PLO was largely transferred to the PA, with the caveat that it would be held simultaneously accountable for the OPT's quality of governance and for promoting Palestinian statehood aspirations (Hroub, 2010b). However, there is a disconnect between the political narrative promoting the Accords and the reality of the Accords themselves. While the Accords recognise the existence of the Palestinian nation and afforded them certain rights, the political institutions established by the Accords, like the PA, were never intended to be the precursors of a sovereign Palestine (Pace and Sen, 2019).

The Accords gave the PA responsibility for administering Palestinians alongside the power to raise taxes and elect representatives. However, any policy areas that may provide the PA with the "international legal personality" necessary for statehood remained firmly under Israeli control. Additionally, the contentious issues of East Jerusalem, Israeli settlements, the border between Israel and Palestine, the right of return, water, and security arrangements – were classified as "Final Status" issues that would be negotiated after five years (ECF, 1993: Art. V). Additionally, the institutional remit of the PA only extends to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with Israel deliberately preventing the PA from having any institutional presence in East Jerusalem. Further negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis under the auspices of the MEPP made the PA administratively subservient to Israel's occupation regime, while also being held responsible for safeguarding Israel's security through extensive security cooperation (Baconi, 2018). Paradoxically, the more Israel constrained the Palestinians' right to self-governance and independence, the more Palestinians demanded that Fatah, through the PA, defend those rights.

Hamas's decision to contest the 2006 elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) was in response to this situation and its desire to play a more prominent role in Palestinian politics and by doing so broaden the avenues through which it could legitimately resist Israel's occupation and challenge Fatah's hegemony. First, it wanted to gain a political voice in the decision-making processes on how the OPT was administered to redress the corruption, clientelism, nepotism, and bureaucratic malfeasance affecting the PA. Second, Hamas wanted to reconfigure Palestinian resistance by contesting Fatah's institutional vision of the PA that yielded to the MEPP's *status quo* and implement its vision that would have the PA challenge Israeli occupation by focusing on institutional capacity building as a precursor to statehood (Rabbani, 2008).

Despite Hamas's commitment to an opposition mode of resistance, when it won the 2006 election, the US, Israel, and Fatah hardliners refused to accept the result, understanding that Hamas's legitimacy capital was now a potent combination of electoral and resistance legitimacy (Hroub, 2010b). Instead, they tried to strangle Hamas economically, aiming to prevent it from using this capital to change the OPT's *status quo*. The election result meant that the OPT's political environment changed irrevocably with Hamas a permanent, though contested, presence in Palestinian politics.

Israel responded by declaring the Gaza Strip a hostile entity. It halted all traffic between Gaza and Israel, barred all exports from Gaza, and stopped Gazan labourers from entering Israel for work. It also stopped transferring tax revenues and fees it collected on behalf of the PA to the PLC (ICG, 2008). Mahmoud Abbas, who is PA President, and Chairman of Fatah and the PLO, responded by transferring control of key Palestinian financial institutions like the Palestinian Investment Fund (PIF), which held approximately US\$1 billion, from the PLC to the Presidency (WikiLeaks, 2006). The US responded by surreptitiously funding Fatah affiliated militias to ferment a security crisis in Gaza that further inhibited Hamas's ability to generate support and belief in its government (Rose, 2008).

When civil war between Fatah and Hamas appeared likely, Saudi Arabia convened a meeting between the factions in February 2007 that culminated in the signing of the Mecca Agreement and the establishment of a coalition government headed by Hamas (ECF, 2007). Nevertheless, the levels of mistrust between Hamas and Fatah hardliners remained acute, exacerbated by intensive spoiling by Israel and the US who remained steadfastly opposed to Hamas legitimately participating in Palestinian politics. In June 2007 Hamas, fearing a coup, launched a pre-emptive attack against Fatah and after ten days of fighting assumed control of the Gaza Strip (Baconi, 2018).

While Palestinians are equally critical of both Hamas and Fatah for the political and social bifurcation, the one advantage Hamas has is its continued commitment to dissidence resistance. Since 2007 Hamas has fought five wars with Israel: 2008, 2012, 2014, 2021, and 2023. After each of these conflicts polling continually shows that despite Gaza's repeated destruction, Hamas's popularity surges (PCPSR Polls No. 63 – 89). For example, after the 2014 war, despite 67.2% of respondents declaring that conditions in Gaza were bad/very bad, Haniyeh held a commanding 60.5% to 32.1% lead over Abbas as preferred President. Additionally, Hamas's political party, Change and Reform (CR), received a fillip in support rising from 32.1% in June 2014, to 45.8% in August. Pointedly, 52.9% of respondents believed that armed action was the most effective way of achieving statehood, with 85.9% supporting the continued launching of rockets into Israel (PCPSR Polls No. 52, Special and 53).

