

Peace in the Mideast, Summer 2024

Exploring the Nature of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict from its Beginning to Today



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Foreword:

This summer at the University of California, Irvine's Interdisciplinary Center for the Scientific Study of Ethics and Morality, students led by instructors Professor Daniel Bar-Tal and Justin Pollack addressed an especially pressing topic of modern geopolitical conflict concerned with ethics and morality. In the shadow of October 7th, in which members of Hamas brutally murdered over 1,200 Israelis and took hundreds hostage, and the following occupation of the Gaza strip by the Israeli Defence Forces where over 40,000 Palestinians have been killed and over 1.9 million displaced, having an understanding of the Israeli-Arab conflict and its historic basis are crucial amidst a modern geopolitical landscape riddled with misinformation, bias, and polarization. Understanding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a whole requires examining the varying narratives and perspectives within Israeli and Palestinian societies, with a broad range of views reflecting the nuanced, complex nature of the conflict.

This module began with discussion and lecture on the social psychology of intractable conflicts, drawing on Professor Bar-Tal's 2013 book on the socio-psychological foundations, dynamics, and characteristics of intractable conflicts. Students were taught about the cycle of intractable conflicts—outbreak, escalation, de-escalation, and peace building through reconciliation—and real-world examples of these. The aim of this was to equip students with the knowledge and ability to apply ethical frameworks and better understand the nature of how intractable conflicts are formed and can be resolved. Through this, students examined the culture of conflict, moral dilemmas, and solutions to intractable conflicts. From there, the module focused on examining the historical background of the Israeli-Arab conflict focusing on key



moments throughout history from the Ottoman Empire and the First Aliyah to the current Israel-Hamas war. Students learned about and researched relevant topics spanning history from both Israeli and Palestinian sources, and were taught how to analyze the different perspectives within them. Each meeting students were engaged in open, constructive dialogue and lecture about each time period and were encouraged to discuss given topics from both an Israeli and Palestinian perspective to broaden their understanding and eliminate bias. Students were then divided by groups focused on a time period and selected different topics to research, analyze, and apply their understanding of intractable conflicts to both Israeli and Palestinian perspectives, which now culminated in this report.

Especially now it is paramount to have a well-informed, non-biased understanding of one of the most geopolitically complex and personal intractable conflicts of our time. This module aimed to educate youth and focus on unbiased, nuanced approaches to the discussion of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The ongoing debate and discourse surrounding this topic will have far-reaching implications for today's world and future generations, and by fostering discussion within these exceptional students, this module allowed them to develop their research and analytical abilities, granted them the understanding of ethical and moral considerations in intractable conflicts, and enabled them to be mindful of differing perspectives.



The Idea of Zionism and the First Wave of Jewish Immigration

Authors: Jane Park, Jia Kim, Eliana Tesfaye, and Siena Mahdi

Introduction: What is Zionism?

Although the roots of Zionism extend further back in history, modern Zionism was politically established in the late 19th century by Austro-Hungarian Jewish political activist, Theodor Herzl. More than just a belief, Zionism emerged as a movement in response to centuries of anti-Semitic persecution in Europe, advocating for the creation and preservation of a Jewish national state in modern-day Palestine. This ideology was fueled by the Jewish diaspora's aspiration for Israeli independence and encompasses various aspects of Jewish-Israeli politics as well as Jewish identity as a whole.

Initially, Zionism struggled to gain widespread Jewish support, but it soon became extremely influential later in the 20th century. Today, over 46% of the world's Jews now live in Israel. However, as Zionism gained traction, Palestinian dissent intensified, supported by the broader Arab population. The opposition to Jewish settlement in Palestine continues to remain a focal point of international debate, deeply affecting Palestinian-Israeli relations and sparking intense hostility.

The Idea of Zionism from a Palestinian Perspective

Palestinian sentiment toward Zionism has not drastically altered over time, but has become more urgent and extreme as the movement has etched its way into the everyday lives of the Palestinian majority. When Zionism was solidifying its roots in the beginning of the 20th century, Palestinian authorities believed the movement was a threat but never predicted it would



become the center of debate throughout the nation. In 1908, the first anti-Zionist weekly newspaper was published by Palestinian journalist Najib Nassar. In his writings, Nassar stresses how modern day Zionism is officially a threat to Palestine and no longer a harmless belief supported by a small fraction of Jews. His goal was to warn his people of the movement's increase in both support and funding. This narrative foreshadows the following increase in anti-Zionist sentiment in Palestine.

Palestinians began to associate Zionism with western colonialism near the time of The Balfour Declaration which promised a “national home for the Jewish people” in Palestinian territory. This declaration unified the Palestinian people in resistance through extreme anti-Zionist and anti-British ideologies. The first large-scale Palestinian anti-Zionist demonstrations took place at the Nebi Musa Riots in 1920. Speakers at this riot proposed a much more militant approach at stopping Zionism and Jewish settlement from spreading throughout the region. During these riots, tensions erupted into violence, highlighting the deepening rift between the Jewish and Arab communities in Palestine. The passionate speeches made by Amin al-Husayni and others, gathered the support of many and were seen as a cry for independence against British and Israeli forces that they believed desired to oppress them. This period saw the rise of organized Palestinian political movements and a growing sense of nationalism, with an increasing number of Palestinians viewing Zionism as an existential threat.

The Idea of Zionism from an Israeli Jewish Perspective

Since the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Zionism remains an extremely sensitive topic of discussion across the world. During rough circumstances in Eastern Europe, Jews quickly found peace in certain regions of Palestine and what is now Israel. During this period, the Jewish community in Palestine were certain the overall goals of Zionism would soon be achieved, but the Balfour Declaration of 1917 gave Jews an additional sense of hope in having their own state, as it promised a “national home for Jewish people”. As Zionism started to spread throughout the Jewish community, not all Zionists had the same views on what returning to the homeland would



be like. Secular Zionists, influenced by Theodor Herzl, viewed the return to the historical land of Israel as a cultural revival of Jewish people and a national revival of a land that was lost long ago. Religious Zionists had a much more spiritual view, emphasizing that the return to Israel is part of the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. These two sectors of Zionism in the early 20th century explain the blend of national, cultural, and religious revivals that we see in Israel today. The early decades of Zionism were characterized by intense immigrations, agricultural development, and the creation of democratic institutions.

Eventually, Israeli Zionism was forced to grapple with complex issues such as integration, pursuits of peace and security, and mainly, conflicts with Arab neighbors. Before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Jewish settlers viewed Arab opposition as a significant obstacle in achieving their aspirations of a united homeland. Many Jews felt the rising hostility and tensions of their new neighbors, and voiced that Arab resistance was a threat to their survival and overall right to self-determination. This period cemented a view among many Jews that Arabs were determined to eradicate Jewish settlement and will continue to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state.

