VIOLENCE, NONVIOLENCE, and the PALESTINIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

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National Movement

Why do some national movements use violent protest and others
nonviolent protest? Wendy Pearlman shows that much of the answer
lies inside movements themselves. Nonviolent protest requires coor-
dination and restraint, which only a cohesive movement can provide.
When, by contrast, a movement is fragmented, factional competition
generates new incentives for violence and authority structures are too
weak to constrain escalation. Pearlman reveals these patterns across
nearly one hundred years in the Palestinian national movement, with
comparisons to South Africa and Northern Ireland. To those who ask
why there is no Palestinian Gandhi, Pearlman demonstrates that non-
violence is not simply a matter of leadership. Nor is violence attrib-
utable only to religion, emotions, or stark instrumentality. Instead,
a movement's organizational structure mediates the strategies that it
employs. By taking readers on a journey from civil disobedience to
suicide bombings, this book offers fresh insight into the dynamics of
conflict and mobilization.

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To my parents

Preface

The inspiration for this research stemmed from my experiences living in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv for a total of more than three years between January 2000 and August 2008. I was already hooked on Middle East politics before that journey began, as I had lived in Morocco and studied Arabic for five years. Yet my first trip to Israel and the Palestinian territories captured my heart and mind in a new way. At the turn of the millennium I did a tour of Israel and then spent five months in the West Bank, where I studied at Birzeit University and worked at a local organization. The following summer I lived and worked in the Gaza Strip. During the years that followed, I returned every chance I got. When afar, I monitored day-to-day events with what became an unhealthy addiction to the news. People often asked me what my Jewish family thought about their daughter giving so much attention to the Palestinian situation. I would explain that my grand-mother's only regret was that I had been a more interesting person before I became an "all Israel–Palestine all the time" channel.

Three months into the second Intifada, I conducted interviews with about two dozen Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These were pub-lished in 2003 as the book *Occupied Voices: Stories of Everyday Life from the Second Intifada*. I undertook that project both to help myself understand the experiences of ordinary people enduring a terrible conflict and to bring their voices to a larger audience. As I gave book talks around the United States, however, I found that discussions repeatedly ended with the same query. Over and over, people said that they were moved by the personal stories but had trouble understanding why Palestinians carried out violence against Israelis. Even those who supported Palestinians' quest for statehood were perplexed. "Don't Palestinians see that suicide bombings only undermine sympathy for their cause?" people asked. "Why don't they use nonviolence instead? Where is the Palestinian Gandhi?"

The answers at my disposal fell short. I knew from my study of history that Palestinians *had* used nonviolent as well as violent protest, but I lacked a con-vincing explanation of why they had done so to different extents at different

times. My conversations in the West Bank and Gaza had shown me why many people believed that protest was necessary and justified. Yet this did not account for why protest took certain forms. By then I was a doctoral student in political science, so I turned to scholarly theories of rebellion and insurgency for answers. Influential studies attributed political violence to factors ranging from manipulative elites to religious fundamentalism to cold calculations of costs and benefits. Though these were often validated by cross-national statistical tests, they misrepresented or oversimplified what I had seen on the ground. Furthermore, they had more to say about how conflict escalates to bloodshed than about the circumstances under which it remains unarmed.

I made this question the topic of my dissertation. My motivation was to satisfy my own desire for understanding and to contribute to others' understanding as well. Knowing that any viable explanation of violent or nonviolent protest should account for ebbs and flows in both, I extended the scope of my research to cover the history of the Palestinian national movement. I studied Hebrew to increase my appreciation of the Israeli experience, as well as methodologies of quantitative and qualitative research to bring greater rigor to my analysis. I also returned to live in Israel and the Palestinian territories from June 2004 through August 2006 to carry out field and archival research.

I strove to bring diverse forms of evidence to bear upon my question. My analysis of Mandate Palestine drew on original material from the Israel State Archives, namely the collections of Chief Secretary's Office Papers, Palestine Government Arab Documents, and George Antonius Papers. I scrutinized the reports of the official commissions of inquiry into the disturbances of 1921, 1929, and 1936, the British high commissioner's monthly reports, periodic reviews, and telegrams, and the writings of district commissioners detailing events in the areas of Palestine under their purview. I also made use of memoirs of Palestinians and Arabs involved in nationalist activity at the time.

