

Palestine's Great Flood: Part II

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Max Ajl^{1,2,3} 

Abstract

This is the second part of a two-part article on the Palestinian question. This part treats the development and trajectory of anticolonial nationalism, focusing on the post-1970s period in the Gaza Strip. It treats the growth and development of the main armed factions in the Strip, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad, and then discusses Israeli policies toward Palestine, broadly, and the Gaza Strip, in particular. It analyses the closure policy post-2006 and the growth of armed organizing and capacity. It then discusses the regional dimensions. It finally engages with different explanations for US policy toward Palestine, discussing the “Israel Lobby” thesis in its various iterations. It concludes with some reflections on contemporary exile organizing and intellectual production.

Keywords

Palestine, Zionism, Imperialism, settler-colonialism, Israel lobby

¹ Department of Conflict and Development Studies, University of Ghent, Belgium

² Merian Center for Advanced Studies in the Maghreb (MECAM), University of Tunis, Tunisia

³ Observatory for Food Sovereignty and the Environment (OSAE), Tunis, Tunisia

Corresponding author:

Max Ajl, Department of Conflict and Development Studies, University of Ghent, 9000 Gent, Belgium; Merian Center for Advanced Studies in the Maghreb, University of Tunis, ISEAHT 27, Rue Florian - Borj Zouara (Bab Saadoun), Tunis, Tunisia; Observatory for Food Sovereignty and the Environment (OSAE), 2, Rue Lucie Faure Staircase A, Floor 3, 1000 Tunis, Tunisia.

E-mail: max.ajl@ugent.be

Introduction

The focus of this study is Palestinian anticolonial nationalism and Israeli-NATO settler-colonialism and imperialism. It is concerned with recent Palestinian political history and the generalized shift to Islamic, as opposed to secular, armed resistance in the face of Israeli post-1993, and especially post-2000, closure, siege, and warfare, particularly in the Gaza Strip. An assessment is made of the events of 7 October and their aftermath: the multiple months of armed struggle and the genocidal Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) counter-insurgency (Albanese, 2024). The mooring point is Palestine as harboring an anticolonial movement, embedded in the Arab and Islamic worlds, where it remains a dynamo of regional politics, against the US–Israeli local, regional, and international campaign to alchemize Palestine into a situation manageable through local collaboration, economic peace, intermittent hot wars, and decapitation of political leadership through mass imprisonment and assassinations (Abdo, 2014).

The frame used throughout is the national question (Moyo & Yeros, 2011) and counter-insurgency, particularly the post-October 7 Israeli brutality applied to the Gaza Strip and, at a lower level of intensity, the West Bank and 1948 Palestine. In so doing, it brings to the fore Palestinian national politics, in a moment when diffuse rhetoric of Palestinian agency, centralization of Palestine voices, and solidarity with undifferentiated Palestinians are preponderant at the expense of the organized Palestinian national movement and its factions and exile formations (Kates, 2014).

Accompanying a counter-intuitive de-politicization of the Palestinian cause has been a de-centering, if not disavowal (Omar, 2023), of the tactics, strategy, and vision of the Palestinian national movement. In its place a legalistic rhetoric of genocide and a victimizing and teleological rhetoric of settler-colonialism dominate, which end up—though needlessly—sidestepping resistance as the organizing practice for much of Palestinian nationalism and the regional system within which it nests.¹ Meanwhile, trends in contemporary Marxism lapse either into economism or romanticism, foregoing materialist analysis of colonialism and settler-colonialism, marked by the absence of sovereignty for the people under occupation. Such analyses rest on blinkered engagements with the region's modern history, generally fail to anatomize the US–Israeli agenda, and lack any understanding of Arab–Iranian national and class struggles.² Furthermore, they lack any understanding of the centrality of political sovereignty in modern regional history or any capacity to theorize and defend the regional political sovereignty regime. Finally, they place Palestine

outside of materialist analysis and fail to engage with its own history of theorizing. Some perspectives go so far as to cast opaquely Hamas as a “manager” of the occupation on behalf of Israel, or simply use a moralizing rhetoric of criminality against the armed movements in the Gaza Strip (Baconi 2018; Intercepted, 2023). What remains, in a vacuous phrase, is “the relatively autonomous character of national oppression” (Haider, 2021), an analysis that explains nothing, for it fails to enter into the agrarian questions of land and nation, their connections to political sovereignty, and their articulation with global accumulation.

This article begins by surveying the sources of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) strength in the Gaza Strip in the context of Israeli settler-colonialism and occupation, as well as the specificities of political and social structure in Gaza. It then discusses the strengthening of Islamist resistance amidst the imperially and colonially-induced decline of the leftist rejectionist forces, before briefly discussing the post-2000 and post-2011 imperial agenda in the region, how Palestine fits into it, and how the Gaza Strip nestles into the overall imperial-colonial strategy. The question of the “Israel Lobby” and Israel’s strategic utility to US war-making in the context of the current war is also discussed. The article concludes with some reflections on the emergent re-constitution of the Palestinian right.

The Origins of Socio-political Fracturing

While the origins of the war on the Gaza Strip have proximate (the October 7 attacks) and general (Zionism) causes, Gaza has been the historical seminary and sanctuary for Palestinian anticolonial nationalism, in large part the result of its acute poverty, population concentration, Israeli-imposed developmental blockages, and the strength of noncollaborationist forces there in contrast to the West Bank. These processes trace back to the 1947–1949 primitive accumulation (Mousa, 2006) and ethnic cleansing, Al-Nakba (the catastrophe) that marked the founding of the Israeli state. This violence displaced huge numbers of Palestinian peasants from the Central-South and South of occupied Palestine into the Gaza Strip, creating a deracinated propertyless population essentially without occupational structure, and sweeping over the existing and relatively diminutive Gazan class structure. At first, Fatah dominated in the Gaza Strip. Later, this newly forged social layer was fertile for organizing by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine’s (PFLP), although the relatively well-funded Muslim Brotherhood was able to organize there as well (Usher, 1995). The late 1960s and early

1970s saw a massive left-led insurgency, fractured by the Israelis and left bereft by an export-oriented landed class (Lesch, 2023). Through the 1970s and 1980s, the Muslim Brotherhood entrenched itself in the Strip through a complex of civil society institutions. By the 1980s, the success of the Iranian revolution inspired Islamic Jihad and cadre within what would become Hamas, pushing the latter slowly into motion against earlier quiescence (Alavi, 2017, pp. 190–197). Throughout that decade, all Palestinian political forces (including Hamas, officially announced in 1987) vied for leadership of anticolonial activity within the Strip. Fatah, although riven by internal contradiction, would end up in a position of dominance. Meanwhile, the Left, especially the PFLP, faced a variety of mechanisms of decapitation by the Palestinian bourgeoisie, amongst them the snatching up of its senior cadre into Palestinian capitalist structures.³ Increasingly, the Islamic movements' preparations for armed resistance, Israeli repression, and regionally rising legitimacy of anti-imperialist—and anti-Soviet—Islamic movements made their manifestations magnetic in the Gaza Strip (Hussein, 2021).