The Nebi Musa riots of 1920 resulted in the deaths of five Jews and injuries to many more, causing shock and fear within the Jewish community. The violence reminded many of the vulnerability Jewish settlements faced in Palestine. The Nebi Musa riots reinforced Zionist ideals for many Jews in the region. Furthermore, the violence was seen as validation that Jews needed a state of their own to secure protection from anti-Semitic attacks. Although Israeli society was filled with differing ideologies, Zionism remained a solidifying force in shaping Jewish identity and guiding the future political, social, and cultural developments in Israel. Currently, Israel's Jewish population has surpassed 7 million. Israel is recognized as a sovereign state by many, but the concept of the state remains an extremely controversial issue among residents of that region.



Introduction: The First Wave of Jewish Immigration or the First Aliyah

The First Aliyah, occurring between 1881 and 1903, was the first significant wave of Jewish immigration to Palestine. A total of about 35,000 Jews from mainly Eastern Europe but also Yemen were motivated by a combination of spiritual beliefs, nationalist aspirations, and safety from persecution and economic turmoil in their countries of origin. The First Aliyah was triggered by Theodor Herzl's talks of Zionism but continued due to organizational support and financial resources. The First Aliyah and the rise of Jewish immigration laid the foundation for the state of Israel's formation and the future of Zionism that we now know today. However, the First Aliyah also impacted local Palestinian Arab populations and set the stage for widespread political turmoil that would permanently alter the region in every aspect of life.

The First Wave of Jewish Immigration from a Palestinian Perspective

The first wave of Jewish Immigration is seen very differently depending on what the source is. From a Palestinian perspective, the first wave began after World War I when the League of Nations placed Palestine, which was previously under the control of the Ottoman Empire, under British administration. According to the United Nations, which is known to have some bias towards Palestine, this administration was known to support a Jewish national home in Palestine. This led to a mass immigration to the area causing Palestinians to uprising in 1936 in the Arab Revolt. After much continued tension, the United Nations split Palestine into two states in 1947. The two states were the Arab and Jewish states, but in 1948 Israel declared independence. Palestinians state that when this occurred, Israel captured more land than was originally given during the partition plan and this caused outrage. According to the United Nations, more than half of the Palestinians were forced out of their homes and many were sent to refugee camps.

In the book, *The Palestinian People: A History*, it stated that Palestinians had become "the odd man out" even prior to 1948. However, the event where they were removed from their



homes heightened everything to new levels. In 1967, there was a Six-Day War between Israel and neighboring Arab states. There were almost half a million Palestinians forced to flee as Israel was now occupying Gaza and the West Bank. The United Nations was very clear that Palestinians had the right to their independence and to return to their homes from the Refugee Camps. Then later in 1987, Palestinians revolted against Israel and eventually were able to bring the signing for the Oslo Accords which was between Israel and Palestine. This was able to get Palestinians to recognize Israel and the Palestinian authorities were granted permission to govern parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

However, there were many more issues between both sides that were unable to be resolved. These issues escalated and in 2000 there were bombings and armed clashes as a result. In 2005 Israel then withdrew troops and citizens in Gaza which was after an armed takeover done by Hamas. Then in 2007, Israel started to relocate back onto Gaza and that caused a catastrophe on both sides. After all the tensions and bloody events Palestinian was forced to remove their membership from the United Nations. They are now considered an observer state. The United Nations also demanded that Israel remove and stop all their illegal settlement activity however this did happen despite their warnings. After all those events and observing them from a Palestinian point of view, both sides have viewed that the separating into two states was unsuccessful and their issues are far from resolved. Palestinians state that this conflict will continue until Israel is able to halt their occupations and justice is brought.

The First Wave of Jewish Immigration from an Israeli Perspective

The 1881-1882 massacre in Russia, marked a significant wave of Jewish immigration to the land of Israel. Many Jews came primarily from Eastern Europe. One group was former members of Hibbat Zion and Bilu, two early Zionist movements that were the mainstays of the First Aliyah. These early Zionists aimed for the Jewish people's political, national, and spiritual revival. Despite the harsh climates, diseases, heavy Turkish taxation, and Arab opposition, the Jews relied on two people, Hibbat Zion and Baron Edmond de Rothschild. Baron Edmond de



Rothschild established agricultural settlements called moshavot, a type of agricultural Jewish settlement in Israel founded by the members of the Old Yishuv in the late 1870s. Nearly 35,000 Jews immigrated during this period, but almost half of the Jews left with around 15,000 establishing rural settlements and the rest moving to towns.

During the 22 years of the First Aliyah, pioneers established 32 new Hebrew settlements in the land of Israel, known as the new Yishuv. The Jews faced many challenges and personal sacrifices. Among the first colonies established were Rishon Lezion, Zichron Yaacov, Rosh Pina, and Petah Tikva. Later, Rehovot, Menahemia, Metula, Nes Ziona, Gedera, Hadera, Atlit and other colonies followed. Meanwhile, the concept of “The New Jew” emerged, promoting a strong and resilient Jewish figure in response to the need for a Jewish state or Zionism. Zionist leaders like Theodor Herzl and Max Nordau championed this ideal, emphasizing the physical and mental resilience for Independence in Israel.

During the First Aliyah, while most Jews from Russia and Romania migrated to the United States, those who came to the land of Israel were mainly middle-class families and emissaries. Due to their urban backgrounds, most settled in cities like Jadda and Jerusalem. Around 2,500 Yemeni Jews moved to Jerusalem and encountered economic difficulties as well as a lack of housing and unfriendly treatment by other residents of the city. As a result, they created separate housing, community, and financial organizations for themselves. Agricultural settlements based on private farms sprang across Israel from Metula to Gedera including Rishon LeTzion, Zichron Yaakov, and Yesod HaMa’aleh. The immigrants also stimulated the development of older communities such as Petach Tikva and Rosh Pinna. Despite the hardships, these settlements were supported by Baron Edmond DeRothschild, while Eliezer Ben Yehuda’s efforts strengthened Hebrew leading to major changes in education and culture.



Conclusion

The perspectives of Arabs and Israelis on Zionism and the First Aliyah reveal deep-rooted historical and ideological differences that will continue to spur conflict in the region. For many Israelis, the First Aliyah marks the hopeful beginning of their existence in the Middle East and a foundational moment in fulfillments of Jewish aspirations across the world. Conversely, Palestinian Arabs perceive the First Aliyah and significant waves of Jewish immigration as the primary reason for their peoples displacement and ongoing struggle. Likewise, Zionism is seen as an external force that disrupted Palestinian life. The complete divergence in each side's narrative gives the issue a unique form of complexity that will be difficult to solve. Bridging the gap between these contrasting perspectives will require both Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews to acknowledge the legitimacy of each group's history. This conflict's urgency has spiked within the past few months and will continue to become more disastrous as both sides continue to dehumanize and delegitimize the other.