For later eras, I incorporated other materials. I consulted the wealth of primary documents collected and published by the Institute of Palestine Studies in English and Arabic. I used press reportage, some obtained from the press archive at Tel Aviv University's Moshe Dayan Center. I examined quantitative data from the statistics kept by B'Tselem (the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights), the ICT-Merari terrorist incidents database of the Institute for Counter-Terrorism at the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya, Israel, and a comprehensive database on violent events compiled by Mohammed Hafez of the Naval Postgraduate School. I also scrutinized more than a decade of public opinion polls conducted by three Palestinian research institutes: the Palestine Center for Survey Research, the Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre, and the former Center for Palestine Research and Studies. In addition, I relied upon more than three dozen human rights and investigatory reports authored by Israeli, Palestinian, and international organizations. I gained appreciation for the primary data contained in such on-the-ground documents when I helped translate them during my own internships in two Palestinian human rights groups, the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights in

Ramallah and the al-Mezan Center for Human Rights based in the Jabalya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip.

Finally, my twenty-six months in Israel and the Palestinian territories built on my previous experience and enabled me to continue to hone my understanding of both peoples by living among them. I observed interactions, developed lifelong relationships, absorbed daily media in two languages, and paid attention to the political talk that is the sound track of life on both sides of the Green Line. I had countless informal conversations with Israelis and Palestinians about the conflict and conducted forty-eight formal interviews, six of which were in the Gaza Strip (between July and August 2005), four in Israel (June–August 2006), and thirty-eight in the West Bank (June–August 2006, January 2007, August 2008). I carried out interviews in either Arabic or English, and tape-recorded, transcribed, and translated nearly all of them. In the interest of taking the strictest precautions to protect human subjects from any kind of harm or discomfort, I have not identified interviewees by name. I have, however, helped readers situate their comments by briefly indicating their occupation or affiliation, as well as the place and date of the interview.

I could not have carried out this project without the help of many people. My dissertation benefited immeasurably from my advisers, Jorge Domínguez, Devesh Kapur, Roger Owen, and Stephen Rosen. I thank each of them for challenging my project in a different way. Their combined abilities to pierce through my often murky ideas taught me not only how to think and write, but also how to teach. I learned no less from wonderful graduate school classmates. In them I have been fortunate to find a community of scholars and friends for the long haul.

I am indebted to several institutions that funded my research. My fieldwork was made possible by a United States Institute of Peace "Peace Fellows" Dissertation Fellowship and a grant from the Palestinian–American Research Center. A Harvard University–Hebrew University Graduate Fellowship and Foreign Language and Area Studies Award enabled me to study Hebrew and other topics for twelve months at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. A Starr Foundation Fellowship at the Center for Arabic Studies Abroad provided for twelve months of advanced Arabic training at the American University in Cairo. I was able to get a start on revising my dissertation as a postdoctoral fellow at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at the John F. Kennedy School of Government. There I learned tremendously from top-notch scholars of conflict, both experienced and up-and-coming. They gave me invaluable feedback on my work and inspired me through exposure to their own.

Now an assistant professor at Northwestern University, I am fortunate to have benefited from the tremendous generosity of the Crown family and its dedication to Middle East studies, as well as from Weinberg College's support for junior faculty. I could not imagine colleagues better than those whom I have found in the Department of Political Science. I thank them all. A vibrant working group of faculty studying the Middle East and North Africa has provided the icing on the cake of a terrific intellectual home.

Over the years, I have presented various pieces of this research at Northwestern, Harvard, the University of Chicago, and the Northeast Middle East Politics Workshop, among other conferences. I am appreciative of all who shared their time and thoughts with me in those forums. The deepest gratitude goes to those who read chapters or sometimes much more of the manuscript-in-preparation: Nathan Brown, Rex Brynen, William Gamson, Jeff Goodwin, Ylana Miller, Aldon Morris, Rosemary Sayigh, Yezid Sayigh, Charles Smith, Hendrik Spruyt, Salim Tamari, Mark Tessler, Mary Ann Weston, and the late Gil Friedman. I am indebted to their generous giving of expert knowledge and fantastic insight. I can only hope that my revisions do some justice to the acumen of their suggestions. I am also very grateful to those who offered counsel in navigating the path from dissertation to published book, especially Jamie Druckman, Dennis Chong, Devesh Kapur, Dan Galvin, Ben Page, Jim Mahoney, Monika Nalepa, Jillian Schwedler, and Victor Shih.

Innumerable people assisted my field research in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Israel. Their kindness continually humbled me, and I regret terribly that I cannot honor them all by name. I am especially grateful to Aboud and Rodaina Abdullah and family, Bradley Brigham and Ghaith Omari, Ali Jarbawi, the Jarrar family, Laura Junka, Lucy Mair, the Muna family, Charmaine Seitz, Jamila and Yasaar Shrafi and family, Ghada Snounu and family, Issam Younnis, and my incredible neighbors in the old city of Jerusalem. I lack the words to express my particular debts to Iman Ashur, Jehan Jarrar, Suzanne Jarrar, and Alberto Spektorowski.