The Oslo Accords and the “peace process” shifted this dynamic. The fall of the USSR and then the encirclement of Iraq prepared the ground for Palestinian surrender. The PFLP's economic lifelines snapped one after the other throughout the 1990s (Kates, 2014) with the disorganization of exile political infrastructure and the criminalization of financing for the “rejectionist” parties which refused to accept the Oslo Agreements and their framework for the Israeli-imposed cage of neo-colonialism and subcontracted settler-colonialism. Foreign-funded nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) took leftist leadership into their bosom, and such individuals could no longer contribute to political activity, since NGOs were required to commit their employees to distance themselves from the illegalized “rejectionist” party structures (Bhungalia, 2023).

Meanwhile, throughout, the Israeli occupation systematically de-developed the Gaza Strip, dismantling planning institutions and political organizations, and unweaving the industrial fabric (Roy, 2016). Palestinian laborers, reared on a mix of social reproduction and prophylactic containment aid monies routed through United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the Palestinian Liberation Organization steadfastness funds, had entered Israel in large numbers to take up laboring positions in the lowest rungs of the economic ladder since 1967. This migratory, precarious, and ultimately fungible labor flow rendered the Gaza Strip acutely vulnerable to Israeli methods of economic coercion and political pressure. Although the siege is commonly dated to 2006 with the more severe methods of economic coercion

associated with that moment, Israeli “closure” policies led to the gushing of the Palestinian labor flows into Israel becoming streams and then trickles with the end of the First Intifada, as the Gaza Strip labor market was forcefully “delinked” from Israeli capital and alternative laborers, primarily Southeast Asians, were imported as replacements.

Thereupon Hamas took up the baton of anticolonial resistance. At the dusk of the First Intifada, Iran opened the tap of military aid to Hamas (Rezeg, 2020), with large economic flows, the counterpart of the massive US–EU aid inflows into the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to ensure an economic peace. The US-sponsored Palestinian Authority embarked on neoliberal and subcolonial collaborator state construction in the West Bank and Gaza (Rabie, 2021), based on security coordination with Israel, and Palestinian capitalist collaboration with Israel through the Palestinian Authority (PA), as local capitalists, exile capital, especially Gulf Palestinian capital, and a freshly forged “new class” shared the proceeds of complicity with colonialism (Hanieh, 2011).

The Move to Warfare, Closure, and the Armed Strategy

In 2000, the structures of economic peace began to buckle. A new political segment took power in Washington, directly connected to the oil and weapons industries and associated pools of capital. This fraction moved on from the post-USSR strategy of containment and desiccation within the Arab region, which was based on widespread income deflation and political engineering through sanctions, terror lists, and “normalization” of the Israeli presence, alongside Israel’s growth as a high-technology incubator for US–Israeli capital. Their new strategy was hot wars, state evaporation, decapitation, and post-war reconstruction on the Ta’if Model: entrenching sectarianism and accelerating de-statization (Kadri, 2017) through a meta-static imperialist-funded “independent civil society.” Against this context, Ariel Sharon provoked the Second Intifada, as Israel moved in lockstep with its imperial sponsor from “globalization” of capital through newly opened investment options in Eastern Europe, South Asia, and Latin America (Gowan, 1999) to militarized accumulation.

On the global plane, the United States tried to consummate its destruction of Ba’athist Iraq and Afghanistan (Ahmad, 2004; RUPE, 2003). In 2000, Israel retreated from Lebanon. Hezbollah’s expulsion of the Israelis “galvanized the frustrated Palestinian masses,” giving weight to Islamic resistance as the preferred mobilizational and ideological pattern and

armed resistance as the strategy to defeat colonial power (Alavi, 2019). The PA's remaining nationalist commitments under Yasser Arafat, in part the child of fear of Islamist political power (Usher, 2003), were buried in the cairns of the Second Intifada. As it waned, Israeli colonialism and its US backer sought to re-encase the Palestinian file in amber, through direct military containment in the Gaza Strip and the slightly softer arm of sub-contracted security containment in the West Bank alongside the honeyed soporific of the aid industry. The difficulty of managing the Gaza Strip birthed the "containment from without" strategy: disengagement, or the removal of Israeli colonies from the Strip in 2004 in accordance with the maxim that a maximum of Palestinians should be concentrated on the minimum amount of land, and the minimum amount of direct security engagements should be allotted to control the maximum quantity of Palestinians. "The disengagement is actually formaldehyde," said one of Ariel Sharon's top aides (cited in Shavit, 2004). To that end, the occupation was re-deployed spatially and re-vamped technologically so it could occur through increasingly remote and high-technological means. PA security control was stronger in the West Bank than in the Gaza Strip, where in relative and absolute terms the Qassam Brigades and PIJ were institutionally and military stronger (Skare, 2022), affecting capacity to organize armed activities.

In 2006, Hamas ran for elections and won pluralities, leaning on a resume of resistance to Israel, rejection of corruption, and reinforcing social welfare in occupied Palestine through its network of civil society social welfare institutions—a rebuke to the collaborationist and neoliberal PA reigning in Ramallah. In the face of its victory, the US-trained "Dayton" security apparatus of the PA planned a coup, and Hamas preempted it with its own coup. It was then that "containment" began its drift to bare-life counter-insurgency. "The idea is to put the Palestinians on a diet," said Weisglass, as calories were reduced to a "humanitarian minimum" (Salamanca, 2011) and a blockade emplaced, accelerating the Gaza Strip's de-development by further reducing the flows necessary for economic activity. This system hardened into a scientific program of humanitarian counter-insurgency, meant to damage but not destroy the Palestinian population which Hamas had to administer and caretaker, in the process besieging the resistance movement in the castle of state administration while *sub rosa* it carried the banner and rifle of resistance (Ajl, 2014). In the words of the physician Ghassan Abu-Sittah, Gaza slowly became a

[h]ermetically sealed space in which you are able to titrate people's lives, and really the aim is to keep them in that zone between an incomplete life and

the absence of total death. And you do that titration in the siege by allowing the different components of life to come in or denying them. So, it literally is like a chemical equation: when you are titrating life, you are bringing in more hours of electricity or withdrawing hours of electricity, you are bringing in the infrastructure for sewage and water treatment or you are withdrawing it, you are allowing food. We know that from the Wikileaks papers, the Israelis were talking about putting people in Gaza on a very strict diet, so there is actually a calorie control and formula that the Israelis employ when they allow food, medication, and medical personnel. And then the components of death: when you control the number of cancer patients you give permits to leave Gaza, and you allow it to vary between 20% and 40% rejection rate. And then during the negotiations on de-escalation with Hamas, you throw in the offer of a cancer hospital in Gaza. (Abu-Sittah, 2020)