Polling also reveals that the positions supported by many Palestinians reflect Hamas's argument that the OPT's current *status quo* needs to change to challenge Israel's occupation more directly. For example, in a poll taken just after the GMR protests, when asked what the PA's top priority should be 27.6% of respondents nominated combatting Israeli occupation and settlements, 26% nominated the spread of poverty and unemployment, and 25.6% the spread of corruption. Concerning the two-state solution 60.5% of respondents believed that it was no longer viable, with the majority continuing to judge armed action to be the most effective means for achieving statehood (PCPSR Poll No. 74).

The problem for Fatah was that it had no mechanism to mitigate this disenchantment and to project a sense of institutional and policy reinvigoration concerning its messaging on Palestinian resistance. When the PA tried to reform its much-maligned security forces, Palestinians viewed these reforms with cynicism judging that they were less about restoring law and order through institutional capacity building, and more about criminalising legitimate resistance to Israeli occupation in the West Bank (Tartir, 2019).

This cynicism was exacerbated by decisions taken under the rubric of the MEPP. Firstly, in 2020 the Trump Administration published its "Deal of the Century" intended to resolve the Palestinian/Israeli conflict (White

House, 2020). The proposed “removal of Jerusalem from the table”, coupled with US recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, confirmed to Palestinians that the US was not a good faith actor and that the MEPP was not a process intended to realise a Palestinian state. Secondly, “normalisation” talks began between the US, Israel, and key Arab states known as the Abraham Accords (U.S. State Dept, 2020). The Accords were a significant departure from the regional diplomatic *status quo* as per the Arab Peace Initiative (ECF, 2002) in which any normalisation depended on Israel withdrawing to the 1967 ceasefire lines and accepting a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Accords caused consternation in the OPT with 80% of Palestinians describing them as treasonous, insulting, and an abandonment of the Palestinian cause (PCPSR Poll No. 77).

By the time of the 2021 war, Palestinians’ opinion of the PA remained poor with 84.1% of respondents believing that there was corruption in PA-controlled institutions. Additionally, 65.4% of respondents were dissatisfied with Abbas’s performance, with 68.2% believing he should resign. Finally, 55.4% of respondents believed that the two-state solution was no longer viable, with the majority still favouring armed action to achieve a Palestinian state (PCPSR Poll No. 79). From Hamas’s perspective, Fatah’s trajectory was a cautionary tale proving that the existing *status quo* for achieving a state via the MEPP was untenable, especially with the US and key Arab states seemingly abandoning the Palestinian cause in favour of Israel. With opposition resistance pathways via the MEPP becoming increasingly impracticable it was also clear to Hamas that a more dissidence mode of resistance would be needed to generate change.

6. The 2021 Hamas/Israel War

These legitimacy problems were exacerbated by developments in Israel that created a more contentious strategic environment for Palestinian demands for statehood and represent the next critical juncture leading to the October 2023 attacks. Post-2015, Israeli politics became increasingly capricious with consecutive elections not providing sufficient majorities to any party, making coalitions unstable. Shapira and Rahat (2021) argue that Israeli voters are no longer identifying with specific political parties, but with left-wing/right-wing political blocks. Left-wing voters tend to back limited territorial compromises with Palestinians, while right-wing voters champion an Israel “from the river to the sea”. With the right-wing block in the ascendancy, post-2015 elections saw ultra-nationalist parties, such as The Jewish Home, Shas, Yisrael Beiteinu (Israel Our Home), and Otzma Yehudit (Jewish Power) join governing coalitions for the first time. This ultra-nationalist fervour made Palestinians fear that Israel intended to permanently extinguish Palestinian statehood aspirations (Kretzmer, 2023). In turn, this made Hamas’s resistance more necessary.

This fervour also caused the ideological rhetoric between Israelis and Palestinians to become increasingly focused on the fate of Jerusalem. All Israeli ultra-nationalist parties oppose any Palestinian state, believe in the indivisibility of Jerusalem, and want complete Israeli sovereignty over the Occupied Territories. For the nationalists, sovereignty of Jerusalem is the embodiment of the Zionist ambition of creating the Jewish state of Israel (Aronson, 1990). Likewise, Palestinians consider East Jerusalem, with its vital religious, cultural, political, administrative, and economic position, to be an indispensable part of any future Palestine. This makes Jerusalem a unifying symbol for both nations with defending the Palestinian presence in East Jerusalem becoming a clarion call for Palestinian resistance, making this a key factor in how Palestinians judge the legitimacy of Hamas and Fatah.