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My father, Michael Pearlman, has showed an unparalleled knack for lifting my spirits, often by reminding me not to take myself too seriously. My mother, Lois Pearlman, passed before I began postgraduate studies. Yet her example of compassion, creativity, and courage lit my every step and always will. It is to them that I dedicate this book.

Acronyms

AE	Arab Executive
AHC	Arab Higher Committee
ALF	Arab Liberation Front
AMB	al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade
ANC	African National Congress
ANM	Arab Nationalist Movement
AOLP	Action Organization for the Liberation of Palestine
BSO	Black September Organization
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
DFLP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (formerly PDFLP)
EC	Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization
IRA	Irish Republican Army
LNM	Lebanese National Movement
MCA	Muslim–Christian Association
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation)
NGC	National Guidance Committee
NICRA	Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association
NIFHC	National and Islamic Forces Higher Committee
PA	Palestinian Authority
PAC	Pan-Africanist Congress
PDFLP	Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (later DFLP)
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PFLP-GC	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command
PLA	Palestine Liberation Army
PLC	Palestinian Legislative Council
PLF	Palestinian Liberation Front
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PNC	Palestinian National Council

PNF	Palestinian National Front
PPSF	Palestinian Popular Struggle Front
PRCs	Popular Resistance Committees
SDLP	Social Democratic and Labour Party
SMC	Supreme Muslim Council
UDF	United Democratic Front
UNLU	United National Leadership of the Uprising
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Contents

The Organizational Mediation Theory of Protest

April 1936: Palestine erupts in revolt. For years, the indigenous Arabs of Palestine have engaged in pressure politics. Their goal is to convince Great Britain to abandon its support for the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. After a decade of such protest fails to bear fruit, however, Palestinian Arabs launch a rebellion. The "Great Revolt" begins with broad-based participation in unarmed activities such as a general strike, popular demonstrations, and boycotts. Sporadic armed attacks become more frequent as rural bands carry out sniping and sabotage. The rebellion enters a hiatus and then becomes more dramatically and exclusively violent when it resumes in the fall of 1937. Rebel bands battle with British troops, and thousands die before the rebellion collapses into internecine fighting.

March 1988: The first Intifada against Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip is in its third month. For weeks on end, Palestinian youths clash with Israeli troops by throwing stones, blocking roads, burning tires, and defying curfew. Each day registers acts of nonviolent protest, including sit-ins, boycotts, commercial strikes, refusal to pay taxes, mass resignation from Israeli institutions, and the organization of community-based alternatives. Women lead huge demonstrations on International Women's Day. On "Land Day," an annual protest against land confiscation, Palestinians inside Israel march in solidarity with the occupied territories. Tens of thousands of Palestinians have been arrested, injured, or killed. Nonetheless, their use of lethal violence against Israel remains very limited.

March 2002: A second Intifada is in its second year. With violence claiming the lives of 246 Palestinians and 113 Israelis, the month is among the bloodiest in the history of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Palestinian activists open fire on Israeli civilians, infiltrate settlements, detonate bombs at bus stops, fire makeshift rockets, and set off a roadside bomb that destroys an Israeli tank. Israel's repression of Palestinians is likewise violent and severe. On March 27, a suicide bombing, the 37th of the Intifada, leaves scores dead and wounded at a Passover dinner. The Israeli army responds with a sweeping and bloody

operation whereby it reoccupies most West Bank towns. That day, an 18-year-old girl becomes the youngest Palestinian female suicide bomber.

Why do social and insurgent movements employ the strategies and tactics that they do? Focusing on the vexing problem of political violence, scholars have produced theories about the targets, timing, and intensity of a group's use of arms. Yet as the history of the Palestinian national movement demonstrates, violence is only one form of protest and contention. The question of why movements use violent means, therefore, is inextricable from the question of why they do or do not use *nonviolent* means. This book takes up this query. I argue that while the paths to violence are multiple, there is one prevailing path to nonviolent protest: a path that requires a movement to have or create internal cohesion. When a movement is cohesive, it enjoys the organizational power to mobilize mass participation, enforce strategic discipline, and contain disruptive dissent. In consequence, cohesion increases the possibility that a movement will use nonviolent protest. Inversely, when a movement is fragmented, it lacks the leadership, institutions, and collective purpose to coordinate and constrain its members. Its very internal structure thus generates incentives and opportunities that increase the likelihood that it will use violence.