Against this tableau of amputated life, Hamas and the other armed factions laboriously built up an armed capacity. While the Gaza Strip remained under external military occupation, it had some internal sovereignty (Skare, 2021, p. 179). Military capacity and action became the currency of political allure. Through 2011, the armed elements relied on Syrian, Hezbollah, and Iranian backing, ranging from funds to arms transfers, logistics, training, and sharing technical blueprints for home-grown weapons manufacturing.⁴

In 2011, the United States and Qatar took advantage of discontent with regional underdevelopment and lack of political freedom to deploy a multipronged strategy to ensure such unease would serve the US–Israeli–Gulf Cooperation Council geopolitics of razing strategic opponents, part of the US attempt to gut the resistance camp (Matar & Kadri, 2018). Qatar successfully convinced Hamas’ political leadership to decamp from Damascus to Doha and Istanbul, and then to denounce the Syrian government. Such political isolation was part-and-parcel of the broader US sequence of armed assaults which started in 2003 in Iraq, to evaporate Arab republics already weakened by decades of war, militarization of politics, and neoliberalism imposed by international financial institutions, which empowered domestic capitalist classes (Kadri, 2016). The United States soon reneged on the 2015 Iran deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and reverted to maximum-pressure sanctions (Ajl, 2015). Meanwhile, tens of billions of dollars of US and Gulf capital, in alliance with Jordan and Israel, went into arming, equipping, training, and paying the salaries of US proxies in their war on Syria (Higgins, 2018, 2023). Israel bombarded Damascus hundreds of times during the war, particularly hitting Iranian assets, damaging logistics lines, and materiel transiting Syria on the way to Hezbollah, and seeking

to prevent the consolidation of a second front on its armistice lines with the Syrian Arab Republic (*Aljazeera*, 2018; *Asharq Al Awsat*, 2023; *New York Times*, 2019). As Hamas's political wing fled from Damascus, financial support from Iran sharply decreased and much was effectively diverted to PIJ (Skare, 2021, p. 208) and to a lesser extent the PFLP, a flow which would later again be directed to Hamas. PIJ outpaced Hamas in Palestinian popular support after the 2014 Israeli massacre, largely because of the magnetism of its more open resistance to Israel (Skare, 2021, p. 208), in contrast to Hamas's long-term strategy of building up the strategic and military assets capable of weakening Israel in a sustained encounter, which began on 7 October.

In the West Bank, theretofore scattered EU–US efforts to build up a straightforwardly collaborator-level security apparatus accelerated under Salam Fayyad, the former Prime Minister of the PA, with hundreds of millions of dollars of funding annually to ensure that what had happened in the Gaza Strip could not recur in the West Bank. By now, the PA's security services in the West Bank employ 80,000 employees, amongst the highest per capita globally (Dunning & Iqtait, 2023). This force has been a mechanism for state-building, especially the state's role in social reproduction (Abdel, 2013)—hundreds of thousands of West Bank Palestinians rely on family in the security forces for sustenance in the face of Israeli dis-articulation of the West Bank's economy and primitive accumulation of the West Bank's productive forces (Samara, 1992).

The Growth of Armed Struggle in the Gaza Strip

Although Palestinian violence took place during the Oslo Period, and indeed until 2008, from 2009 onward, across the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, armed activity markedly accelerated. The Israeli government's attempts to politically amputate Hamas from the Palestinian body politic relied on containing the military power and political appeal of Hamas and other rejectionist forces. Such containment was partial and relied on constant regional reinforcement: attempting to cleave Hamas from its alliance with remaining anticolonial or pro-sovereign states and movements in the Arab–Iranian region through cozening Hamas leadership to relocate from Damascus to Qatar during the US war on Syria. Throughout this period, Hamas underwent internal shifts in composition and militancy which subtended the build-up of its armed capacity and greater organic fusion between political and military capacities. Yahya Sinwar assumed leadership of Hamas in Gaza (Hroub, 2017), while Osama Hamdan in Lebanon became a leading

spokesperson. These elements crystallized the portion of Hamas sentiment which prioritized the maintenance and eventual deployment of its arsenal. They nurtured and rested on the build-up of the political and material linkages which underpinned the armories: Hamas training with Hezbollah, Iran, and Syria for 800 of its elite commandos; the growth of drones and missile technology, including the development of the Zouari drone through the Islamic-Arab popular cradle which nests Hamas and Palestine as far afield as Tunisia, from whence Zouari, the drone's designer, hailed. Missile technology arrived from Iran (IISS, 2021), and tunneling and engineering blueprints from Hezbollah and Iran (Watkins & James, 2016). Meanwhile, the Hamas doctrine broke from the top-heavy command-and-control structures of conventional armies toward decentralized "guerrilla" people's war, a fact acknowledged by its antagonists (Morag, 2023). Through emulation and training, it has drawn on Hezbollah, which had long adopted a model of guerrilla confrontation with clear affinities to Asian national liberation struggles.⁵

Furthermore, other technological shifts have been central. First, "low tech" communications: Hamas's intelligence apparatus discerned that Israel was able to track both cellular networks and even emissions from various devices and moved to low-emitting devices and its own hard-wired communications network (*Asharq Al Awsat*, 2024). Second, rockets give it military, strategic, and vertical above-ground and horizontal reach, enabling it to break from the quarantine chambers which imposed a political isolation even more deadening than the economic isolation. Third, looking forward, and lacking the mountain redoubts of Lebanese Hezbollah, for Hamas, the concrete became their mountains. Instead of military action proceeding along a complex irregular topography that ascends vertically, tunnels supply strategic and military depth. As Majdalawi points out, both systems, developed in tandem, were acquired at immense sacrifice and not without errors, and constitute the strategic stronghold and the central repository of sovereign decision-making for the Palestinian people (Majdalawi, 2021). This innovation allowed Hamas to begin the social-political process of destroying the "preservative" within which Israeli political containment had placed the Palestinian cause. In May 2021, Hamas rocketry emerged as an element of the Unity Intifada, breaching Hamas's strategic and political isolation from the remainder of the Palestinian people.

From within these cradles, Hamas launched a military operation on 7 October, resulting in the deaths of over 1,100 Israelis, soldiers as well as civilians.⁶ Alongside other Palestinian militia, it penetrated through the Gaza envelope and beyond, close to the West Bank, by means of an aerial, ground, and amphibious assault based on mapping then targeting

the Israeli electronic border surveillance systems and the automatic and remote machine gun turret emplacements to which the IDF had outsourced its intelligence gathering capacity. It is unlikely that Hamas expected such speedy collapse of the IDF defense lines.

This operation was based on convincing the population that mere existence was a forerunner to collapse, and not a guarantee of staying on the land. Majdalawi (2021) cites Nahr el-Bared, Yarmouk, and the dispersion of the Gaza Strip's youth to Scandinavian countries as evidence of how survival can be antecedent to cleansing, the elimination of social life, the primitive accumulation of land, and the dislocation and possible erasure of popular insurgency. The result has been a multifront war, launched by the Israeli state under its most extreme right-wing administration, which invaded the Gaza Strip seeking to recover the prisoners of war and civilian captives, and to eliminate Hamas.