Treating resistance relationally provides the subsequent actions of Palestinians and Hamas with meaning and intent outside of the simple use of violence. Concomitantly, this resistance reveals the meaning and intent of Israeli power that is intended to crush any expression of Palestinian nationalism by denying them “permission to narrate”. The events in Jerusalem that precipitated the 2021 war saw Hamas again take the opportunity to enhance its legitimacy by demonstrating its dissidence resistance to Israeli power. The significance of these

actions is amplified by the fact that Ramadan, increasingly a demonstration of Palestinian *samud* (steadfast perseverance), coincided with Jerusalem Day, an increasingly nationalist celebration of the 1967 reunification of Jerusalem.

At the beginning of Ramadan, Palestinians youths started protesting after Israeli police prevented Palestinians from congregating around Damascus Gate, which is a centre for cultural and civic gatherings and a social hub for Palestinians in East Jerusalem. Then the Israeli Supreme Court issued a statement confirming its intention to authorise the eviction of Palestinian families from their homes in the East Jerusalem suburb of Shaykh Jarrah. According to the UN's Special Rapporteur, Michael Lynk, the evictions were part of Israel's plan to segregate and fragment East Jerusalem from the West Bank (OHCHR, 2021). When Palestinians again protested, ultra-nationalists, accompanied by Otzma Yehudit leader, Itamir Ben-Gvir, tried to break them up. In the ensuing violence, Israeli police fired sponge bullets, stun grenades, and skunk water to protect the ultra-nationalists (ICG, 2021).

Finally, on *laylat al-qadr*, the holiest night of Ramadan, Israeli police prevented thousands of Palestinians from praying at al-Aqsa mosque. In the resulting mayhem more than 600 Palestinians were injured. Violence at Islam's third holiest shrine brought thousands of people onto the streets with protesters repeatedly calling upon Hamas to intervene. Hamas responded with an ultimatum demanding Israel evacuate the al-Aqsa compound and Shaykh Jarrah. When Israel ignored this, Hamas launched barrages of rockets into Israel (Khalidi and Seikaly, 2021).

This resulting war proved a major turning point for Hamas and its role in Palestinian resistance because it exposed both the intent of Israel's power and Fatah's powerlessness. The war positioned Hamas at the forefront of Palestinian resistance as the "defender of Jerusalem", and thus of Palestine, something that significantly increased its legitimacy and the potency of its narrative about the need for change. Highlighting the importance of Jerusalem, Sinwar declared, "I'd like to use this opportunity to warn the Zionist occupation and its leaders: The al-Aqsa mosque and Jerusalem is where we draw the line. If you want to survive for a while, stay away from the al-Aqsa mosque and Jerusalem" (MEMRI, 2021).

Polling conducted after the war reveals how Hamas had again transmuted its dissidence resistance into increased political support. Support for CR improved from 30.1% in March to 41.3% in June, with support for Haniyeh also increasing from 45.8% to 59.1%. Meanwhile support for Abbas plunged from 47.1% to 27.2% in the same period. In the June poll, 55.7% of respondents believed that the PA was a burden, while 61.2% believed that the two-state solution is no longer viable. Additionally, 60.3% of respondents wanted a return to an armed intifada, up from 43.2% in March. Asked specifically about the war, 74.9% rated Hamas's performance as excellent versus 13.1% for Fatah. Asked why Hamas became involved, 71.7% responded that it was to defend Jerusalem and al-Aqsa mosque. Pointedly, when asked who was most deserving to represent Palestinians, 52.7% of respondents indicated Hamas, with 14.3% nominating Fatah (PCPSR Polls No. 79 and 80).

The war again showed how important dissidence resistance is to Palestinian legitimacy. Fatah's experience provided Hamas with another cautionary tale that highlights the benefits of engaging in dissidence resistance versus the costs of not doing so. Polling reveals a clear trend in public opinion whereby Palestinian values concerning the meaning and intent of resistance more closely match Hamas's multidimensional resistance narrative. Simultaneously, Palestinians were faced with a seemingly impotent PA unable/unwilling to advance the cause of Palestinian statehood in the face of an increasingly normalised Israeli occupation. As a former PA advisor opined, "[The PA] is weak, divided, and slowly moving outside of international consensus. There is an increasing sense that this is the worst moment for the Palestinian national movement since 1948" (Berman, 2021).

7. The 2023 Gaza War

When viewed collectively, these critical junctures shaped the intent of Hamas's resistance and set it on the road to the October 7 attacks by narrowing the number of viable alternate paths it could legitimately express its resistance to Israeli occupation becoming normalised; a situation that would see the extinguishment of Palestinian statehood aspirations. The attacks were as Fraihat and Hedaya (2024: 83) note "the foreseeable outcome or the next step in [a] series of escalations". These junctures also highlight the prominence that dissidence resistance now plays in determining how Palestinians judge the legitimacy of Hamas and Fatah. With the prospects of a state chimerical, and with little chance of external assistance, Hamas reasoned that it needed to radically change the political narrative concerning restitution of the Palestinian Question, conducting what amounts to a cost/benefit analysis: what are the costs of attacking Israel, both to the movement and to any future Palestinian state versus the costs of not?