The War of 1948 and the Establishment of Israel

Authors: Stella Myers, Adam Benjamin, Nathan Nightingale, Caden Baniassad

Overview: Nakba of the Palestinians

The term “Nakba” refers to the Palestinian exodus in 1948, which was a pivotal event in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Nakba, which means “catastrophe” in Arabic, resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. Following the declaration of the State of Israel in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, over 700,000 Palestinian Arabs were displaced from their homes. This led to widespread dispossession and caused significant loss of life and property; it also resulted in the creation of a large refugee population. This population has faced ongoing challenges and have felt that their rights have been denied ever since (United Nations.).

The conflict between Jews and Arabs had intensified in the 1930s, both due to the increase of Jewish immigration and the Zionist movement trying to establish a Jewish state in Palestine (United Nations). Because of the persecution of Jews in Europe, many were fleeing and trying to find security and safety elsewhere. The conflict got bigger after the United Nations proposed a partition plan to divide Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem under a UN administration. This plan was accepted by the Jewish leadership but it was rejected by the Arab states. They argued that it was unfair and violated the UN Charter. Jewish militias launched attacks against Palestinian homes and villages, and thousands of Palestinians had to flee (United Nations). When Israel declared independence on May 14, 1948, surrounding Arab countries invaded; this led to a war that lasted until 1949 (Encyclopaedia Britannica). The fighting and subsequent victories from Israel resulted in the displacement of Palestinians. This outcome is seen by many as an inevitable consequence of the conflict that was initiated by the Arab states rejection of the UN partition plan.



The Nakba's legacy includes not just the physical displacement of Palestinians, but also the continuous impact on Palestinian identity and Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The displaced Palestinians became refugees in neighboring Arab countries and in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and they lived in conditions of statelessness and poverty. According to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, more than 5 million Palestine refugees are scattered throughout the Middle East. The Nakba remains a central element in Palestinian nationalism, because it symbolizes the loss of their homeland and the injustice that they feel (United Nations). On the other hand, the Israelis call the 1948 war the "War of Independence," because it marks the establishment of the state of Israel.

The aftermath of the Nakba also had big geopolitical consequences. The newly established State of Israel took in a large influx of Jewish immigrants that came from European and Arab countries. The Arab states then faced the challenge of integrating large numbers of Palestinian refugees. The resulting tensions and the lack of a resolution have contributed to decades of conflict and failed peace efforts in the region.

Comparison: Different Perspectives on the Nakba

The Nakba is a very polarizing issue with both sides having very different perspectives on the same exact situation. The Israelis see the Nakba as a way to paint the creation of Israel in a negative light and turn it into something evil. Meanwhile the Palestinians treat it as one of the most devastating events in their history and as something that was caused due to the Israelis wanting to control the land.

This is seen as throughout all of the Palestinian sources all using similar language. This is seen where in an AP news article the journalist describes the Nakba as a tragedy perpetuated by Israel's refusal to allow the return of Palestinians following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War (Krauss). Similarly, Al Jazeera refers to Nakba as not one event but rather something that is perpetually



not allowing Palestinians to return to their land (Damen). Through the similarly worded texts we see how the Palestinian perspective of the Nakba is that it is not just one event but an example of how the Palestinians are being ethnically cleansed from the land of Israel. They then use this as a way to show the creation of Israel in a very negative light as an event that is the cause of all the conflict in the region, framing it in the sense that if Israel was never created there would never have been any conflicts.

Conversely, the Israelis view the Nakba as an unfair term used to describe what they see as the only course of action in their situation. Rather than see the Nakba as an event that was caused with Malicious intent the Israelis viewed it as something out of their control due to the refusal of Arab leaders during the UN's attempt to create a partition plan. This is seen by how the Jewish Virtual Library describes it. In their entry on the Israeli War of Independence it is not even called the Nakba rather it is just described as the only course of action to be possibly taken at the time of the War due to the refusal of splitting control of the land ("Israeli war of Independence"). This is in clear contrast from rather than treating it as a perpetrating issue the Israelis see it as an event that was not created out of a want to ethnically cleanse the land of Israel but rather them just taking normal actions in a war.

As both sides have conflicting views on the same issue it causes the ability to create peace almost impossible as when both sides will look back on their history it will cause them to realize both sides have been unjust in their description of history. Where the Palestinians will view this as Israelis trying to get off of punishment after kicking them out of their land, Israelis see this as a way of Palestinians trying to demonize the creation of Israel making it as if they do not have a right to be a country on the land they are on. Due to this difference in perspective it becomes almost impossible for both sides to find common ground causing for the continuation of the conflict.



Overview: The 1948 War

The 1948 war, also known as the Israeli Independence War, was a battle between the Palestinians and the Jews. Both sides wanted a land for their own and conflicts caused the war to begin. This followed the end of the British Mandate. The war caused many deaths between the Jews and the Palestinians. This also led to the Nakba which caused the displacement of many Palestinians. The Israeli Independence War had many other outcomes for both the Jews and the Palestinians. These outcomes caused many deaths, attacks, and other battles including what happened on October 7th in Israel.

The Palestinians who had the most population in the land did not like Jews settling into Israel. The Jews settled into Israel because of their history and the Holocaust. Many conflicts began. The Partition Plan's goal was to divide Israel into a Palestinian and a Jewish state. The Jews agreed to it but the Palestinians denied it. The first phase of the war started by an Arab invasion. The Arabs blocked access to a hospital and a University. There were several Arab invasions and clashes between both soldiers. Israel then captured the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip.

The legacy of the war was Israel winning their independence. Israel gained control of the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem, the Sinai Peninsula, and the West Bank. The war started in 1948 and ended in 1949. The Zionists have always wanted a home for the Jews and in 1948 they got what they wanted. The Palestinians were upset at the outcomes after the battle. The land they thought was theirs got taken away from them. There were 750,000 displaced Arabs. It became hard for them to get jobs and they lived in poverty. The war in general caused mass destruction, deaths, and poverty for people living in Israel.

After the War, there became a big change in the state of Israel. The Jews owned all of Palestine and some of the Egyptian areas that Egypt lost during the battle. Currently, there is another war between Palestinians and Israelis. I think the outcomes of the 1948 War caused this to happen. Hamas attacked Israel because they wanted the land back. Clearly, the 1948 War is very important to understand, and you can learn about what is and what was going on in Israel



after 1948. In conclusion, the 1948 War was a fierce battle where the Jews eventually won and claimed a homeland for their people.

Comparison: Different Perspectives on the War of 1948

The War of 1948, also known as the Israeli War of Independence or the Nakba (Catastrophe) to Palestinians, remains a contentious and pivotal event in Middle Eastern history. The perspectives of various groups on the causes, events, and consequences of this war differ significantly. This paper aims to compare and contrast the narratives presented by Al Jazeera, a major Arab news network, and Jewish sources like the Jewish Virtual Library and My Jewish Learning. These narratives not only provide insight into the historical conflict but also shape contemporary understanding and attitudes.