Counterinsurgency and Genocide in the Gaza Strip

The Palestinian struggle has long been the internationalized struggle *par excellence*. Alongside dynamics of internationalization come questions concerning the rhetoric used to frame the struggle, the constituencies to which to appeal, and the social base of change within Palestinian society (Cohen & Doumani, 1981; PFLP, 1969). During the current war, genocide and "Second Nakba" have been used to elucidate the dynamics of IDF targeting and bombardment operations, and, furthermore, to hold Israel to account in international tribunal and within the court of Western liberal civil society. Although these concepts are helpful for illuminating the war of position within global civil society and in international jurisprudence—indeed, the Palestinian national movement has constantly used international law, especially in the post-Soviet period—they run the risk of occulting the war of movement which incited Israel to activate the latent cleansing and genocidal "option" for dealing with the Palestine question.

The de-emphasis on the war of movement stems from two sources. One is the overall illegalization and subsequent delegitimization of antisystemic armed violence, in contrast to the lionization of US-backed antistate violence: notably, the Syrian opposition has been accepted by US Middle East studies (*inter alia*, Pearlman, 2017). Another is the broader de-politicization of the Palestinian cause, turning it into a set of de-territorialized rights, sheared from the national movement as the agent to achieve and defend those rights (Qato & Rabie, 2013).

In taking the Palestinian national movement as a point of departure, we also examine the logic of the Israeli move to extermination. The lens of counter-insurgency is used to illuminate the dynamics of resistance and high-technology razing, as well as the movement from counter-insurgency to genocide. The notion of a Second Nakba may end up being apt—indeed, the contemporary scale of murder is unprecedented in Palestinian history, amidst the recorded death and injury of 3–4% of the population over two months, 5–6% by the sixth month. But there are qualitative differences between 1948–1949 and 2023–2024: the narrowing of the technological gap between the Arab militia and Israel, the presence of a semi-industrialized state, Iran, backstopping the Palestinian resistance (and behind Iran, the industrial superpower of China); the capacity of the militia in terms of training and military organization; the manifest deterrent capacity of various Arab and Iranian forces; and the ability of those forces to impose terms on the United States and Israel. Indeed, the military tableau and level of organization looks nothing like 1948–1949, or 1967. The Arab and Iranian forces confronting Israel have learned the lessons of 1967: centralized, land-bound, heavy-footed, and overly rigid military forces are not capable of confronting the Israeli or NATO armies, in part because Israel and NATO were engineered to fight such forces. Moreover, they have learned the lessons of evolving hi-technology counter-insurgency, and, in turn, slowly are eliminating technological-military buffer zones between Israel and its abutting Arab states. Even more so, at the military-organizational and strategic level, the Iranian and Arab forces have learned what Amer Mohsen calls the true lesson of Vietnam: to bring together their entire social structure to work toward a “common national goal,” the costs be what they may (Mohsen, 2023).

Because the social structure became so central in those Asian wars, and to the counter-insurgencies they precipitated, we may draw insights from those experiences into the nature of the war in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and more broadly in the region. Given that national mobilization is central to guerrilla war, and the counter-insurgency designed to extirpate it, popular support is the central variable. Populations can shield, succor, and, above all, refuse to release information concerning the whereabouts of resistance. Furthermore, the resistance movements are of the people: war must have the legitimacy of the people otherwise the people will surrender and isolate the armed forces. Such popular support is also central in undermining spying and informer networks, which had been highly effective Israeli tools of its efforts during the previous decades of colonial containment and violence. During the present war, dense urban concrete

blocks—whether before or after Israeli fire belts devastated the built infrastructure—are an above-ground complement to the underground concrete tunnel network. Their even more jagged postbombing contours have made them even more suited to Palestinian asymmetric resistance. Through two months of warfare, Israel registered no significant military achievements, and had achieved none of its war aims. Moreover, Hamas command-and-control networks had remained fully intact, with the Palestinian guerrillas capable of launching complicated ambushes in multiple arenas of the Gaza Strip, including areas where the IDF was supposedly engaged in “clearing” operations, and destroying—according to Hamas communiqués, which the IDF has not even publicly denied—over 400 pieces of Israeli military hardware.

As Ahmad (1971, p. 14) writes, in a “war of attrition, there can be no decisive victory over a strong foreign enemy”; instead, “at best, one hopes to inflict heavy losses, exhaust it, and through international pressure, force it to negotiate—not the status quo, but withdrawal.” On the side of the colonial forces, all counter-insurgent operations, including within the Israel political sphere, share a “negative posture” toward anticolonial warfare, “managerial attitudes” toward the population, their politics, and their political avatars, and a “technocratic-military approach to their suppression,” including massive air and ground operations, large troop deployments, attrition, encirclement, and “mop-up operations” alongside massive displacement and free-fire zones. Israel military strategy, beginning with massive fire belts on Palestinian cities, evolved into forcing the bulk of the Palestinian population toward the South, to render the North a possible buffer zone.

When IDF operations failed to evacuate the dense urban cores of al-Shuja’iyya and Jabalia, other methods came into play; and in the South, this has meant the dual operation of population shifts to so-called safe zones, attempts to bound geographically the Palestinian civilian population and clear out entire cities as free-fire zones (to which the IDF has resorted, as populations of Gazan cities refused to move). Alongside these tactics, the IDF’s move to ever-more-violent bombing (as when the ceasefire broke under Israeli violations of the terms of prisoner exchange) marks the shift of counter-revolutionary violence in a genocidal direction, as cracks have started to fissure Israeli society through the protests from the families of the hostages. Yoav Gallant and others have spoken of inflicting massive pain on the Palestinian civilian population as a deliberate war aim, alongside allowing for the spreading of disease and the infliction of widespread hunger in the Gaza Strip as tools of warfare: “cruelty ... [and] suffering ... as a means ... fight against the entire opposing system because it is precisely its civil collapse that will bring the end of the war closer” (Ofir, 2023).

Yet, by the end of December 2023, despite the decimation of the “system” at the concrete level, on the ideological plane, which tends to be determinate in such circumstances outside consummated genocide, the “system” consolidated in favor of the armed operations. This hardening of the resistance is taken by the IDF not as evidence of the failure of its own mechanized counter-insurgency and genocide in compelling political outcomes, due to historical patterns of “theorists and practitioners of counter-insurgency [being] unable to grasp or unwilling to acknowledge the ... finality of broken political and social links,” seeing it primarily as a “technical” problem requiring “intelligence and suppression” (Ahmad, 1971, p. 28). Hence the IDF emphasis on a bestiary of technical solutions at the micro- and macro-level from sea-water flooding, threats of bunker-busters, insistence on decapitation of leadership, and theater deterrence, under the assumption that suppressing Palestinian nationalism and the broader Arab popular cradle within which it rests can be accomplished.