While these junctures placed Hamas on the path to October 7, there were added factors that affirmed Hamas's rationale for needing to radically change the OPT's *status quo*. In November 2022, another indecisive Israeli election resulted in a coalition government again containing religious and ultra-nationalist parties. After the government was sworn in the UN and Human Rights Watch (HRW) both observed an immediate increase in killings, settler violence, and administrative detentions, with the UN recording 192 Palestinians killed by the IDF/Police between January and October 2023 – the most since 2005 (Shakir, 2023). The UN also reported that settler attacks against Palestinians were at their highest since records began in 2006, with an average of three attacks occurring daily, causing another 20 Palestinian deaths in the same period (UNOCHA).

Concurrently, Israel announced the construction of 24,300 new units in existing Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including 9,670 units in East Jerusalem, the highest recorded since 2017. A UN Report concluded that the new government's policies aligned with those of the settler movement (OHCHR, 2024). Statements by senior government ministers heightened tensions further with Ben-Gvir, now Israel's National Security Minister, stating, "We have to settle the land of Israel and at the same time to launch a military campaign, blow up buildings, assassinate terrorists. Not one or two, but dozens, hundreds, or if needed thousands" (ToI, 2023).

The upsurge in settler violence so concerned Israeli security agencies that on 25 June the chiefs of the IDF, Shin Bet, and Israeli Police issued a rare joint public statement denouncing the attacks, claiming that "they constitute, in every way, nationalist terror" (Kogosowski, 2023). Additionally, the UNHRC warned that "violations are being committed by Israeli authorities as part of the Israeli government's goal of consolidating its permanent occupation" (OHCHR, 2023).

September 2023 polling provides a snapshot of public opinion in the leadup to the attacks and the opinion that the Occupied Territories' *status quo* was untenable. When asked about the most pressing problem confronting Palestinians the majority nominated Israel's occupation. When asked about the Oslo Accords, 63% of respondents supported their abandonment, 68% believed that they harmed Palestinians interests, and 71% believed that the two-state solution was no longer viable. Pointedly, 53% of Palestinians thought that armed action was the best way of achieving independence (PCPSR Poll No. 89).

This was the environment in the OPT confronting Hamas and the other resistance factions when they launched the 7 October attacks, pointedly called Operation al-Aqsa Flood. The attacks are prime examples of dissidence resistance unmasking the power asymmetry between Palestinians and Israel. The scale and audacity of the 7 October attacks is matched by the disproportionate Israeli response. There are reciprocal messages between Hamas and Israel about Hamas's determination to resist the permanence of Israel's occupation and Israel's determination to combat this resistance. Ayyash describes this as a "violent dialogue", whereby both are speaking to each other with violence (Ayyash, 2010). While Ayyash was specifically analysing Hamas's suicide attacks, the 7 October attacks are in a similar category because of Hamas's determination to expose the

asymmetrical power relations between Palestinians and Israel by enticing Israel to “play”. Hamas wanted to create a horrific spectacle that would force Israel to make the meaning and intent of its power visible – not just *vis-à-vis* Israel’s response to the attacks themselves, but the meaning and intent of its occupation/siege. The scale and audacity of the attacks meant that Israel could only respond in one way – the disproportionate use of violence against Palestinians (Ayyash, 2010).

After the attacks Hamas published two documents that outline their reasoning for the attacks (HAMAS, 2023; HAMAS, 2024). Both documents highlight the centrality of Hamas’s actions to the exigencies and permanence of Israeli occupation and to the failures of the international community to support any Palestinian demand for statehood. According to Hamas, Palestinians are faced with the dilemma of whether to keep waiting for the international community to intervene or whether Hamas should “take the initiative in defending the Palestinian people, lands, rights, and sanctities” (HAMAS, 2024: 6). According to senior Hamas official Khalil al-Hayya, the attacks were an effort to “change the entire equation and not just have a clash. We succeeded in putting the Palestinian issue back on the table” (Hubbard and Abi-Habib, 2023).

The costs to Hamas and Palestinians in the OPT have been horrendous with Reuters reporting over 67000 Palestinians killed in Gaza as of October 2025 (Al-Mughrabi and Farge, 2025). Nevertheless, the attacks appear to have achieved the broader goals about the Palestinian Question. Exposing the intent of Israel’s power to erase the Palestinians past, present, and future in the OPT has indeed brought restitution of the Palestinian Question to the forefront of international consciousness with France, the UK, Canada, and Australia finally willing to recognise Palestine (Fraihat and Hedaya 2024). Whether this will result in a Palestinian state is another question.