Before diving into the specific narratives, it is essential to understand the broader historical context leading up to the War of 1948. The United Nations Partition Plan of 1947 proposed to divide the British Mandate of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem under international control. The Jewish leadership accepted the plan, seeing it as a legal basis for the creation of a Jewish state, while the Arab leadership rejected it, unwilling to concede any part of Palestine to Jewish control (Jewish Virtual Library).

Al Jazeera's narrative emphasizes the impact of Zionist actions and British colonial policies on the Palestinian population. The network highlights the displacement and suffering of Palestinians, attributing much of the conflict to the influx of Jewish immigrants and the subsequent military actions by Zionist groups. Al Jazeera often refers to the events of 1948 as part of a deliberate strategy of ethnic cleansing, citing historians like Ilan Pappé, who argue that Zionist leaders planned and executed the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes (Al Jazeera).



Jewish sources, such as those from the Jewish Virtual Library and My Jewish Learning, offer a different viewpoint. They frame the War of 1948 as a defensive struggle for survival against overwhelming Arab aggression. These sources emphasize the acceptance of the UN Partition Plan by the Jewish community and portray the subsequent conflict as a reaction to Arab hostility and invasions by neighboring Arab states. They highlight the existential threat faced by the nascent Jewish state and the efforts of Jewish paramilitary organizations like the Haganah to defend their communities and secure the territory allotted to them by the UN (Jewish Virtual Library; My Jewish Learning).

The narratives from Al Jazeera and Jewish sources reveal deep-seated differences in the interpretation of the War of 1948. Al Jazeera's accounts focus on the narrative of Palestinian victimhood and displacement, often accusing the Zionist movement of premeditated ethnic cleansing. In contrast, Jewish sources stress the legitimacy of the Jewish state's creation under international law and depict the war as a necessary response to existential threats posed by hostile Arab forces.

The language used in these narratives also differs significantly. Al Jazeera frequently uses terms like "ethnic cleansing" and "Nakba" to describe the events, evoking a sense of deliberate injustice and tragedy. Jewish sources, however, use terms like "War of Independence" and "defensive struggle," which frame the conflict as a fight for survival and legitimate self-defense.

The War of 1948 remains a deeply divisive issue with contrasting narratives that continue to influence the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By examining these differing perspectives, we can better understand the complexities of the conflict and the challenges to achieving reconciliation and peace. Education that incorporates these diverse viewpoints is crucial for fostering mutual understanding and moving towards a more peaceful future.

Continued Jewish Immigration and the Six-Day War

Authors: Jared Gonzalez, Sophie Kim, Hannah Rose, Jiwon Park

Post-Independence Jewish Immigration to Israel

Beginning in the year of 1948, the world witnessed the largest migration of Jews into modern day Israel in history (Kaplan). Prior to the establishment of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948, much of the Jewish population lived in exile; approximately 650,000 Jews occupied the area within Palestine that would later be officially recognized as the homeland for the Jewish people. But with Israel's independence, Jewish immigrants flocked their new home in impressive amounts, even despite ongoing conflicts with Arab states such as the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, which commenced on the day following Israel's establishment and raged on for nearly a year. The Israeli government had declared that with the development of their state, they would aim to take in massive waves of Jewish immigration in order to reach their goals of developing the country (Centre for Economic Policy Research Great Britain). In the decade following Israel's establishment alone, the total number of Jewish immigrants to Israel reached nearly 1,000,000, more than doubling their original population in the region (Eliav). Jewish immigrants came from across the world, mainly from a post-Holocaust Europe and SWANA (Southwest Asia and North Africa) following the Farhud and pogroms in Libya, Morocco, and other parts of the region. The "Law of Return," passed in 1950 by the Knesset, granted any person of Jewish descent immediate citizenship to the newly-founded State of Israel, allowing such a vast influx of *Olim*, as they're called in Hebrew, to join and contribute to Israeli society. This law still exists in the modern day and has throughout this time supported Jewish immigration seeking refuge from



persecution across the globe in places like the former Soviet Union, Yemen, Ethiopia, and more in subsequent waves of *Aliyah*.

In contrast to the Palestinians, the Israeli/Jewish population viewed the mass immigration to Israel in the late 1940s to 1950s in a positive light. The region encasing Israel, particularly Jerusalem, held great religious importance to the Jews. As the Jewish population viewed the space occupied by Palestine as their rightful ancestral homeland, they were more than content to return to what was in their eyes their native land. With the establishment of the State of Israel, all previous limitations on Jewish immigration to Israel were uplifted, allowing Jews from all over the world to enter their homeland, resulting in hundreds of thousands of Jews migrating to the newly formed State of Israel. The Holocaust, the mass genocide of European Jews during the second World War under Nazi Germany, which had begun in 1941 and ended in 1945, had been devastating to the Jewish population. According to founder and former prime minister of the State of Israel David Ben-Gurion in the Israeli Declaration of Independence, “The Nazi [H]olocaust, which engulfed millions of Jews in Europe proved anew the urgency of the reestablishment of the Jewish State, which would solve the problem of Jewish homelessness by opening the gates to all Jews and lifting the Jewish people to equality in the family of nations” (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum). True to this statement, survivors of this tragic period were the first to arrive at the newly established Israeli state. To these survivors, the migration to Israel gave them a home after years of persecution under Nazi Germany and displacement as a result of the Holocaust.

The people of Palestine viewed the mass Jewish immigration as a threat to their ancestral land. They opposed to the immigration and the establishment of a Jewish state. This large increase in numbers changed the demographic landscape of the land even further, making Palestinian return to the places seized by Israel during the 1948 War of Independence even less feasible. It has been made evident that Israel and Palestine have opposing opinions on the widespread Jewish immigration to Israel. The Jewish population viewed this as a great victory, especially following years of genocide against their people in the Holocaust. After centuries of



displacement, they finally had a country of their own. They believed they possessed an innate, God-given right to be in their own sovereign state. The Palestinians, however, saw this as foreign colonization of their ancestral land. With nearly one million Jewish immigrants, Palestinians felt their homeland was being overtaken.

The Six-Day War

The Six-Day War was a regional conflict that pitted the country of Israel against a coalition of various Arab states, but one primarily led by three nations: Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. The War is described by Britannica as one brought about by “a series of miscalculations,” with each side deciding to act based upon a perceived threat of attack from the other side (Britannica). Ultimately, in the lead-up to the War, Israel found itself surrounded by Arab troops and decided to pre-emptively attack, which led to the Israelis capturing and controlling territory that quadrupled the country’s original size (Wilson Center). This territory included the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem, and Golan Heights. The Six-Day War had lasting impacts on the entirety of the Middle East (Bowen).