Through early January, the Palestinian armed groups had formally announced the destruction of over 900 pieces of Israeli armor, and the killing of over 1,600 IDF troops. Furthermore, they retained capacity to launch sophisticated ambushes across historical Palestine, including the use of anti-aircraft missiles, the taking-down of expensive unmanned aerial vehicles, and the targeting of Tel Aviv with coordinated missile volleys. By month six of the military operation, while there had been extensive attrition in Hamas and other battalions, Palestinian military forces were launching missile salvos to southern occupied Palestine and engaging and winning military confrontations with IDF troops in areas of the Gaza Strip said to be cleared and secured.

By March 2024, Israel moved to a campaign of even more genocidal counter-insurgency, targeting the civilian population at a large scale, including what remained of its infrastructure, and imposing starvation to force Hamas to accept inferior terms—in other words, to win at the negotiating table what the IDF had been unable to win on the battle-field. This included the systematic targeting of doctors, the evaporation of the healthcare system, and the assassination of civilian officials charged with aid provision and distribution, to dismantle the civil cradle for guerrilla activity while increasing the starvation level of the civilian population more broadly. By April, Israeli forces had largely withdrawn from the Gaza Strip and those remaining were subject to devastating ambushes.

Meanwhile, the West Bank has seen a low-level insurgency throughout this period, building on accelerating armed activity in the West Bank from 2020 onward. It is particularly concentrated in Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarem, and the “triangle of fire” between them, with the poverty of

Nablus partially accounting for the resilience of the city in the face of Israeli colonialism and encroachment (Shoufani, 2024), on the one hand, and a fertile area for resistance to Israel, on the other. This has escalated from the Lion's Den group to attacks using military hardware and improvised explosive devices against Israeli military bulldozers and tanks. The Jenin Brigade has been at the core of these activities, eliciting a murderous Israeli counter-insurgency intended to root out the armed opposition within that city (Hanaysha, 2023). Meanwhile, Israeli capture of prisoners has accelerated in the West Bank, anticipatory to being forced to accept further prisoner swaps with Hamas and other elements in the Gaza Strip. Finally, PA "security cooperation," its role as a "second South Lebanon Army," (Faleh, 2023) has been an element in the IDF arsenal unavailable to it in the Gaza Strip: the IDF subcontracts counter-insurgency to its local partner, which, for example, murdered anti-PA activist Nizar Banat (Barakat, 2021).

The Regional Front

The 7 October operation occurred without clear coordination between the other elements of the Palestinian military alliance system. This was so because of the desire for secrecy and the Hamas lack of ability to predict the degree of Hannibal Doctrine the IDF would apply and, therefore, the likely scale of its retaliation and the accompanying need for greater advance coordination. Yet, clearly, subsequent military confrontations have occurred in open regional coordination. There are three types of action within the Arab–Iranian state system which are moved by the turbine of Palestinian armed actions: first, the resistance axis; second, the overt military collaborators of Israel and the United States; and third, a "broker" or nonfrontline camp with varied levels of commitment to Arab nationalism and anti-Zionism or more covert collaboration. The front—with various modes of support for armed struggle—includes Yemen, Syria, Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon, many occupied by US belligerent forces. The overt military collaborators include Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, Bahrain, and Jordan, and Egypt with a heavy foot in that camp (although there are elements in Egypt which at the political level prevent it from engaging in full military collaboration with Israel); and the "broker" or "soft-support" elements include Tunisia, Qatar, and Algeria.

The axis has moved into open warfare against US military installations in Iraq and Syria, with regular and escalating bombings—and contrarilywise, coming under constant Israeli attacks on logistical

infrastructure in Syria, used for coordinating joint military strategies and materiel movements. Ansar Allah in Yemen has fired ballistic missiles and drones at targets in Israel. They justify this in terms of Islamic liberation theology—“the revolution of the Arab and Islamic nations,” defending “justice for all citizens of this nation in the face of the American-British-French Zionist invasion and occupation” (Al-Asaad, 2023)—and intimately connect it to the worldwide export of their ideology with its concern for the poor (Moussaoui, 2023, p. 233). Yemeni action expanded to a blockade of Israeli-flagged, operated, or associated ships passing through the Strait of Mandab in the Red Sea, and then widened further to a naval blockade of any ships heading to Israel, understood as part-and-parcel of the legitimization and ideological commitment incubated in the 21 December Yemeni Revolution.

The Lebanese front has been marked by a war of attrition between the Lebanese Hezbollah and Israeli forces, with wide-scale destruction of high-technology Israeli military technology, a surveillance-based Maginot Line against attacks from the North, and targeting of barracks, troop emplacements, and Israeli armor. This operation pulled a substantial portion of the IDF military strength from the South or Center of Israel to the North, alleviating military pressure on the Gaza Strip, while also depopulating northern Israel and forcing Israel (and the United States, which has sent ships to the Mediterranean as an ostensible deterrent) to either cease the attack on the Gaza Strip, or open a second front in a wider Arab theater of war with Hezbollah. Such a war implies the targeting of Lebanese cities and, in turn, the destruction of Israeli population centers and almost certainly a ground incursion not just into Lebanon but, likely, into Israel as well. These engagements from Iraq, Iran, and Hezbollah have elicited retaliation: the assassination of Hamas leader Salah Arouri in Beirut on 3 January, and the attack on PMF headquarters in Baghdad on 4 January.

Jordan, with a majority Palestinian population, a major site of US military cooperation, and signatory of a peace treaty with Israel in 1994, persists in its historical neo-colonial role, colluding with the Zionist movement and the United States (Shlaim, 1988), as its ruling elite relies ever-more on imperialist aid and rent circuits for regime survival (Ufheil-Somers, 2015). It has been putting down domestic discontent and jailing over a thousand activists protesting against Israel and the presence of the United States and their economic, political, and military agreements. Jordan has also shot down Yemeni drones and missiles and has been helping with a land bridge to circumnavigate the Yemeni naval blockade. Jordanian security forces face challenges in maintaining control over the Jordanian population, whose absolute majority is of Palestinian origin

and where Palestinian spokespeople have acquired enormous popularity and support, as 66% of Jordanians strongly supported the 7 October events (Anon, 2023).

Saudi Arabia and the UAE have helped Israel circumvent the naval blockade, normalized, or crept up on normalization with Israel, and are openly aligned with the US project in the region. It is understood that Saudi Arabia would welcome the downfall of Hamas, although the 7 October attack destroyed the prospects for Saudi normalization with Israel and forced the Saudi leadership into more verbally aggressive postures against Israel, routed through US intermediaries. Egypt's role is more complicated: it was the first Arab state to sign a peace treaty with Israel, with extensive economic cooperation, from gas exports to special economic zones. It also enforces the siege and management of humanitarian catastrophe within the Gaza Strip, and flooded older Egypt–Gaza smuggling tunnels. Yet, it has refused to accept ethnic cleansing and population transfers, amidst concerns about economic destabilization, and possible apprehension about fissures in its own armed forces. Furthermore, Egypt tacitly accepts extensive arms smuggling into the Gaza Strip through the Sinai.