8. Conclusion

Why did Hamas attack Israel on 7 October 2023? This article shows how a series of critical junctures progressively narrowed the range of viable alternate paths through which Hamas and the Palestinians could resist the normalisation and permanence of Israel’s occupation. Palestinians increasingly feared that this sounded the death knell for a Palestinian state. Faced with such a parlous situation Hamas chose to conduct the al-Aqsa Flood attacks to “irrevocably shatter the *status quo*” (Rabbani, cited in Fraihat and Hedaya 2024, 83).

From a conceptual perspective, using the critical terrorism and resistance literatures as a framework opens the analytical space around these junctures to fashion this alternate explanatory path by providing historical, political, and social context to these terrorist attacks. This makes Hamas’s use of violence on 7 October instrumental in that it has a specific goal(s) – to change the *status quo* of the Palestinian Question and by doing so defend the ideal of a Palestinian state. This explanation calls into question the utility of arguments/assumptions proffered by more orthodox literature on terrorist attacks that rely on Weberian and Hobbesian norms to characterise non-state actor violence as solely about threatening the power and security of the state.

To focus exclusively on the horrific violence of 7 October obscures the complex, and increasingly asymmetric, political, military, and societal relationships between Palestinians and Israelis. Because resistance is a multidimensional and relational concept, not only does this analysis reveal the meaning and intent of Hamas’s resistance, it also reveals the meaning and intent of Israel’s power. As the intent of this power changed so too did the intent of Hamas’s resistance that became about challenging, negotiating, and undermining this *status quo*. By analysing both Hamas’s resistance and Israel’s power in relation to each other, and without declaring the legitimacy of either, gives Hamas “permission to narrate”, furnishing its resistance with agency and allowing for a conceptually richer and deeper understanding of the complex interplay between the causal conditions and mechanisms that contributed to the attacks of 7 October.

This analysis also emphasises the leading role that resistance legitimacy plays in supporting/discouraging various resistance pathways. As opposition inspired pathways to statehood were closed or became untenable, so Palestinians supported more dissidence pathways to generate the necessary changes to the OPT's *status quo*. This causal explanation calls into question the utility of the legitimacy/illegitimacy dichotomy on non-state actor violence present in the orthodox literature by contextualising Hamas's use of terrorism and finding it as a tactic of political violence intended to precipitate change in the OPT's *status quo*. These critical junctures reveal the increasing legitimacy pressures on Hamas creating a plausible causal story for the path its resistance took between 2017 – 2023; a path that led to the October 7 attacks.

References

- Abu Artema A. (2018), "With the Great Return March, Palestinians Are Demanding a Life of Dignity", April 6, *The Nation*, available at: <https://www.thenation.com/article/world/with-the-great-return-march-palestinians-are-demanding-a-life-of-dignity/>.
- Abusalim J. (2018), "The Great March of Return: An Organizer's Perspective", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 47(4): 90 – 100.
- Adwan I. (2019), "Hamas Charter: Changes and Principles", *Politics and Religion*, 13(1): 15 – 37.
- Ahmed S. (2020), *The "War on Terror": State Crime & Radicalization: A Constitutive Theory of Radicalization*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ahmed S. (2025), "The Middle East: Terrorism, International Law, and the Cosmopolitan Myth", *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 18(2): 400 – 423.
- Al-Mughrabi N. and Farge E., (2025), "Explainer: How many Palestinians has Israel's Gaza offensive killed?", 8 October, *Reuters*, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/how-many-palestinians-has-israels-gaza-offensive-killed-2025-10-07/>.
- Arendt H. (1970), *On Violence*, London: The Penguin Press.
- Aronson G. (1990), *Israel, Palestinians and the Intifada: Creating Facts on the West Bank*, London: Kegan Paul International Ltd.
- Asal V., Phillips B. J., and Rethemeyer R. K. (2022), *Insurgent Terrorism: Intergroup Relationships and the Killing of Civilians*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ayyash M. (2010), "Hamas and the Israeli State: A 'Violent Dialogue'", *European Journal of International Relations*, 16(1): 103 – 123.
- Baaz M., Lilja, M., Schulz M., and Vinthagen, S. (2016), "Defining and Analyzing "Resistance": Possible Entrances to the Study of Subversive Practices", *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 41(3): 137 – 153.
- Baconi T. (2018), *Hamas Contained: The Rise and Pacification of Palestinian Resistance*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bauhn P. (2024), "Just War, Human Shields, and the 2023-24 Gaza War", *Israel Affairs*, 30(5): 863 – 878.
- Bennett A., and Elman C. (2006), "Complex Causal Relations and Case Study Methods: The Example of Path Dependence", *Political Analysis*, 14(3): 250 – 267.
- Bennett A. and Checkel J. T. (2015), *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Berman L. (2021), "With Jerusalem focus, Hamas touches a nerve even friendly Arab states can't ignore", 11 May, *Times of Israel*, available at: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/with-jerusalem-focus-hamas-touches-nerve-even-friendly-arab-states-cant-ignore/>.
- Blatter J., Haverland M. (2014), "Case Studies and (Causal) Process Tracing", In I. Engeli and C. Rothmayr Allison (eds.), *Comparative Policy Studies: Conceptual and Methodological Challenges*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 59 – 83.
- Brown J. M. (2020), *Force of Words: The Logic of Terrorist Threat*, New York: Columbia University Press.

