Chapter 1

Civil Resistance and Contentious Politics

We do not work for peace. We work to end the occupation.

- Majdi, nonviolent activist, Bethlehem

Hani was ready to race. The seventeen-year-old had traveled to Ramallah the previous day from his village near Jericho and stayed overnight in the home of his cousins. Now, at nine o'clock in the morning, he found himself on a school soccer field with over three hundred other Palestinian youth, as well as several dozen Israeli and international supporters, all sporting bright, numbered t-shirts and sitting astride bicycles.

A 50-kilometer bike race from Ramallah to Jericho was organized by the East Jerusalem YMCA Youth-to-Youth Initiative on 23 March 2007, as a display of local and international solidarity against checkpoints, the separation barrier, and the occupation, and a show of support for freedom of movement. Local clubs donated hundreds of bicycles and helmets for the event, which drew Palestinians from all areas of the West Bank, as well as supporters from over twenty countries.

The governor and mayor of Ramallah, and the PA Deputy Minister for Youth and Sport, opened the event with speeches expressing support for a just peace and freedom of movement in Palestine, and rejecting human rights violations. Then, following the remarks, the race was underway, with hundreds of bikes jostling down the bumpy Ramallah-Jerusalem Road. The route, planned entirely on Palestinian roads within the West Bank, would swing east before reaching the Qalandiya checkpoint, and continue through the Jordan Valley to Jericho.

I spoke with Hani about eight kilometers into the race, when the riders were stopped by Israeli soldiers at the Jabaa' checkpoint, one of 67 internal checkpoints regulating the movement of Palestinians within the West Bank. The participants dismounted from their bicycles, but remained at the checkpoint, while the organizers and international volunteers tried to negotiate with the soldiers to allow the riders to pass. Hani informed me that it seemed the soldiers were willing to let a small number of the riders pass, but the participants were determined to stay together. They maintained a sit-in at the checkpoint for nearly an hour, before finally turning back to Ramallah. "Of course I'm disappointed," Hani told me as he untied a small Palestinian flag from the back of his bike frame, "But maybe the race ending this way will draw attention to the movement restrictions we face everyday."

Despite Hani's hopes, creative acts of resistance like the bike race were largely

overlooked during the second intifada, in both the academic literature as well as

the local and international media, overshadowed by incidents of armed struggle,

such as suicide bombings and rocket attacks. However, episodes of unarmed

resistance were taking place throughout East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza

on a daily, sometimes in visible forms such as protests and demonstrations, and

other times in more subtle forms everyday resistance and steadfastness. Episodes

like the bike race thus inspired the research questions that guide the discussion in

this book: What was really happening in Palestine in terms of unarmed struggle

during the second intifada, what were the constraints that limited mobilization,

and to what extent does a space exist for a widespread popular movement in

Palestine today?

In this chapter, I define civil resistance, drawing from nonviolent action theory,

and introduce my framework for analysis, drawing from social movement theory.

I indicate that there were many nonviolent episodes during the second intifada,

but I argue that a widespread nonviolent movement failed to emerge, not because

of a lack of popular support for unarmed methods, as often assumed by activists

and scholars alike, but rather because of constraints at the local, national, and

international levels. I suggest that there is significant potential support for

unarmed tactics, but actual mobilization depends largely on re-framing

nonviolence as strategic civil-based resistance, and re-claiming a space for such resistance in the current political context.

CIVIL RESISTANCE

Although the term "nonviolence" has many meanings, the idea of strategic nonviolence, or nonviolent action, forms the foundation the kinds of civil resistance discussed in this book. According to Gene Sharp, strategic nonviolence is based on the idea that "the exercise of power depends on the consent of the ruled who, by withdrawing that consent, can control and even destroy the power of their opponent" (1973: 4). From this viewpoint, it is believed that "governments depend on people, that power is pluralistic, and that political power is fragile because it depends on many groups for reinforcement of its power sources" (8). Thus, people can transform situations of oppression by withdrawing their consent through refusal of cooperation, withholding of help, and persistence in disobedience and defiance (64).