Qatar, finally, plays by far the most sophisticated pro-systemic role. It harbors a US naval base and is the core of “Arab Spring” regime-change propaganda and sectarian incitement through al-Jazeera Arabic. On the broader level of cultural interface, it funds a metastatic form of cultural production through its “Arab Centers” in Western and Arab capitals, its own universities such as the Doha Graduate Center and the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, a massive publishing arm. Within this constellation, quietude concerning, or support for, the US regime-change war in Syria is a red line. Meanwhile, the fusion of a “new” form of Arab nationalism along with a “democratization” discourse runs parallel to the Qatari brokering role between Hamas, Egypt, the United States, and Israel, positioning Qatar, as an allegedly neutral party which simultaneously hosts US military installations.

The Lobby, US National Security Doctrine, and Explanations for the Violence

The geopolitical lightning storm incited by the US–Israeli operations has given rise to a high-volume debate, long taking place in various forms within anti-Israel or anti-Zionist movements in the West, the Arab world, and globally. That debate concerns the “rationality” of the US–Israeli

operations, the incentive of the US government and its ruling class to armor Israel diplomatically and militarily, and widespread questioning concerning whether Israel is—or has always been—an albatross from the perspective of the sustainability of US power and accumulation. Does the “Israel Lobby” divert the US ruling class into a hall of mirrors of destructive and irrational dispensing of violence with its lockstep alignment with Israel?

The debate was first raised on a worldwide scale within liberal Western civil society by the publication of Mearsheimer and Walt’s *The Israel Lobby* (2006). This argument concerns the social, political, and economic origins of US foreign policy in the Arab–Iranian region. In essence, two core arguments are put forward: first, that in the region US foreign policy is “irrational” or “led astray” by the domestic US Israel lobby; and, therefore, second, there would be more “rational” ways for the US to pursue its “interests” in the region, in the Lobby’s absence.

It would be irrational to deny the existence of institutions peddling a particular vision of US geopolitical interest, and which cement support for it amongst middle classes, particularly Jewish ones, and popular classes in the West, for example, the evangelical Zionist sector. However, the debate is generally incoherent or fragmented because it fails to found its analysis in the role of the Arab–Iranian region in US accumulation, in a consistent and rigorous notion of US “interests,” or even a consistent delimiting or analysis of Lobby institutions. Within this nonframework, effect is taken for cause, and effects are read sporadically or selectively: Israel played a role in evaporating portions of progressive Arab nationalism in the 1967 war (although not in Iraq and Libya) and staving off Soviet influence; after the end of the Soviet Union, Israel has not directly attacked progressive iterations of Arab nationalism in decades and has only sometimes been successful in participating in US attacks on Iraq, Syria, or elsewhere. Therefore, the strategy of Israeli chaos is superfluous to US interests.

Yet, US interests, as the US ruling class defines them, remain remarkably absent from such conjectures. For “interest” must be understood in class terms rather than ascribed to unified national blocs, and clarified rather than assumed; indeed, the “national interest” from which the Lobby allegedly diverts US power is a concept foreign to an historical materialist universe. Any notion of interest must be derived from the history of capitalist accumulation. When this history is examined, violence is central. Primitive accumulation and wars were the case under colonialism, whose logic was the drain of wealth by means of demand deflation, famine, and genocide, as it is up to the present by the destruction of societies and the

“accumulation of waste” (Kadri, 2023; Patnaik & Patnaik, 2021). The assumptions that underpin Lobby arguments derive from Cold War modernization theory, which held that inclusion in US capitalist trade and development architecture would lead to US-style accumulation, development, and industrialization, and which has not been borne out by the historical record.

Instead, the United States has opted for hot wars (Kolko, 1986) to re-integrate countries into models of subordinate primary-commodity export, agrarian concentration, and integration into the new international division of labor based on export-oriented industrialization in strategically selected regions and concentration of technology within the core. To maintain a polarized system, the US pursues subordinate integration of the peripheries, rather than autonomous build-up of capital, technological development, and industry. Thus, Japan and Germany were allowed to re-industrialize and rebuild, provided they remained within the US defense umbrella, as part of the Cold War’s containment mechanisms against revolutionary China and the Soviet Union. During this period, the Arab–Iranian region was primarily integrated into the US-led world system via the conduits of oil (Kolko & Kolko, 1972) and later, weapons sales. By the late 1960s, war became an additional vector of the region’s integration into the US accumulation strategy, as Israel became a sower of regional instability and an irritant provoking regional arms purchases (Ajl, 2024b).

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, this system remained intact, with the simple existence of Israel and *a fortiori* its armed operations against Palestinians and surrounding Arab states representing a permanent example of Arab weakness and helplessness, engraining a “state of defeat” (Kadri, 2014). Meanwhile, US aggression in the region moved to sanctions and aggressive de-development, culminating in the evaporation of the state in Iraq and Libya, devastating proxy war in Syria, and famine through war and sanctions in Syria and Yemen alike, with absolute losses of capital stock and shortening of human life spans in many of these countries, reaching an apotheosis in the US–Israeli policy in the Gaza Strip. Such policies have the full support of the US political elite. The “Lobby thesis” suggests this degree of destabilizing warfare deviates from a more rational US policy for imperial management. A weaker implied secondary hypothesis suggests that, absent Israeli aggression and territorial revanchism, the Arab region would become more like other Third World regions: marked by disarticulated industrialization, agrarian concentration, and similar dynamics.

Yet, this second thesis is ahistorical in two respects. First, it overlooks the contemporary problem of surplus industrialization on a world scale, such that traditional Latin American clients moved to “premature” deindustrialization (Sato & Kuwamori, 2019) in the face of East Asian dominance of export markets, while much of Africa has remained increasingly excluded from industrialization, whether by import substitution or export orientation (Ossome & Naidu, 2021; Yeros, 2023). Second, this ahistorical framework overlooks that distinct regions play distinct roles within the overall system of US-superintended accumulation.

Oil, in particular, makes the region distinct in offering a highly compact, highly traded, and essential commodity for world markets, one whose production must be engineered, indeed sabotaged in order to repress production on a world scale (Blair, 1976; Wolfe-Hunnicut, 2021). Oil sales remain denominated in dollars and are a source of petrodollar recycling, despite the “obstacle” of Israel (Spiro, 1999). US policies in the region are perfectly consonant with the broader move to sanctions and income deflation as methods of pro-systemic political engineering via imposed cut-off from the world (Doutaghi, 2024; Doutaghi et al., 2022). From a consequential perspective, US–Israeli warring and sanctions regimes in the Arab–Iranian region have posed no problem to overall US accumulation, visible in income inequality, stock returns, or almost any plausible indicator of the robustness of US wealth and power. Indeed, they have served the agenda of the worldwide disorganization of any form of armed or unarmed opposition to the US agenda, including the dissolution of alternative centers of capital accumulation and their accompanying states, and the crippling and deformation of projects that take state power (as in Cuba and Venezuela).