In Israel, the military victories of the Six-Day War were met with celebration and a renewed sense of faith in divine intervention and God. The pervading view on the situation was that Israel, then a very young nation, had single-handedly defeated three Arab states, seized key territory, and forever transformed their position on the geopolitical stage from a small, insignificant country to a world power – all in the breakneck pace of six days. This could only be seen as a miracle, as an act of the hand of God (Akers). Israeli citizens were newly energized to continue their fight to remain in the Promised Land, the area that had always been perceived as their birthright. However, it should be noted that some high-ranking Israeli officials strongly objected to going to war with other Arab nations; in the lead-up to the War, though the majority of Israeli people rejoiced in the military victories of their nation, some senior officials spoke out against driving the fragile regional balance closer to an inevitable war and urged for the maintenance of peaceful relations with neighboring countries. There also exist some conflicting



reports on the eagerness of Israelis to fight a war against Arab nations; while most sources seem to state that the Israeli people were excited for the chance to defend their Holy Land and serve their God, these may be affected by hindsight bias. A testimony from Meir Shalev, an Israeli who was 19 years old at the onset of the Six-Day War, mentioned a “national mood of panic” leading up to the fighting, with some Israelis fearing that they could be driven out of the Middle East completely (Bateman). Overall, Israeli perspectives on the fighting were largely mixed, with some advocating for peace while others desired a chance to honor Israel and their Lord by engaging in conflict with other Arab nations seeking to limit their expansion.

In Palestine and across the Arab World, the crushing blow of the Six-Day War was first met with a combination of awe and helplessness, according to reports from British diplomats in the region. In the lead-up to the war (which included Israel winning an aerial skirmish against Syria), the Palestinians were taken aback by the military power of Israel and hadn’t expected the country to be so powerful. They felt powerless to fight back against the State and joined Syrian leaders to call on Egypt to intervene, pressuring then-president Gamal Abdel Nasser to engage before it was too late. However, Egypt was soon defeated by Israeli forces in a similar manner during the Six-Day War (Office of the Historian). Today, Palestinians say they are “still suffering” as a result of what happened during the Six-Day War. Fatima Khadir, a Palestinian who was eight years old in 1967, discussed her traumatic experience sustaining an eye injury due to being struck by shrapnel during the Six-Day War while her family was fleeing their home in the Old City of Jerusalem. She and her family eventually made it to a refugee camp; as of 2017 (the year Khadir was interviewed – the most up-to-date information available regarding her family’s situation), they had not been able to return to Jerusalem’s Old City despite half a decade having passed since the Six-Day War (Bateman). An estimated 300,000 to 500,000 Palestinian civilians were displaced as a result of Israel’s seizures of territory during the Six-Day War alone (Haddad and Chughtai; Public Broadcasting Service).



The First Intifada and the Oslo Accords

Authors: Ryan Delpassand, Elad Levy Racin, Julie Ngo, Serena Tarango

Palestinian Perspective on the First Intifada

In the late 1980s to early 1990s the Israeli-Palestinian conflict went through a significant change with the beginning of the First Intifada. The First Intifada was a culmination of illegal Israeli settlements, Israeli “iron fist” policies in illegally occupied territories, and a frustrating lack of power for the Palestinian people manifesting itself in initially non-violent protests. The inception of the First Intifada was when four Palestinians were killed by Israeli soldiers enforcing “iron fist” policies. Over 10,000 people attended their funerals and participated in non-violent civil disobedience. However, Israeli armed forces aimlessly shot into the crowd and wounded 20 Palestians and killed one 17 year old boy. As a result, non-violent civil disobedience turned violent and the First Intifada broke out. Although the Israeli soldiers may have felt that the protests became dangerous and were justified in needing to defend themselves, ultimately, the Palestinians felt they were well within their rights to take up arms against Israeli forces occupying Palestinian territories.

Palestinians over the prior twenty years had dealt with the illegal Israeli occupation in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza. According to Hanaa Hasan from the Middle East Monitor, “Israel ruled the occupied territories with an iron fist, enforcing curfews and conducting raids, arrests, deportations and house demolitions.” (Hasan, 2017). Hasan’s purpose in writing this was to allow the reader to understand the difficulties of Israeli occupation for the



Palestinians. The Palestinians felt as though Israel utilized their tactical advantages to illegally occupy the territory then control the Palestinian people through acts such as “enforcing curfews” and “arrests”.

In response to Israel’s “iron fist” policies, Palestinians barricaded roads to prevent Israeli vehicles from entering Palestinian neighborhoods. Acts such as these were considered rioting by Israel. Israel continued to escalate their response to protesting by firing rubber bullets into protesting crowds. A vast majority of the Palestinians protesting were in the young adult demographic who had grown up during the illegal occupations—which is the nexus for their protests because they needed to stand up for themselves after their rights have been violated for all their lives. Furthermore, Israel when the protests grew, “...used mass arrests to try to dissuade people from taking part.” (Hasan, 2017). Hasan’s intended audience when writing this article was for people who do not understand the perspective of the Palestinians and why it was necessary for Palestinians to stand up to Israel at this time. Mass arrests in the Palestinian’s eyes were the latest iteration of Israel attempting to strike fear into the Palestinians to gain better control over the territories. Organizations such as the PLO responded by forming a conglomerate of Palestinian liberation organizations called the Unified Leadership of the Uprising or UNLU. As Palestinians continue to protest, they began to economically suffer as universities, schools, and many businesses began to close down. With not only their economic situation growing worse, according to pal quest, “In the first year, at least 300 Palestinians had been shot dead and tens of thousands injured” (Heacock, 2024). Heacock’s purpose behind writing about the death toll of Palestinians within the first year of the Intifada was to demonstrate to the audience how Israel responded in order to maintain their illegal occupations over the territories and how the Palestinians continued to move forward. The Palestinians naturally viewed Israel as a state that was actively attempting to claim the land which they were living on and fought to maintain those territories in the face of disputes. Emphatically, the Israeli response to the First Intifada indirectly resulted in the creation of Hamas and will continue to have lasting implications on peace talks between the two bodies going forward.



After nearly six years of conflict, the Palestinians and Israelis signed an agreement called the Oslo accords on September 13, 1993 which were proposed by Norwegian sociologist Terje Larsen, and the document was signed at the White House. Although the First Intifada had been resolved the Palestinian people would continue to struggle for peace and self determination up to the present day. The Oslo Accords proved to be ineffective and would play a significant role in the inception of the Second Intifada.

Israeli Perspective on the First Intifada

On December 8, 1987, an Israeli truck crashed into and killed four Palestinians and injured seven. The crash, viewed by many Arabs as revenge for a recent murder of a Jewish man in Gaza, resulted in waves of protests spreading through the Palestinian territories(Fischbach). The protests-called Intifada, meaning “rebellion” or “uprising” in Arabic-consisted of widespread Palestinian resistance against Israeli occupation. The protesters largely refrained from violence, and their resistance instead took the form of peaceful disobedience; such as demonstrations, strikes, tax evasion, boycotts, graffiti, etc (“Status”).