Direct action refers to strategic nonviolent tactics that deliberately challenge the authority of the oppressor. Direct action is usually the most visible form of popular resistance and is the approach typically associated with civil resistance. Nonviolent direct actions can include acts of omission, when people refuse to

perform acts that they are required to do by practice, custom, or law; acts of

commission, when people perform acts that they are not usually expected or

allowed to perform; or combinations of the two (Sharp 1973). Both acts of

omission and acts of commission can be categorized in the areas of protest and

persuasion, noncooperation, and intervention (Sharp 1973, Helvey 2004,

Ackerman and Kruegler 1994).

Protest and Persuasion

Acts of protest and persuasion include public actions such as mass

demonstrations, marches, and vigils; formal statements such as petitions,

declarations, and public statements; symbolic acts such as displaying flags, colors,

and symbols; and communicative acts such as hanging banners and posters,

distributing newspapers and leaflets, and holding meetings and teach-ins. While

often used strategically throughout nonviolent movements, acts of protest and

persuasion usually emerge early in a struggle, and can function as tools for

mobilization and consciousness-raising (Sharp 1973). The bike race provides an

example of this type of tactic, in that it sought to mobilize local youth in protest of

movement restrictions, while simultaneously raising awareness about freedom of

movement violations in the hopes of persuading others to act on the issue.

Protest and persuasion techniques have several objectives. First, actions of this nature seek to provide a signal to oppressive forces that the participants seriously object to certain policies or acts. Moreover, these actions serve to show the wider oppressed population that the opposition movement is challenging the oppressor, thus encouraging others to critically analyze their situation and, ultimately, work for change. Finally, persuasive actions can raise consciousness about the situation outside of the region, thus calling attention to the situation and increasing international solidarity. In these ways, protest and persuasion tactics serve as challenges to the oppressor on the one hand, and as appeals for local participation and external support on the other hand. The bike race again provided an example of this type of action, in aiming for exposure, expression, and persuasion.

Noncooperation

Often considered the most powerful category of nonviolent tactics (Helvey 2004), noncooperation includes acts of social, political, and economic noncooperation. Social noncooperation includes acts such as shunning and ostracism, suspension or boycott of social events, and disobeying social norms, thus marginalizing the oppressive community. Acts of economic noncooperation, including boycotts, strikes, and nonpayment of taxes, aim to impair the means available to a government to provide goods and services to its supporters, thus decreasing

supporter loyalty. In addition, reducing government means can ultimately hinder its ability to carry out oppressive policies. While nearly all nonviolent acts are political to a degree, acts of political noncooperation refer specifically to actions that aim to reject the authority of the occupying power, such as withdrawal of political support, boycott of government bodies, and refusal to recognize government institutions.

The objective of noncooperation is to make it difficult for the government to function by withdrawing the people's consent to the occupying power. While impairing the oppressor, noncooperation can also increase solidarity within the community and strengthen civil society (Helvey 2004). In the case of Palestine, acts of noncooperation such as strikes and boycotts did take place during the second intifada, however, because of the effective separation of the Israeli and Palestinian populations, these actions often went unnoticed in Israel. However, there were still numerous incidents of noncooperation, including many daily interactions between Palestinians and Israeli soldiers at checkpoints. In the bike race for example, the refusal of the bikers to turn around when instructed to do so reflected the spirit of noncooperation.

Intervention

Intervention refers to acts of civil disobedience, such as sit-ins, pray-ins, defiance of blockades, land seizure, and use of alternative social, economic, transportation, and communication systems (Sharp 1973). Interventionist tactics aim to disrupt established practices and policies with the aim of creating new relationships, institutions, and patterns of behavior (Helvey 2004). Because they are more confrontational, interventionist acts often put activists at greater risk for more severe repression than other actions, including detention, arrest, personal injury, and even death. However, because they are provocative, interventionist actions are sometimes more effective than other tactics in forcing attention on the issue.