Moreover, while the current stage of genocide, famine, and murder of civilian populations and the risk of widespread war seem to have posed once again the question of the dangers of Israeli over-reach to US power, the hypothetical is seldom raised: could the US afford to allow Palestinian armed militia and their regional allies to defeat its client state? The US security arrangements in the region are a set of political bulwarks that serve global accumulation through a set of flows (petrodollars, finance, armaments, limited industrialization and greater services, export-oriented agriculture) alongside the inducement to global militarization, the interweaving of Israel into the US arms, counter-insurgency, and technological value circuits, and the defeat of Arab working classes in the interest of that system. The PA was engineered as a Palestinian mirror image of Arab neo-colonial and pro-systemic forces, in part to suppress Palestinian democracy and resistance activities, in part to stabilize the

Israeli settlement project, by now encompassing 600,000 settlers and vast areas of the West Bank worth billions in real estate and infrastructural development. In part also to extinguish Palestine as a potential destabilizer within Arab states, where Palestinian exiles had played important roles in republican and revolutionary movements (Kazziha, 1975, 1985). Speaking simply of “endogenous” Israeli contradictions, the settlement project represents their export onto the backs of Palestinians through primitive accumulation of land and resources, alongside providing a laboratory for weapons testing and other Israeli investments.

The induced “thingification” (Césaire, 2001) of the Palestinian people through neo-colonial and collaborator-based containment encountered in 2023 a movement in Palestine that sought “to crack history open” (Allday & Omar, 2023). To make such a “crack” is inherently to do the unpredictable. To foresee its consequences is to enter the realm of the counter-factual. Yet, we do know some things: Over 10% of Israelis now live in settlements which would have to be evacuated if Hamas were to force a long-term *hudna* (truce) along the pre-1967 lines. Such transformation would require re-housing hundreds of thousands of people and incite the religious right. It would risk a civil war or social breakdown. Therefore, political arrangements are concerned with defanging, crippling, or amputating political forces capable of changing the Israeli status quo, a fact the PA knows well: “[d]estroy them, destroy them, this time, Israel must destroy Hamas, otherwise we’re done,” in the words of a PA official (cited in Faleh, 2023). That is, Hamas represents a political force that Israel and the US are unable to contain or coopt, yet simultaneously cannot bring to bear enough violence to destroy. Hamas and its allied smaller militia in Gaza and the West Bank challenge the political-military defeat imposed on the Arab working classes which has been the US–Israeli *modus operandi* since the pummeling of the Arab front-line nationalist states in 1967. An Israeli (and US) loss in the Gaza Strip—and indeed, survival of Hamas represents a loss—risks PA destabilization and, therefore, Israeli destabilization, beyond the extant losses to the Israeli economy from the war itself. Greater destabilization, or even state collapse, represents the potential loss of hundreds of billions of dollars in fixed assets and hi-tech capital investments. Furthermore, a direct loss in an asymmetric war would embolden all the varied armed forces, hundreds of thousands of men in the Arab region, bracketing the Iranian military. It would embolden others who would see that Western military power can be defeated or expelled (as in West Africa), and the deterrence effect to Russia and China would likewise erode.

That is, the “losses” to capital only appear imaginary, and Israel appears as an hindrance, only if one imagines that capital can function without permanent militarization and permanent primitive accumulation and the use of violence to erode or evaporate rival centers of capital accumulation, or if capital can infinitely shrug off the losses of the political arrangements which have historically scaffolded accumulation on a world scale. This is a capitalism which can be posited but it is not a capitalism which exists in history; and it is certainly a capitalism which, having alternative centers of accumulation and military power, would open maneuvering space financially and military for Third World states. It is not a capitalism which the US desires. It is clear that Hamas and its allied regional states and militia have driven a suboptimal outcome and set of choices for the US, such that Israel appears as a less attractive ally from the perspective of US domestic hegemony. But what this proves is that the US ruling class is not omnipotent.

This leaves two significant questions: first, what does the Lobby do, if it does not significantly affect the contours of US foreign policy, except at the margins? And second, what strategic implications can be drawn from this fact?

In fact, capitalism must not simply be politically engineered via violent dominance abroad. While violence and political repression are reserve modalities of assuring the political and cultural framework for capitalism, within the core capitalism operates much more by forging political assent. Therefore, the Lobby’s interface is primarily at the level of forging hegemony and, therefore, the molding of political culture through widespread disciplining of dissent from the pro-Zionist position, within a wide range of political, cultural, intellectual, organizational, and other arenas on an international scale, spreading Zionist propaganda, and, in particular, embedding Zionist propaganda within one element of the US middle classes, those identifying as Jewish (Feldman, 2016). As a result, historically, Palestine (and US support for Israel) became explosive within the antiwar movement and Black Power movements of the 1960s (Levin, 2017), the antinuclear left of the 1980s (Ahmad, 2006), and indeed contested into the early 2000s (INCITE!, 2017). Second, the “Zionist” or “Jewish” Lobby, in the form of institutions like the Jewish Institute for National Security of America, is in fact a revolving door of Pentagon-complex advisers: more an arms lobby than an Israel lobby.

Finally, the Lobby institutions serve as a unique mechanism of discipline against antiracist, anti-Zionist, and anti-imperialist organizations and organizers, and furthermore fund a wide array of anti-anti-racist or otherwise reactionary organizations and initiatives in the United

States—the choice of donor recipients is consistent rather than inconsistent with the overall politics of reaction (IJAZN, 2015). A more subtle consequence of the Lobby has been to lubricate notions of a “Palestine exception” to a supposedly broader progressive consensus around social justice or antiwar work. To support Palestine in this context becomes a mark of antisystemic or internationalist politics, and is even conjoined with regime-change positions in the remainder of the Third World, including Iran.⁷ Indeed, nominal anti-Zionism, fused with silence on, if not opposition to, the actual forces carrying the burden of anti-Zionist struggle, and anti-internationalist silence on the remainder of US aggression marks most of the progressive intellectual sphere, particularly within the Western academy. Strategically, the existence of the Lobby means that opposition to the US–Israeli colonization faces frictions which other segments of opposition do not, although there are smaller lobbies with respect to aggression on Iran and Syria, for example, which while clearly lacking the same power as the Israel lobby, have had greater success in disorganizing opposition to the US military occupation of Syria.

At the same time, the Lobby thesis does raise a salutary point: namely, the possibility of fissures and ruptures within the consensus of US support for Israeli military activities and colonialism. While for the most part, the discussion lacks seriousness vis-à-vis US geopolitics—would the US support Arab democracy in historical Palestine?—it raises issues concerning the goal of antisystemic actors in the Western sphere. Any international and domestic joint challenge to Israel would raise the costs to the US–EU–Gulf ruling classes of proceeding with their current policy of support for Israeli violence and normalization of colonialism in the Arab region.