Despite the peaceful nature of the protest, Israel demanded nothing less than the surrender of the Palestinians and the complete end to the protests. To accomplish this goal, the Israeli military displayed a willingness to commit extreme acts of violence. Over the course of the Intifada, Israeli forces killed 1,376 Palestinians in the occupied territories(“Fatalities”). Israel also instituted a series of policies including house demolitions, restrictions of movement, and deportations.

That is not to suggest that the soldiers all entered the conflict eager for violence. For example, an unnamed Israeli soldier is reported to have said “18 year olds ask me if it is frightening to serve in the territories. I tell them the greatest fear is of myself — what I would become, what I could be drawn into. It’s a jungle with its own laws”(“First”, 2022). It is clear from this soldier's testimony that he and likeminded soldiers did not enter the war willing to commit the violence that



later became characteristic of the conflict. Rather, the growing ability of the soldiers to commit acts of cruelty stemmed from the Israeli cultural narrative of the conflict.

In this case, the Israeli narrative emphasizes the justification of Israel to combat the Palestinians. This is accomplished primarily through the claim that Palestine was a violent threat to the safety and security of Israel. The goal of the Israeli narrative was to create a one-sided narrative with Israel as the victim to Palestinian aggression. Such a narrative has the dual purpose of building support for Israel while delegitimizing the Palestinian resistance. To those who believe this message, it offers a clear justification for violence against Palestinians that places the Israeli soldiers in the positions as defenders of peace, rather than perpetrators of violence.

This narrative soon became prevalent in the territories of Israel. A journal article in *Discourse & Society* reveals the trends on Israeli news coverage at the time of the First Intifada. The first discovery is that Arabs were significantly less likely than Jews to be mentioned by name in news articles; with the individuals in the two groups being named 7 percent and 55 percent of the time respectively. The second discovery is that the use of photos and lexical intensifiers decreased over time (Nir and Roeh, 1992). Put together, these findings offer support to the previously established Israeli narrative of the Intifada. The fact that Arabs are named less frequently than Jews assists the dehumanization of the Palestinians, reducing them to nameless threats that can be more easily destroyed. The overall decrease in photos and lexical intensifiers also contributes to the building of the cultural narrative. A lack of these elements creates a decline in the perceived significance of the events included in the newspapers. This decline allows the Israeli readers to create greater psychological distance between themselves and the conflict, rather than forcing them to confront the often violent nature of Israeli involvement.

Furthermore, the conflict narrative of Israel emphasized the violence of the Palestinians. In response to the idea that the First Intifada was largely nonviolent, newswriter Michael Gizzi, calling the claim “fundamentally flawed and dishonest at its core.” Gizzi suggests that belief in such a claim would result in calls for Israeli citizenship for all Palestinians in occupied territory, turning the Jewish population into “a minority in a Palestinian state” (Gizzi, 2016). Gizzi's



opposition to the claim of a nonviolent Intifada can be explained by the Israeli cultural narrative. As previously stated, the largely nonviolent nature of the First Intifada is a widely accepted fact in reports about the event. To many Israelis, the actions of the Palestinians are perceived as a genuine threat to the state of Israel. Therefore, the Israeli narrative has led Gizzi and countless others to view the First Intifada as an act of violence by the Palestinians and a genuine threat to the security of Israel, justifying the harsh and often disproportionate military response of Israeli forces against the Palestinian resistance.

Justification of violence would remain the predominant Israeli narrative of the conflict throughout the six years of the First Intifada. Slowly, however, the Israeli people began to accept the idea of a major peace discussion between Israel and Palestine. This resulted in the 1993 signing of the Oslo Accord, the first agreement in what had the potential to reshape the relations of the two warring forces (“Milestones”).

Israeli Perspective on the Oslo Accords

The partnership between Israel and the PLO began on a promising note, with the Gaza-Jericho phase, the signing of the Paris Economic Protocol, and the signing of the Oslo II Accord. There lingered a sense of idealistic euphoria between the two groups as peace finally seemed possible. This optimism quickly faded as terrorist acts from extremists and unprogressive talks emerged. In retrospective, the preface to the oslo accords were a promising series of events, culminating in the jubilating start of the accords; however, as these arguments quickly derailed, violence between the communities as well as inability to compromise left Israel in a desolate situation filled with difficult decisions, ultimately leading to the defining characteristics of relations between the two groups today.

In its early stages, the partnership between Israel and the PLO was strong; however, after progress dwindled, doubts began to creep into Israeli society, furthered by violent uprisings, leading to ideological shifts. Agreements between the two parties started promisingly, with the



Gaza-Jericho phase, defining their economic relations with the Paris Economic Protocol, and s Israel withdrawing from all Palestinian cities, transferring responsibility for most of the Palestinians in the West Bank, in addition to Gaza, into the hands of the Palestinian Authority with the Oslo II Accord signing. Israel and the PLO appeared determined to partner during this phase. Already, the first free elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council and Chairman of the PA already turned heads. Held in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, these events triggered reactions amongst Arab militant opponents who escalated their violent efforts to derail the process, actions sparking concern among Israelis about further concessions to the Palestinians (Sela, 2009).

The talks quickly derailed as both parties realized the improbability of compromise because of the drastic differences between the wants of both sides. For one, the talks seemed unfair to begin with, as Clinton was overly supportive of Israel, leading to bias from the start. As the talks continued, differences between the two persisted, especially over borders, Jerusalem, and whether Israel would recognize Palestinian refugees' "right of return,". By December, Palestinians suspended talks and Clinton blamed Arafat for their failure (US Department of State). Tensions culminated in a violent explosion after Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharron visited Temple Mount, resulting in an intifada.

Extremists on both sides escalated tensions, resulting in a complete breakdown between the two parties. Firstly, Rabin, a pioneer in peace, was assassinated by an Israeli extremist, followed by a series of terrorist attacks from Hamas, including suicide bombings, ceasing support for the labor party in the 1996 election. Israelis had seen enough of the instability and wanted a strong leader to guide the country, leading to the election of Benjamin Netanyahu, an opponent of the Oslo accords. The terrorist attacks also left Israelis mistrustful of the PLO and their "true" intentions. Continued Israeli settlement throughout the Oslo process displays failure on behalf of the Israeli government to effectively act. Also, After the al-Aqsa Intifada broke up, many Israelis blamed Arafat for the accords' failure, who bore the majority of the blame. The continued violence against Israelis from palestinian groups, with few futile attempts to curb it



from the PLO, evidences the constrained decision making of the group. Ultimately, the lack of serious debate on the conflict's core issues leaves the public uneducated on the difficult concessions they would have to make in order to reach a settlement (Sela, 2009).

The Oslo accords seemed destined to fail from the start. Both sides failed to agree on the most basic of things, leading to the negotiation's demise, and the following terrorist events from extremists. The Israeli public completely shifted its politics, and the Oslo Accords left a legacy which defined the group's policies on each other for decades as a failed attempt at peace.