Even when the oppressive power responds to interventionist tactics with violence, such harsh responses can bring about change by initiating political jiu-jitsu. According to Helvey, political jiu-jitsu occurs when "negative reactions to the opponents' violent repression against nonviolent resisters is turned to operate politically against the opponents, weakening their power position and strengthening that of the nonviolent resisters" (2004: 150). In this way, harsh responses by an occupying power to activist tactics can convince other bodies, such as international organizations, institutions, and states, to put pressure on the regime or lend support to the movement.

In the case of the bike race for example, if the youth had collectively decided to defy the soldiers' orders and attempt to push through or around the checkpoint, this would have been an interventionist act of civil disobedience. The youth would almost certainly have been subject to arrests, tear gas, rubber bullets, and possibly live ammunition, thus, organizers of the event needed to decide if the risks to participants were worth the potential political gains. While in this instance, the organizers ultimately decided to obey the soldiers' orders, I witnessed numerous episodes when activists defied authorities by damaging separation barrier infrastructure, entering prohibited "security zones," and dismantling road blocks.

Acts of protest and persuasion (such as marches, demonstrations, and protests), noncooperation (such as boycotts and strikes), and direct intervention (including civil disobedience) characterize some of the most visible nonviolent tactics in Palestine and elsewhere. This book focuses primarily on mobilization related to these direct actions, but also explores indirect actions, including civil society initiatives and everyday acts of resistance, which characterized the broader sphere of nonviolence in Palestine in the second intifada.

Broadening the lens of nonviolence in this way offers both benefits and risks. On the one hand, this extension may be necessary to accommodate the range of actors

and actions that contribute to activism in situations of protracted conflict, such as Palestine, in which the lines between activists and non-activists are not always clearly defined. From this perspective, resistance becomes a part of daily life, extending beyond activist networks and becoming incorporated into institutions such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), schools, and media outlets. On the other hand, expanding the discussion of nonviolence in this way risks conceptual stretching, blurring the meaning of resistance not only for scholars, but also for activists attempting to mobilize others for strategic action. Thus, in this study, while I include both direct and indirect actions in my discussion, I distinguish between them in my analysis, exploring how indirect actions can both facilitate and constrain direct resistance.

Ultimately, the strategic nonviolence discussed in this book refers to action, in contrast to passivity or pacification, as sometimes implied by critics. Likewise, it is distinct from dialogue and conflict resolution, in that it actively confronts systems of direct violence and structural violence and seeks change, not accommodation. Finally, strategic nonviolence is different from forgiveness and reconciliation, which are processes of healing that, when possible, are generally more appropriate in post-conflict settings. Strategic nonviolence, or civil resistance, is ultimately a method of popular struggle and a mode of contentious politics.

CIVIL RESISTANCE IN THE SECOND INTIFADA

Palestine presents a unique case in that the PA functions as a state-like institution, yet East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza remain occupied territories under Israel. This arrangement creates a double challenge for activists. First, it requires them to confront challenges from their own government while focusing the crux of their efforts on the occupying force. Second, the occupation status complicates Sharp's assumption that power depends on the consent of the ruled, and its corollary that withdrawal of consent can destroy the power of the oppressor. While this theory may pertain in internal situations, it is difficult to apply in situations of occupation, as even complete withdrawal of Palestinian consent does not undercut the power of the Israeli government if it still has the support of the Israeli constituency. Similarly, situations of occupation present activists with an even greater challenge than removing a dictator or political party from office, in that they must seek to change the relational structure between themselves and the occupier. They thus need to negotiate a space for resisting the occupying force while convincing the occupying state's people and leadership of the need for change.

Because the framework of power and consent is different in the Palestinian context, methods of nonviolent action also vary in strategic effect. Strategies such as protest and persuasion, noncooperation, and intervention are all difficult to employ in the Palestinian context in which the Israeli and Palestinian societies function separately. This has especially become the case since the construction of the separation barrier, which has further limited contact points between Palestinians and Israelis. As a result, protests and demonstrations within Palestine are rarely noticed in Israel, Palestinian strikes affect only Palestinians, and few opportunities exist for public civil disobedience. The bike race for example took place within the West Bank on Palestinian roads; thus, even the sit-in at the internal checkpoint was only witnessed by other Palestinian travelers. Thus, Palestinians have had to develop other creative nonviolent strategies to influence the Israeli public and government, and have shifted much of their activism to target the international community rather than Israeli society.