- Brown N. J. (2024), "Palestinians Without Palestine", 25 June, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, available at: <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/06/state-of-palestine-leadership-future?lang=en>.
- Brown N. J. and Hamzawy A. (2010), *Between Religion and Politics*, Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- B'tselem (2021), "Unwilling and Unable: Israel's Whitewashed Investigations of the Great March of Return Protests", December. Available at: https://www.btselem.org/sites/default/files/publications/202112_unwilling_and_unable_eng.pdf.
- Chandra U. (2015), "Rethinking Subaltern Resistance", *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 45(4): 563 – 573.
- Crenshaw M. (2001), "Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches", In D. Rapoport (ed.), *Inside Terrorist Organizations*, London: Routledge, pp. 13 – 31.
- Cronin A. K. (2024), "How Hamas Ends: A Strategy for Letting the Group Defeat Itself", *Foreign Affairs*, 103(4): 50 – 61.
- Daase C., Deitelhoff N. (2019), "Opposition and Dissidence: Two Modes of Resistance Against international Rule", *Journal of International Political Theory*, 15(1): 11 – 30.
- Davis R. (2016), *Hamas, Popular Support, and the War in the Middle East: Insurgency in the Holy Land*, New York: Routledge.
- Economic Cooperation Foundation (ECF) (1993), "Declaration of Principles (Oslo I)", 13 September, available at: https://ecf.org.il/media_items/612.
- ECF (1995), "Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement (Oslo II)", 28 September, available at: https://ecf.org.il/media_items/624.
- ECF (2002), "Arab Peace Initiative", 28 March, available at: https://ecf.org.il/media_items/572.
- ECF (2005), "Cairo Declaration", 17 March, available at: https://ecf.org.il/media_items/1202.
- ECF (2007), "Mecca Agreement", 8 February, available at: https://ecf.org.il/media_items/1199.
- Foucault M. (1982), "The Subject and Power", *Critical Inquiry*, 8(4): 777 – 795.
- Fraihat I., Hedaya M. (2024), "Understanding the October 7th Hamas Attack on Israel and the War on Gaza", in G. Elkahlout (ed.), *Gaza's Cycle of Destruction and Rebuilding*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 77 – 103.
- Gordon N. (2008), "From Colonisation to Separation: Exploring the Structure of Israel's Occupation", *Third World Quarterly*, 29(1): 25 – 44.
- Gunning J. (2007), "A Case for Critical Terrorism Studies?", *Government and Opposition*, 42(3): 363 – 393.
- Gunning J. (2009), *Hamas in Politics: Democracy, Religion, Violence*, London: C. Hurst & Co.
- HAMAS (2023), "Statement by Hamas's al-Qassam Brigades top military commander", 7 October, *Middle East Monitor*, available at: <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20231007-statement-by-hamass-al-qassam-brigades-top-military-commander/>.
- HAMAS (2024), "Our Narrative: Operation al-Aqsa Flood", 21 January, *Palestine Chronicle*, available at: <https://www.palestinechronicle.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/PDF.pdf>.
- Haraway D. (1988), "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective", *Feminist Studies*, 14(3): 575 – 599.
- Hobbes T. (2009), *Leviathan: The Matter, Forme, and Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiastical and Civil*, Auckland: The Floating Press.
- Hroub K. (2010a), *Hamas: A Beginner's Guide*, 2nd ed., London: Pluto Press.
- Hroub K. (2010b), "Hamas: Conflating National Liberation and Socio-Political Change", in K. Hroub (ed.), *Political Islam: Context Versus Ideology*, London: Middle East Institute (SOAS), pp. 161 – 181.
- Hroub K. (2017), "A Newer Hamas? The Revised Charter", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 46(4): 100 – 111.
- Hubbard B., Abi-Habib M. (2023), "Behind Hamas's Bloody Gambit to Create a 'Permanent' State of War", 9 November, *New York Times*, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/08/world/middleeast/hamas-israel-gaza-war.html>.