This argument is straightforward, yet its implications pose a challenge to existing analyses. Scholars and commentators propose a plethora of explanations for a movement's conflict behavior, from religious values to access to weapons, and from the escalatory effect of state repression to stark calculations of what is needed for success. My emphasis on movement cohesion and fragmentation suggests that there is no simple one-to-one correlation between any of these factors and movement protest. Rather, their influence is mediated by a movement's internal structure. Movements are not machines, propelled automatically by instrumental calculations, ideology, or all-powerful elites. Nor are they akin to billiard balls, pushed in one direction or another by external impetuses or pressures. There are instead distinctly internal and organizational reasons for their strategic choices.

I call my analytical approach the "organizational mediation theory of protest." While this approach can shed light on a variety of movements for social and political change, I apply it here to self-determination movements. Struggles of ethnic or national groups for autonomy or independence are among the world's most common sources of bloody conflict. Yet most self-determination movements are not violent. Of the 132 self-determination movements active as of 2006, only 18 engaged in armed hostilities.[1] Even movements that do engage in violence do not do so consistently over time. Of the 71 self-determination movements that waged armed struggle at some point since the 1950s, more than half no longer rely on violent strategies.[2]

The need to understand the conditions under which protest is violent or nonviolent is pressing for scholars and policy makers alike. There is perhaps no better case with which to explore this puzzle than the Palestinian national movement. Many find it difficult to explain Palestinians' strategies, including those who sympathize with their goals. Witnessing lethal attacks, some

wonder why there is no "Palestinian Gandhi." They suggest that nonviolent means might better help Palestinians win international sympathy or convince Israelis that painful concessions would not diminish their security. This book suggests why these questions are off the mark. Launching nonviolent protest is not simply a matter of leadership or utilitarian calculations. A movement's organizational structure is itself sufficient to make unarmed methods highly improbable, regardless of other impetuses or motives for such a course.

The Palestinian case is anomalous in many respects, such as its diasporic dispersal, complex interpenetrations by Middle East regional politics, and attraction of vast attention from across the world. Compounding this is the particular intractability of the conflict between Israeli and Palestinian claims to a nation-state in the same land. Given its peculiarities, much of the research on comparative conflict processes does not address the Israeli–Palestinian situation. At the same time, the literature specifically on this case tends to fall in the realms of journalism, history, and policy analysis more than in that of the social sciences. These tendencies forfeit valuable opportunities to scrutinize the Palestinian experience for generalizable insight.

While the larger circumstances of the Palestinian national movement are exceptional, many of the dynamics shaping its protest behavior are not. Palestinians share with other social and self-determination movements two basic challenges: overcoming multiple sources of internal division in order to mobilize collective action and choosing among available strategies for challenging a status quo. Many scholars of Palestinian politics are sensitive to the link between internal divisions, on the one hand, and strategy, on the other. Nearly all note that this relationship has inhibited the success of Palestinians' struggle.[3] Yet none to date have systematically theorized and analyzed its effect on their very *forms* of struggle. In undertaking that task, I seek to make a unique contribution to understandings of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, while also countering treatment of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict as categorically unique. To further this end, I also show how patterns in Palestinian history can help us understand the South African antiapartheid struggle and Northern Ireland republican movement and how these movements can in turn elucidate the Palestinian experience.

LIMITS OF CONVENTIONAL EXPLANATIONS

Protest is the act of challenging, resisting, or making demands upon authorities or power holders.[4] Violent protest entails the exertion of physical force for the purpose of damaging, abusing, killing, or destroying. Nonviolent protest does not entail physical force. Gene Sharp identifies three kinds of nonviolent action: acts of protest and persuasion, such as marches or the display of signs and slogans; noncooperation, such as strikes and boycotts; and nonviolent intervention, such as sit-ins, hunger strikes, and other deliberate refusals to observe law or social custom.[5] As analysts look across cases, these criteria can help them categorize protest as either violent or nonviolent. The application

of these criteria, however, demands attention to context. For movements that espouse armed struggle, a shift toward stone throwing represents a decrease in the violent character of protest. For movements committed to electoral politics, the opposite is the case.