The direct action campaigns that did take place in the West Bank emerged largely in response to the construction of the separation barrier, which divides many rural communities from their farmland and water sources. Though most actions focused on "stopping the wall," the village campaigns became a nexus of resistance to the occupation itself. The majority of village-based direct action campaigns were coordinated by local popular committees, consisting of individual volunteers from

local communities who led demonstrations, mobilized villagers, organized boycotts, and often maintained communications with other committees, media outlets, and solidarity groups.

Many local campaigns were directly or indirectly supported by civil society organizations, which helped local communities initiate legal cases, facilitated research and documentation, and organized trainings, conferences, and workshops to disseminate nonviolent strategies. Other NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) encouraged international outreach and solidarity, especially in the form of boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) campaigns, and coordinated alternative tourism and encounter programs to increase international awareness of the occupation. Other civil society groups used independent media to raise awareness about the occupation in general and the unarmed struggle in particular, both regionally and internationally. Finally, countless Palestinians participated in everyday acts of resistance, specifically remaining on their land in spite of encroaching settlements and construction of the separation barrier, in the spirit of *sumoud*.

A SOCIAL MOVEMENTS APPROACH

In terms of both direct and indirect actions, popular struggle was not absent during the second intifada. However, civil resistance was episodic at best, with participation limited, never garnering the mass mobilization necessary to constitute a cohesive movement. Activists and scholars alike often assume that there is a lack of public support for unarmed resistance in Palestine. This book challenges that assumption by demonstrating that that there is in fact significant support for strategic nonviolent methods as part of a larger toolbox of activism. The fragmentation of the movement is thus better explained by constraints at the local, national, and global levels. A social movements, or contentious politics, approach offers a theoretical framework for examining these levels in terms of movement coordination, political constraints, and movement framings (Tarrow 1998; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996).

Local Level: Resource Mobilization

Palestinians found (or indeed, created) opportunities for resistance throughout the second intifada. However, activists lacked the sufficient organization necessary for translating local actions and campaigns into a viable *movement*. Challenges to effective resource coordination were evident both within and between political parties, NGOs, and grassroots networks, specifically in terms of agreeing on

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common goals and utilizing strategic tactics, thus inhibiting widespread mobilization.

How do social movements actually form and function? According to some scholars, a movement's relative success or failure depends largely on the efficiency of its mobilizing structures, the "collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action" (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996: 3). This dimension of analysis includes resource mobilization theory, which examines mobilization in the context of professional social movement organizations (SMOs) (McCarthy and Zald 1973, 1977); and the political process model, which examines the role of informal, grassroots institutions as mobilizing entities.

The mobilizing structures approach is particularly relevant to this research for its focus on movement goals, which, in contrast to the first intifada, Palestinian activists failed to collectively articulate; attention to effects of extremists, which is significant in Palestinian resistance in terms of the role of armed groups; and perhaps most importantly, analysis of tactics. The distinction between the SMO focus of the resource-mobilization model and the grassroots focus of the political process model also allow for analysis of both the complementary and competitive

efforts of mid-level NGOs and grassroots-level community-based organizations (CBOs) in Palestine.

In Palestine, resource mobilization during the second intifada faced particular challenges at the political level. Palestinian political parties had proved ineffective in mobilizing for popular resistance in the post-Oslo period (1993-1999), in sharp contrast to the first intifada, in which political movements consistently mobilized members for participation in the struggle. This was largely due to the institutionalization of the major parties under Oslo, which necessitated the transformation of former "movements" under the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) into more conventional parties under the Palestinian Authority (PA). This change was especially evident on university campuses, where the organizing workshops and political theory teach-ins that used to be coordinated by the political movements were phased out following the first intifada.