- Human Rights Council (HRC) (2019), "Report of the independent commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory", A/HRC/40/74, 25 February, available at: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoIOPT/A_HRC_40_74.pdf.
- International Crisis Group (ICG) (2008), "Ruling Palestine I: Gaza Under Hamas", 19 March, available at: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/sites/default/files/73-ruling-palestine-i-gaza-under-hamas.pdf>.
- ICG (2021), "The Israel-Palestine Crisis: Causes, Consequences, Portents", 14 May, available at: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/east-mediterranean-mena/israelpalestine/israel-palestine-crisis-causes>.
- Issa P. (2018), "Interview with Dr. Ghassan Abu Sitta", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 47(4): 46 – 56.
- Jackson R. (2007), "The Core Commitments of Critical Terrorism Studies", *European Political Science*, 6(3): 244 – 251.
- Jones C. (2023), "Gaza and the Great March of Return: Enduring Violence and Spaces of Wounding", *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 48: 249 – 262.
- Kear M. (2019), *Hamas and Palestine: The Contested Road to Statehood*, Oxon: Routledge.
- Khalidi R. I., Seikaly, S., (2021), "From the Editors", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 50(3): 1 – 4.
- Khan M. H. (2004), "Introduction: State Formation in Palestine", in M. H. Khan, G. Giacaman and I. Amundsen (eds.), *State Formation in Palestine: Viability and Governance During a Social Transformation*, Oxon: Routledge, pp. 1 – 12.
- Kogosowski M. (2023), "Israeli Defence Establishment Calls Settler Violence "National Terrorism", 25 June, *Israel Defence*, available at: <https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/58641>.
- Kretzmer D. (2023), "The 'Constitutional Reform' and the Occupation", *Israel Law Review*, 56(3): 397 – 414.
- Law J. (2008), "On Sociology and STS", *The Sociological Review*, 56(4): 623 – 649.
- Lazaroff T. (2018), "'There are no innocents in Gaza', says Israeli defence minister", 8 April, *The Jerusalem Post*, available at: <https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/there-are-no-innocents-in-gaza-says-israeli-defense-minister-549173>.
- Leech P. (2016), *The State of Palestine: A Critical Analysis*, Oxon: Routledge.
- Legrain J. "Hamas According to Hamas: A Reading of its Document of General Principles", in S. Abkarzadeh (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Political Islam*, 2nd ed., Oxon: Routledge, pp. 79 – 90.
- Levitt M. (2006), *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Lipset S. M. (1959), "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy", *The American Political Science Review*, 53(1): 69 – 105.
- Lupovici A. (2024), "Israeli Deterrence and the October 7 attack", 24 July, *The Institute of National Security Studies (INSS)*, available at: https://www.inss.org.il/strategic_assessment/deterrence/.
- Majeed T., Abushbak A.M. (2024), "Politics of Phygital Protests: #GreatMarchofReturn Discourse on Twitter", *Journal of Arab and Muslim Media Research*, 17(2): 95 – 214.
- Margolin D., and Levitt M. (2023), "The Road to October 7: Hamas' Long Game, Clarified", October/November, *Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, available at: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/pdf/view/18508/en>.
- Middle East Eye (MEE) (2017), "Hamas in 2017: The Document in Full", 2 May, available at: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/hamas-2017-document-full>.
- Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) (2018), "Hamas Leader in Gaza", 16 May, available at: <https://www.memri.org/tv/hamas-leader-yahya-sinwar-our-people-took-off-their-uniforms-and-joined-the-marces>.
- MEMRI (2021), "'Hamas Leader in Gaza Yahya Al-Sinwar salutes Al-Jazeera TV, Iran, and Yasser Arafat", 26 May, available at: <https://www.memri.org/tv/hamas-leader-gaza-yahya-sinwar-we-have-500-km-of-tunnels-in-gaza>.
- Mikael B., Lilja M., Schulz M., and Vinthahen, S. (2023), "The ABC of Resistance: Towards a New Analytical Framework", *Journal of Political Power*, 16(1): 59 – 80.
- Milton-Edwards B., Farrell S. (2024), *Hamas: The Quest for Power*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Mishal S., Sela A. (2006), *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence*. 2nd ed., New York: Columbia University Press.
- Mol A. (1999), “Ontological Politics: A Word and Some Questions”, *The Sociological Review*, 47(1): 74 – 89.
- Office of the High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR) (2021), “Israel/OPT: UN expert calls for reversal of Israel’s eviction order against 16 Palestinian families”, 11 January, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2021/01/israelopt-un-expert-calls-reversal-israels-eviction-order-against-16?LangID=E&NewsID=26648>.
- OHCHR (2023) “Statement by Navi Pillay, Chair of the Commission of Inquiry”, 20 June, available at: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/coiopt/statements/HRC-53-COIOPT_EJI_Statement.pdf.