Movements rarely use violent or nonviolent protest to the complete exclusion of the other. Yet what explains the relative prominence or intensity of either in a movement's repertoire of contention? Scholarship on social movements has shed light on the conditions under which people overcome problems of collective action to launch sustained challenges to authority. While an earlier generation of thinkers attributed collective behavior to systemic strains and psychological discontent, the resource mobilization approach emphasized the role of external allies and funds in enabling activists to form organizations. The political process approach then redirected attention to the shifting environmental conditions that generate "political opportunity structures" conducive to direct action. Such shifts produce social movements when aggrieved groups mobilize through networks and organizations and adopt frames that inspire and legitimate such mobilization.[6] Recent work criticizes political process models for being overly structural and ignoring the creativity and emotion entailed in collective protest.[7] The sum of this research offers an important foundation for any study of protest. Nevertheless, its diverse strands tend to debate the sources of movements' emergence more than the strategies that movements undertake.[8] Some critics attribute this oversight to scholars' view of protest as a mechanical outcome of conflict between states and challengers rather than a puzzle in its own right.[9]

Nonetheless, existing research on social movements and other forms of contentious politics points to a range of possible explanations why movements engage in violent or nonviolent protest. One perspective holds that protest is a strategy that movements choose instrumentally in interaction with the adversary from which they seek concessions.[10] According to this view, states' exclusion of certain groups or issues from conventional processes of decision making pushes people to disrupt the system through dissent.[11] The basic asymmetry of institutional and material power leads movements to seek any leverage against ruling authorities. Some turn to nonviolent protest to deny governments the obedience and compliance on which their rule depends.[12] Others embrace violence on the rationale that only stiff costs can compel states to make concessions. In this context, some analysts believe terrorism to be a rational "weapon of the weak" because it gives groups an impact far larger than their small size or resource endowment.[13] Empirical findings suggest that terrorism has also proved effective, particularly in coercing democracies to relinquish territory.[14]

Turning from state structures to state policies, other research considers the particular effect of repression on the likelihood that protest will be violent or nonviolent. Many case studies demonstrate that repression generates individual-level motivations and group-level pressures that radicalize rebellion.[15] Nevertheless, comparative findings are inconclusive,[16] which suggests

that it is variations in the application of repression that trigger variation in protest. Some research finds that indiscriminate repression drives movements from nonviolent to violent protest; when protestors perceive that they are punished regardless of whether their strategies are moderate or radical, they opt for that which inflicts higher costs on their opponent.[17] A similar dynamic ensues when regimes respond to nonviolent protest with coercion rather than concessions, after which rational rebels conclude that nonviolence is ineffective and a stronger course of action is necessary.[18] Inconsistent repression can have the same effect, insofar as it sends a signal that the regime is weak and vacillating. For protestors, therefore, tactical escalation can appear to be the coup de grâce that snatches victory.[19]

These arguments show that protest is the outcome of a dynamic process of rational action, reaction, and anticipation. Nevertheless, the strategic interaction paradigm does not explain why movements sometimes take steps that are suboptimal or even haphazard. Nor does it tell us why they continue with a strategy after it fails to bear fruit. Reflecting that critique, an alternative approach holds that a movement's repertoire of protest is not simply instrumental, but shaped by culture, religion, ideology, or the nonrationalistic "shared understandings" that bring a group together.[20] According to this view, movements that reject nonviolent forms of protest may be driven by ideas and identities that render militancy a value in and of itself. Such arguments are particularly prevalent with regard to Middle East cases, as some suggest that there is something in Islam or Arab culture that disposes people to violence. Along these lines, one commentator attributes suicide bombings to "the thirst for vengeance, the desire for religious purity, the longing for earthly glory and eternal salvation."[21] Others agree that a "culture of martyrdom" can shape protest tactics, but argue that this is a culture of despair among victims of protracted violence who only then become perpetrators.[22]

These explanations remind us that values and beliefs mold collective behavior in ways irreducible to mechanical computations of effectiveness. Yet these claims are often ad hoc. Most cultures are sufficiently rich and complex to legitimate either violent or nonviolent protest. Furthermore, culture per se cannot explain why a single population might engage in different kinds of protest at different points of time. Toward a better account, another line of ideational explanation shifts focus to dynamic processes of framing. Framing is the creative endeavor by which entrepreneurs construct ideas and representations that inspire people to take part in collective action.[23] In this regard, many emphasize the role of movement elites in convincing their communities to engage in one or another kind of protest. Works on the history of nonviolent protest often stress the centrality of leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., who toiled to frame their struggles in ways that persuaded others of the value of unarmed means of resistance and social change.[24] Along similar lines, leaders can also invoke shared values and beliefs in ways that promote violent collective action. A large body of research on ethnic and nationalist conflict examines how leaders incite their populations