The failure of Fateh to serve as a leader of resistance, combined with the internal corruption of the PA in the late 1990s and its inability to provide social services, created a space for the rising influence of Hamas, which had several implications for popular resistance. First, it shifted the focus of the popular struggle from strategic nonviolence, as employed during the first intifada, to armed resistance,

thus militarizing the struggle and, in doing so, limiting opportunities for popular participation. Second, rising tensions between Hamas and Fateh fractured resistance against the occupation, as the parties either organized their own separate actions against the occupation, or prioritized their mobilization regarding the internal struggle over resisting the occupation.

The institutionalization of political parties was not the only organizational factor fragmenting mobilization for civil resistance. At the civil society level, many NGOs were seen as co-opting nonviolence during the post-Oslo period, leading to the professionalization of activism. For many, the shift to NGO-based "activism" depleted the voluntary spirit of nonviolence, rendering it a business rather than resistance. Furthermore, the proliferation of NGOs created a marketplace of sorts for nonviolence, with organizations competing for funding and becoming increasingly influenced by donor-driven agendas. This phenomenon created challenges in mobilizing for nonviolent resistance specifically, as NGOs during the post-Oslo period frequently adopted interpretations of nonviolence as peacebuilding or dialogue, in accordance with donor definitions.

Organizational structures at both the formal and informal levels thus faced challenges in effectively mobilizing for widespread participation. While some popular committees and CBOs had success at the local level, mass mobilization

remained limited largely due to shortcomings in various mobilizing structures, including political parties, NGOs, and grassroots networks.

National Level(s): Political Constraints

Shortcomings at the movement level were further exacerbated by political constraints stemming from Israel, the PA, and the structural dynamic between the two. According to social movement theory, political opportunities refer to the "changes in the institutional structure or informal power relations of a given national political system" (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996, 3), which either create opportunities that "encourage people to engage in contentious politics" (Tarrow 1998, 20), or create constraints that discourage contention. This structural approach focuses primarily on the emergence of social movements, guided by the idea that movements "are shaped by the broader set of political constraints and opportunities unique to the national context in which they are embedded" (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996, 3). Political opportunities and constraints might include dynamic factors such as the level of political access, shifting alignments, united/divided elites, influential allies, and the degree of repression/facilitation;[i] while stable aspects might include the level of state strength and prevailing modes of systematic repression (Tarrow 1998).

In the case of Palestine, Israel's state strength, support from the United States, and tradition of suppressing resistance represented constraints to contention, in combination with the problematic PA structure and divisions among Palestinian elites. Israeli policies of separation, visibly manifest in the separation barrier, limited contact points between Israeli and Palestinian societies, restricting opportunities for direct actions to checkpoints and wall construction zones, limiting Palestinian interactions with Israelis to soldiers and settlers, and preventing opportunities to engage directly with mainstream Israelis. For these reasons, attempts at demonstrations, strikes, and boycotts went largely unheeded in Israel, thus prompting a shift to more symbolic, advocacy-based actions and reliance on media coverage to appeal to the international community for solidarity.

Likewise, Israeli measures restricting freedom of movement within the West Bank, including checkpoints, roadblocks, and the separation barrier, further fragmented Palestinian resistance by localizing actions, and making large-scale events and campaigns difficult to organize and implement. In addition, Israel's use of military violence in response to unarmed actions, as well as frequent arrests of activists and their families, further hindered participation.

