

[Oz, Beinart, Gourevitch and Khalidi On Gaza](#)

This is a catch-up post on important articles earlier this summer that we've neglected to write about.

Award-winning New Yorker correspondent Philip Gourevitch, who first achieved acclaim in 1998 with his book on the Rwanda genocide, favorably contrasts the view of Israeli peacenik writer Amos Oz over that of Palestinian-American historian Rashid Khalidi ("[An Honest Voice in Israel](#)," Aug. 2). In another New Yorker article ("[Collective Punishment in Gaza](#)"), Prof. Khalidi completely dismisses Hamas attacks on Israel as "pretexts" and "red herrings." This quote sums up Gourevitch's critique of Khalidi, in contrast to Oz's observations from his [radio interview on Deutsche Welle](#):

If you take an interest in the war in Gaza, you should read the [Hamas charter](#), but Oz sums up its biggest idea handily enough: "It says that the Prophet commands every Muslim to kill every Jew, everywhere in the world." If Khalidi has a problem with this, he keeps it to himself. While Oz has no problem saying that Israel's violent occupation is unjust to Palestinians and endangers its own people, Khalidi refuses to acknowledge that Hamas exists to end Israel's existence and thrives on Palestinian wretchedness. In the heat of his moral condemnation of Israel—and of America for supporting Israel against Hamas—the hardest line that he will allow himself against Gaza's categorically genocidal leadership is that "we may not like" it. What would he lose to say that we must not?

Ultimately, Khalidi's argument seems to be that might makes wrong. Israel, he says, is "the stronger party." He sees that strength as entirely dependent on America, and he argues that, if America seriously wants to make peace, it must cut Israel loose. Khalidi's aim is to drive a wedge between Israel and what he sees as the only thing it has going for it—American support . . .

Oz's basic view is the same as that of Peter Beinart, as expressed in this article in Ha'aretz, July 23, "[Israel's best weapon against Hamas: Giving the Palestinians hope](#)." Here's an abridged version:

. . . Israel can destroy Hamas' rockets, but Hamas will eventually rebuild them bigger and better, as it did after the last war, and the one before that. And in the relatives and friends of the Palestinians killed in Operation Protective Edge, it will find plenty of new recruits willing to fire them. Israel can overthrow

Hamas and then pull back, but it will leave in its wake Somalia-like chaos that gives groups even more radical than Hamas free reign. Israel can overthrow Hamas and try to install Fatah, but doing so will harm the latter as much as the former because any faction that rides into Gaza atop an Israeli tank will lose its public legitimacy forever. Israel can overthrow Hamas and try to govern Gaza itself, but that would require Israeli 18-year-olds to permanently patrol house-to-house in a territory where they're constantly at risk of becoming the next Gilad Shalit.

So what would I do? First, I'd seek a cease-fire that eases those aspects of Israel's blockade that have no legitimate security rationale. . . .

Here are a couple of examples. Since 2010, Israel has made it easier for goods to enter Gaza. But it still makes it extremely difficult for goods to leave. According to the Israeli human rights group Gisha, only two percent as many truckloads leave the Strip [as did in 2007](#). If Israel wants to check those trucks to ensure they're not carrying weapons, fine. ...

But essentially barring Gazan exports to Israel and the West Bank – historically Gaza's biggest markets – is both inhumane and stupid. It's helped destroy the independent business class that could have been a check on Hamas' power, and left many in Gaza with the choice of working for Hamas or receiving food aid.

In addition to goods, Israel should make it easier for people to leave Gaza, too. A quarter of Gazans have family in the West Bank. Yet even before this war, Israel [allowed Gazans to travel](#) to the West Bank only in "exceptional humanitarian cases." Yes, Israel can restrict the travel of terrorists. But preventing young Gazans from studying in the West Bank – like preventing Gazan businessmen from exporting there – is self-defeating and inhumane. It feeds the isolation and despair that Hamas exploits.

Second, I'd let Hamas take part in a Palestinian unity government that prepares the ground for Palestinian elections. That doesn't mean tolerating Hamas attacks, to which Israel should always reserve the right to respond. But it means no longer trying to bar Hamas from political participation because of its noxious views.

It's common to hear pro-Israel hawks ridicule Mahmoud Abbas for lacking authority over Gaza and for serving the 10th year of a four-year presidential term. But by opposing Palestinian elections, Israel creates the very circumstance its supporters bemoan. . . .

. . . What's crucial is not that Hamas as a party endorse the two-state solution. After all, Likud as a party [has not endorsed](#) the two state-solution, either. What's crucial is that Hamas promise to respect a two-state agreement if endorsed by the Palestinian people in a referendum. In the past, Hamas leaders have [told the media](#) they would. Israel, or its Western allies, should get that pledge in writing, and, in return, allow the free elections necessary to produce a Palestinian leadership with the legitimacy to make a deal.

. . . Nothing would weaken Hamas more than growing Palestinian faith that through nonviolence and mutual recognition, they can win the basic rights they've been denied for almost half a century. Israel's best long-term strategy against Palestinian violence is Palestinian hope. Unfortunately, as effective as Benjamin Netanyahu has been at destroying Palestinian rockets, he's been even more effective at destroying that.