- OHCHR (2024), “Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory”, 1 February, A/HRC/55/72, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/reports/ahrc5572-israeli-settlements-occupied-palestinian-territory-including-east>.
- Pace M., Sen S. (2019), *The Palestinian Authority in the West Bank: The Theatrics of Woeful Statecraft*, London: Routledge.
- Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR) “Index PSR Polls”, available at: <https://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/154>.
- Phillips, S., al-Dawsari N. (2024), “Trivializing Terrorists: How Counterterrorism Knowledge Undermines Local Resistance to Terrorism”, *Security Studies*, 33(1): 30 – 54.
- Rabbani M. (2008), “A Hamas Perspective on the Movement’s Evolving Role: An Interview With Khaled Mishal – Part II”, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 37(4): 59 – 81.
- Rose, D. (2008), “Gaza Bombshell”, 3 March, *Vanity Fair*, available at: <http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2008/04/gaza200804>.
- Said E. (1984), “Permission to Narrate”, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 13(3): 27 – 48.
- Sen S. (2015), “Bringing Back the Palestinian State: Hamas Between Government and Resistance”, *Middle East Critique*, 24(2): 211 – 225.
- Shakir O. (2023), “While a fire rages in Gaza, the West Bank smoulders”, 22 November, *Human Rights Watch*, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/11/22/while-fire-rages-gaza-west-bank-smolders>.
- Shapira A., Rahat G. (2021), “Electoral Behavior in Israel”, In R. Y. Hazan, et. al. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Israeli Politics and Society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 616 – 635.
- Tamimi A. (2009), *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters*, 2nd ed., London: C. Hurst & Co.
- Tartir A. (2019), “Criminalizing Resistance: Security Sector Reform and Palestinian Authoritarianism”, in A. Tartir and T. Seidel (eds.), *Palestine and Rule of Power: Local Dissent vs. International Governance*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 205 – 226.
- The PoReSo Research Group (2023), “Power, Resistance and Social Change”, *Journal of Political Power*, 16(2): 149 – 157.
- Thrall, N. (2018), “Gaza protests mark shift in Palestinian national consciousness”, 2 April, *International Crisis Group*, available at: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/israel-palestine/gaza-protests-mark-shift-palestinian-national-consciousness>.
- Tilly, C. (1985), “War Making and State Making as Organised Crime”, in P. B. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer, and T. Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the State Back In*, New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 169 – 191.
- Times of Israel (2023), “Visiting Evyatar, Ben-Gvir tells settlers to ‘head for the hilltops’, expand outposts”, 23 June, available at: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/visiting-evyatar-ben-gvir-tells-settlers-to-head-for-the-hilltops-expand-outposts/>.
- Toros H. (2012), *Terrorism, Talking, and Transformation: A Critical Approach*, Oxon: Routledge.
- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), (2019) “Humanitarian snapshot: Casualties in the context of demonstrations and hostilities in Gaza: 30 March 2018 – 31 October 2019”, 28 November, available at: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-snapshot-casualties-context-demonstrations-and-hostilities-gaza-30-mar-2018-3>.
- UNOCHA “Data on Casualties”, available at: <https://www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties>.

- U.S. State Department (2020), “The Abraham Accords”, available at: <https://www.state.gov/the-abraham-accords>.
- United Nations Security Council (UNSC) (1967), “Resolution 242”, 22 November, available at: [https://undocs.org/S/RES/242\(1967\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/242(1967)).
- Weber M. (1947), *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- White House (2020), “Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People”, January 2020, available at: <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Peace-to-Prosperity-0120.pdf>.
- WikiLeaks (2006), “Palestine Investment Fund Moved Under President Abbas; New Board of Directors Named”, 8 February, Canonical ID: 06JERUSALEM585_a, available at: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06JERUSALEM585_a.html.
- Younes A. (2017). “Meshaal: We want to restore our national rights.” *al Jazeera*, May 2, available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/05/meshaal-restore-national-rights-170502102152191.html>.

AUTHOR’S INFORMATION

Martin Kear is a critical theory scholar with a specific focus on non-state armed groups (NSAGs) and their complex and asymmetric violent and non-violent interactions with the state. He is the author of the book *Hamas and Palestine: The Contested Road to Statehood* (Oxon: Routledge, 2019) and has published several journal articles and chapters.