Political constraints also emerged within Palestine from the PA during the post-Oslo period. In the years following Oslo, Arafat marginalized the activist-intellectuals who were leaders during the first intifada by replacing them with new institutions led by individuals loyal to him, and hindering these activists' organizations by attempting to supplant their services, influencing their agendas, and ultimately, repressing popular resistance. This apparent clamp on activists was largely due to the fact that both nonviolent leaders and militant groups posed threats to Arafat's authority; however, it was also due to the nature of the Oslo agreement itself, which tasked Arafat personally with maintaining security in the West Bank and Gaza. Meanwhile, the "semi-autonomous" structure of the PA under Oslo made Palestinian institutions increasingly dependent on Israel, politically and economically. Thus, rather than functioning as a site of Palestinian leadership, the PA came to be perceived as an ineffective bureaucracy at best, and a puppet of Israel and the West at worst. Indeed, the PA was not only seen as being under the thumb of Israel, but of the broader international community, either through direct political pressure from the US and the Quartet, or through indirect economic pressure from donor governments and agencies promoting the Oslo "peace process."

Palestinian activists thus faced considerable political constraints in mobilizing for popular resistance, in terms of repression from both the Israeli government and

the PA. In this way, the political structure established under the Oslo Accords resulted in the development of two polities that generated constraints to Palestinian resistance.

International Level: Movement Frames

While political opportunities and mobilizing structures identify some factors for potential collective action, they overlook the salience of ideas, meaning, and identity in individual and collective decisions to resist. As McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald summarize, "people need to feel both aggrieved about some aspect of their lives and optimistic that, acting collectively, they can redress the problem" (1996: 5). The presence or absence of those perceptions is informed by the social construction of movements, or framings, which link the individual to the structural, and build a bridge between movement emergence and dynamics.

In most social movement theory, movement framings refer to the packaging of the *issue* for mobilization. In the case of Palestine however, I extend the framing theory to examine the packaging of *tactics*, specifically nonviolence. Indeed, most Palestinians identify strongly with the issue of resisting the occupation, but do not necessarily identify with the concept of nonviolence as a useful tactic. I attributed this phenomenon largely to western framings of nonviolence during the Oslo

period, which shifted the meaning of nonviolence from resistance to pacification, especially for youth.

Indeed, many second-intifada youth were experienced "nonviolence" as a euphemism for normalization, as propagated during the Oslo period. In particular, the international community's support for dialogue initiatives in the 1990s created a discourse that linked nonviolence with notions of peace, coexistence, dialogue, toleration, forgiveness, and reconciliation. While these concepts may complement a principled approach to nonviolence, they were distinct from the pragmatic nonviolent resistance practiced by Palestinians in the first intifada. In this way, the concept of nonviolence was reframed under Oslo from one of struggle and resistance to one of accommodation and coexistence. As a result, post-Oslo youth tended to distance themselves from civil resistance in framed in the context of nonviolence.

Mobilization for civil resistance in the second intifada was limited by demobilizing organizations, political constraints, and ineffective framings of "nonviolence" under Oslo. However, potential mobilization for unarmed resistance remains high, indicating that a space does exist for a more unified, widespread popular movement.[ii] Although many divisive factors remain, there is public support for civil resistance, and, perhaps more importantly, popular

willingness to participate in unarmed actions, particularly amongst Palestinian youth. However, the realization of a widespread movement depends largely on reclaiming a space for popular struggle in the post-Oslo political context, and reframing "nonviolence" in the broader framework of civil resistance.

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[i] According to Tilly, "repression is any action by another group that raises the contender's cost of collective action. An action which lowers the group's cost of collective action is a form of facilitation" (1978: 100).

[ii] This study draws from Klandermans' concepts of consensus formation, consensus (or potential) mobilization, and action mobilization. I argue that Palestinian youth embody aspects of a collective Palestinian identity, or consensus, of resistance, that results from both organic consensus formation and intentional consensus mobilization. Klandermans defines consensus formation as "the unplanned convergence of meaning in social networks and subcultures" and consensus mobilization as "a deliberate attempt by a social actor to create consensus among a subset of the population" (1992: 80). However, the consensus mobilization to date, while generating "a set of individuals predisposed to participate in a social movement," has failed to extend to action mobilization, or "the legitimation of concrete goals and means of action" (Klandermans 1992: 80).

Youth thus represent a sector with significant "mobilization potential"

(Klandermans 1992: 80), which requires new cultural framings, as well as

improved organizational structures and creation of political opportunities, to

translate into action.