Palestinian Perspective on the Oslo Accords

During the years 1987-1993, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had the option to pursue war or peace because of the Intifada. With both Israelis and the PLO choosing peace, the Oslo Accords established the model for their mission. The Oslo Accords were first signed in September 1993 by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Negotiator Mahmoud Abbas to arrange peace efforts towards the following five years in order to reach a permanent peace solution. Such efforts included altercations regarding authority: transferring authority to Palestine in areas such as education, social welfare, and taxation, democratic elections, withdrawal/redeployment of Israeli security in the newly designated Palestinian territory—West Bank and Gaza Strip.

While Israel had its far-right Jews, Palestine had the Hamas and Islamic Jihad groups that opposed the Oslo Accords as well. These opponents of the Oslo Accords argued that a two state solution dismisses the rights of refugees to return to their homes since the Nakba in 1948. Others said that Israel left Palestine a feasible state that was “non-contiguous” and without natural resources to fuel a running economy. With the fall of the Oslo Accords, Israel raided land that was under the control of the Palestinian Authority (PA) while continuing occupation in the West Bank. Today, “Palestinians believe that Israel has used the Oslo Accords to justify its expansion of illegal settlements in the West Bank” (Aljazeera 2023). Considering this, it is apparent that the



efforts towards peace did not go into effect but instead hinted that the Oslo Accords played a role in heightening tensions between the two states.

In an article by John Quigley, titled, “The Oslo Accords: More than Israel Deserves,” Quigley explains that Israel continues to keep the taken territory since 1948 and “reaps the rewards of the ethnic cleansing it carried out at that time” (Quigley 1997). Therefore, despite the Oslo Accords, it can be seen from a Palestinian perspective that further measures weren’t taken to restore the original Palestine state. Quigley concludes by stating, “The question is not whether Israel must or should abrogate the Oslo agreements. The question is whether the Oslo agreements and, more importantly, the agreement that emerges from the final status negotiations, protect the rights of the Palestinians” (Quigley 1997). In other words, some may view the Oslo Accords as an attempt to take preemptive efforts rather than a reliable peace agreement.

Amongst much disapproval, some Palestinians did perceive the agreement as a step in the right direction. This opinion can be reflected through Palestinian perspectives on Palestinian president and PLO leader Yasser Arafat since he was a major contributor to the Oslo Accords. Furthermore, since the first signing, extremists on both sides could not prevent the signing of the Oslo II Accords. In this updated agreement, which was more thorough and detailed, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were categorized into three areas—limiting each area to different authority and administration.

Conclusion

Although the First Intifada and the Oslo Accords were an effective turning point in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because the illegal Israeli settlements became a much more prominent issue that was condemned by international organizations and a plan was developed for a two state solution. Ultimately, the First Intifada and Oslo Accords most significantly displayed continuity for the conflict because the Oslo Accords proved to be ineffective in removing illegal settlements and the Second Intifada was mostly a result of the failure of the Oslo Accords.



When broadly examining the situation, there is a clear polarization with the Israeli versus the Palestinian narratives. Israel's narrative is that Palestine is a legitimate threat to the security and safety of Israel, and at times of protests Israel does not deem itself completely safe short of a full surrender by the Palestinians. The Palestinian narrative is that Israel has consistently attempted to annex territories reserved for Palestinians and that Israel uses non-violent civil disobedience as an excuse to justify violent responses. Neither narrative is entirely indicative of the truth, however both have evidence backing them to justify both sides. Issues with these narratives arise when only one side is told to the affected population and that narrative is used to justify terror attacks such as the October 7th, 2023 attack by Hamas.

These narratives on both sides of the aisle have been used to take advantage of people caught in the middle by both Israelis and Palestinians for leaders to achieve their broader goals. Emphatically, until the Palestinian and Israeli leadership effectively end their use of one-sided rhetoric, an end to this intractable conflict may never be in sight.

The 2000 Camp David Summit and the Second Intifada

Authors: Kingbo Wang, Evan Arora, Shayan Abbasi, Jackson Miller

Introduction

On July 5, 2000, President Bill Clinton invited the Israeli prime minister, Ehud Barak, and PLO chairman, Yasser Arafat, to Camp David for a 2-week long summit to bring peace to the Middle East. The hope for this summit was that it would end similarly to the 1978 Camp David Accords, where US President Jimmy Carter helped negotiate a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. Despite the US president pushing for peace until the summit's last day, both sides ended up walking away from the summit without reaching any agreement. The failure of this summit was said to be the main cause of the Second Intifada which occurred on September 28th, 2000. Palestinians were frustrated by the lack of progress for a two-state solution, and this led to an increased number of non-peaceful protests and increased support for radical groups like Hamas. The Second Intifada, also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada, consisted of numerous riots and heightened violence as Palestinian citizens fought against Israeli authorities. The Intifada ended five years later, when both presidents agreed to withdraw military power and order to stop all acts of violence on both sides. During this time, over three thousand Palestinians and one thousand Israelis were killed.

Palestinian Perspective on the Camp David Summit and Second Intifada

The key elements of the Palestinian's perspective on the Camp David Summit includes their view of how the Israelis gave insufficient proposals about territorial concerns, the status of Jerusalem, the right of return for Palestinian refugees, and security arrangements for their



borders. During the conference, Yasser Arafat's Palestinians rejected Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's Camp David offers. They believed that in terms of land and sovereignty, the proposals did not fully address their fundamental needs. The division of the West Bank was one of the main points of dispute. Palestinians believed that rather than a functional, sovereign state, the proposed borders would leave them with a fragmented and non-contiguous state. Jerusalem's status was also one main argument at the summit. Palestinian demands require that the capital of a future Palestinian state should be located in the Old City of Jerusalem and other holy sites, such as the Al-Aqsa Mosque. They believed that neither their claims nor complete control over East Jerusalem were sufficiently addressed by the proposals. For the rights for return of Palestinian refugees, Palestinians demanded acknowledgment of the refugees' right to return to their homes and compensation for those who chose not to return, however, the proposals at Camp David did not sufficiently address these demands. It was believed that the proposed security arrangements would be too demanding, the Palestinians feared that their independence and sovereignty would be violated and that they would have little control over their own land, felt uneasy by the security measures proposed by Israel. After all, the Palestinians view the negotiations as biased; they believe that Israel had not made enough concessions and in contrast they are pushed to make changes themselves.

In conclusion, the main points of concern during the summit from the Palestinian perspective were that the proposals were insufficient and did not meet their core demands as a viable state, a fair settlement for the refugees, their right over East Jerusalem, and controlled security measures. They claim that these problems, an existing imbalance in the negotiation process, were the main reasons for the summit's failure.