Finally, a more marginal materialist “corrective” to the Lobby thesis also exists, in theorizations of the role of national oppression of the Palestinians in worldwide accumulation and the conjunctural antisystemic role of the constellation of forces aspiring to, or defending, the Arab–Iranian political sovereignty regime. This perspective proposes the Hamas-as-prison-guard theory, arguing that Hamas seeks to maintain its “military rent circuits (coming from Iran),” that is, “a social formation which draws its massive revenues from its intermediary position in exchanges with foreign capitalists.” Such a perspective flounders on economism: it expressly claims that “Hamas’s interests are not those of the proletariat” (Minassian, 2023). Thus, it fails to see that there is an objective working-class interest in achieving political sovereignty in the face of settler-colonial attacks.

The Palestinian Movement in the West

Post-2005, with the rise of the call for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS), calls for Palestinian rights grew rapidly, in the face of severe repression and the gale force of entrenched anti-Muslim, anti-Arab, and anti-Palestinian racism, including within Western liberal and left arenas.

From 2013 onward, this movement has been partially cleaved—although in ways that cannot be publicly acknowledged, in part because both wings face various degrees of state repression. This cleavage arguably represents the re-emergence of the Palestinian right, which historically was crystallized in Fatah, then the Palestinian Authority, and in the diaspora, in various normalization organizations. Indeed, historically, it occupied that political extreme, until the right wing of Fatah—which maintains antisystemic components within the Al-Aqsa Martyr's Brigade, and had left deviations through those of its cadre who helped found Islamic Jihad (Sing, 2013)—was effectively quashed with the dismantling of the Second Intifada. Politics abhors a vacuum, and that right, which is in fact a class interest, was largely reconstituted through the Boycott National Committee, the NGOs which govern American-European Palestine exile and diaspora activity, including US Campaign for Palestinian Rights, Jewish Voice for Peace, the Palestine Solidarity Committee, and the extensive network of BNC staff. These forces explicitly reject armed struggle and do not allow BDS groups which support armed struggle to identify as such, along with wide-scale purging of organizations and individuals who do not toe this line. Indeed, more recently, this cleavage emerged amidst the demonization of Iran amidst its 14 April retaliation against Israel for bombing Tehran's embassy in Damascus. This "right" has an intellectual corollary in the large array of research networks and intellectuals associated with the Cyprus Construction Corporation's Sabbagh Foundation (the wealthiest Palestinian diaspora), Al-Shabaka (funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and the German Henrich Boell Foundation, as well as an array of Palestinian Gulf capitalists and investment bankers), to construct the ideological legitimization structure of the Palestinian right.

This right has two main calling cards: first, a de-regionalization of the struggle, meaning generalized silence on Yemen and Hezbollah and often support for the US wars on Syria and Libya; and rejection of armed struggle based on international law or its supposed strategic inefficacy (Baconi, 2018; Intercepted, 2023). Gaza and its concerns are also largely absent from these discourses (Ajl, 2023a). Meanwhile, there is a more diffuse "radical" wing—dominant in exile organizations in Europe and North America, and in direct action movements in the United States and Europe,

with an organic intelligentsia primarily within the first-generation exile communities, the youth wing within exile movements, and in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Levant in nonacademic publications and platforms like *Mondoweiss* and *Electronic Intifada*, which defends armed resistance and tends to reject US interference in the Arab region writ large.

Both wings of the movement face sanctions if not criminalization, because the European and US states do not tolerate the BDS movement or public expressions of anti-Zionist sentiment. Nevertheless, antiterror legislation has hammered those elements which take a more radical line, while the less radical line encounters a great variety of repression through the “softer” civil society counter-insurgency manifested through academic disciplining. This serves to create a justification within the academic and popular spheres for more accommodationist positions vis-à-vis Palestine and Israel and justifies de-emphasis on these strategic differences on the grounds that it is Palestine itself which is radical—precluding a more granular orientation to the different forces within the national movement and its blurrily connected exile organizations and civil society appurtenances, and their class character.

The Future, by Way of Conclusion

At the time of writing, Israel had moved to a strategy of starvation siege warfare, occasional special operations raids within the Gaza Strip, and continued bombing. By early April 2024, it had withdrawn most of its armed forces from the Gaza Strip, leaving the Strip ruined, with over USD18 billion in damage, the entire university system leveled, Al-Shifa hospital inoperable and ruined, and nearly all the housing stock in the North and Center of the Strip unusable. Furthermore, top Israeli analysts had, in fact, accepted military defeat not merely on the local Israel–Palestinian sphere but regionally: “[t]he reality is that the war’s aims will not be achieved. Hamas will not be eradicated. The hostages will not be returned through military pressure. Security will not be reestablished” (Levinson, 2024). Yet, if war is an extension of politics, the operative thinking in Washington and Tel Aviv is that an engagement lost on the kinetic plane can again be won through the “indirect” violence of famine, which is underpinned by the direct violence of Israeli control over Palestinian land, sea, and air frontiers. Meanwhile, the threat of escalation looms. Israel has succeeded in a tacit goal of making the Gaza Strip literally unlivable—a declaration it

has only made *en passant*, in announcing as a possible strategic option the sowing of epidemic and famine to smoke Sinwar and other Hamas leadership out and in that way compel defeat of the military-political leadership through siege warfare. Yet, much of the Hamas military capacity endures and it seems certain that aid will re-enter the Strip, although it will be a political bargaining chip. Scenarios are endless, and on the human level, this war shall produce no winners. But politically, Israel will be unable to regain its standing, and its future as a cog in the machine of global accumulation—which requires its own political sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the security of armed accumulation—has been imperiled, alongside perhaps its role as a regional gendarme for the United States and NATO. This much is certain: on 7 October everything changed.

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ORCID iD

Max Ajl  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1422-1010>

Notes

1. See Ajl (2023b, 2024a) for an elaboration of the theoretical and analytical contortions involved.
2. Malm (2024), astoundingly, writes that the left has failed to engage with the imperialist interest in supporting Israel; but it would be more accurate to say that certain platforms and institutions with which he is associated *refuse* such engagement and ignore the rich literature which carries out such engagement.
3. Author's interview with anonymous Palestinian organizer.
4. See Part I of this article (Ajl, 2024b).
5. Thanks to Patrick Higgins for discussion on this point.
6. This article will not enter the argument over what precisely occurred on 7 October, except to state that regular disclosures, including in the Israel press, are proving what was apparent on that day: namely, multiple deployments of the Hannibal Doctrine, with Israel preferring to kill its own rather than allowing them to be captured. This differed markedly from the image presented by the Israeli and US press.

7. Consider here the serial de-publishing operations carried out by *Jadaliyya*'s Iran page, staffed by diaspora who wish to overthrow the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) in the name of "liberation," alleging the publication of "apologetics" for the IRI and sometimes for analogizing it to Israel; see Eshaghi (2020) and Farnia (2023).

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