The outbreak of the Second Intifada was rooted in multiple reasons: the failure of the Camp David Summit, provocation and disillusionment, and underlying grievances, and ultimately Ariel Sharon's visit to the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The Palestinians have a widespread disillusionment with the peace process, particularly after the failure of the Camp David Summit. They felt that the Israelis were unwilling to offer a fair and viable solution, therefore rooting for



their rebelling attitude. Previous Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem was a major underlying grievance of the Palestinians, Israeli's settlement expansion was seen as a major obstacle to peace and a violation of international law. During the occupation, the Palestinians experienced significant economic and social hardship, such as restrictions on movement, economic blockades, and diminished access to basic needs; these conditions resulted in widespread anger and resentment. The Palestinian perspective mentions how Israelis execute human rights abuses, including land confiscation, arbitrary arrests, and violence against civilians. The abuse of power to suppress Palestinians sparks more motivation to rebel. On September 28, 2000, Ariel Sharon, prime minister of Israel's visit to the Al Aqsa Mosque ultimately triggered the Second Intifada. This visit was seen as a very provocative act and a symbol of continuing violation and occupation, which is disrespect for Palestinian sovereignty.

In summary, the Palestinian perspective on the Second Intifada was that it was a legitimate and necessary uprising against Israeli's ongoing occupation of their land, systemic injustices to their civilians, and failed peace processes such as the Camp David Summit. The Second Intifada the Palestinian people were seen as a powerful expression of their rights and sovereignty.

Israeli Perspective on the Camp David Summit and Second Intifada

In the Camp David Summit, Israel's goal was to annex numerous settlement blocks on the Palestinian side of the Green Line and were concerned that a complete return to the 1967 borders were dangerous to Israel's security. The Israeli and Palestinian definition of the West Bank differs by 5% in land area because the Israeli definition does not include East Jerusalem. Based on the Israeli definition of the West Bank, Israeli President Barak offered to form a Palestinian state initially on 73% of the West Bank and 100% of the Gaza Strip. A virulent territorial dispute revolved around the status of Jerusalem. Leaders were ill-prepared for the central role of the Jerusalem issue in general and the Temple Mount dispute, in particular,



would play in negotiations. Barak instructed his delegates to treat the dispute as “the central issue that will decide the destiny of negotiations.”

Israelis view the second intifada as a wave of Palestinian terrorism instigated and pre-planned by the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. Ariel Sharon became the first Israeli Prime Minister to affirm the idea of a Palestinian state, and he even spoke of Israel’s “occupation,” and the bloodshed was such that Sharon also decided to withdraw from Gaza, an area he long imagined Israel keeping. The Israeli economy experienced a significant drop as a result of the second intifada, particularly due to a sharp decrease in tourism. A representative of Israel’s Chamber of Commerce estimated the economic damage caused by the crisis at 150 to 200 billion shekels against an annual GDP of 122 billion dollars in 2002. Hani Al-Masri, director-general of Masarat, the Palestinian Center for Policy Research and Strategic Studies, added that “the main reason behind the Intifada was that Israeli leaders wanted to punish Arafat and the Palestinians to force them to accept the Israeli solutions that were similar to the status quo of occupation. They wanted to force the Palestinians’ consciousness to accept what Israel wanted. Israel wanted through Sharn’s visit to provoke the Palestinians into a violent reaction.”

Conclusion

The Camp David Accords and the conflicts that followed show just how complicated and long-lasting the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is, with its territorial disputes, historical grievances, and different national goals. The Camp David negotiations, although they were ambitious, could not solve key issues like the status of Jerusalem and the borders of the West Bank. Barak's offer was seen as not enough by the Palestinians because it left out East Jerusalem and felt like a continuation of occupation. The second intifada broke out at a time where the peace talks were still volatile and where deep frustrations led to violence. Sharon's shift in strategy was done in the recognition of a Palestinian state and deciding to withdraw from Gaza, was a controversial move in Israeli politics, as it showed that a continuation of the occupation was not sustainable.



The failure of the Camp David negotiations showed that high-level talks alone can't solve deep-rooted conflicts. Earlier, the Oslo Accords aimed for peace by giving Palestinians some self-rule, but the 1995 assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by a Jewish extremist revealed strong internal opposition. Similarly, Palestinian groups like Hamas opposed peace talks and pushed for armed resistance. The second intifada, starting in 2000, was a major turning point. It led to a terrible cycle of violence, with suicide bombings, military attacks, and widespread destruction. The economic impact was harsh, with poverty and unemployment rising and worsening the humanitarian crisis. This period hardened public opinions on both sides, making peace seem less likely.

In 2005, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon pulled out of Gaza, hoping to reduce conflict and show Israel's willingness to compromise. However, this move led to more instability in Gaza. Hamas quickly filled the power gap, winning the 2006 Palestinian elections and taking control of Gaza in 2007. This made peace efforts harder because Hamas refused to recognize Israel and continued to support armed resistance. The conflicts that followed, including wars in Gaza in 2008-2009, 2012, and 2014, showed ongoing volatility and recurring violence. Each conflict caused many deaths, much destruction, and deepened the animosity between Israelis and Palestinians. International attempts to mediate often failed in the face of these challenges.

The second intifada also caused severe economic damage to Israel, and leaders like Hani Al-Masri saw the intifada as a reaction to provocations and an attempt to reject an imposed status quo. This situation shows that without addressing the core issues of sovereignty and mutual recognition, any effort of peace can be only temporary. A lasting solution would be successful if only it has an approach that understands the concerns and perspectives of both Israelis and Palestinians.



Hamas' Ruling of Gaza and the 2024 Israel-Hamas War

Authors: Ilay Noimark, Mia Ben-Zvi, Orah Godet

Introduction

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict took form in the early 20th century and has evolved through a violent series of complex and multifaceted events, ultimately culminating one of the most turbulent environments in the world. In the past few decades, the region has witnessed many wars, attempts for peace, and ongoing intermittent violence and terrorism, with the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 and the electoral victory of Hamas in 2006 further escalating the conflict. With seven major Arab-Israeli wars being fought since the creation of Israel in 1948, there has been a hostile divide between Israelis and Palestinians to this very day.

On one hand, the Israeli viewpoint sees Hamas as a radicalized Islamist terrorist group that causes regional instability and poses a dangerous threat to national security and Israeli livelihood. However, the Palestinian side depicts Hamas as an armed resistance group fighting against aggressive Israeli colonialist occupation in hopes of creating an Islamic Palestinian state. It is vital to understand both perspectives as one can have a more well-informed take on the conflict and a better understanding of the root cause of tension between the two groups. This research paper aims to display the differing perspectives of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in order to help the world gain insight into both narratives and partake in the search for future regional resolutions.



Hamas Ruling of Gaza

Behind the current control of Hamas over the Gaza strip lies an extensive history of Palestinian politics. the significant internal division between the Palestinian leadership, Israel's disengagement from Gaza, democratic elections, and ultimately, the "Battle of Gaza" that irreparably reshaped the Gaza strip. These events have perpetuated the polarization within the Palestinian leaders and had far reaching implications that continue to shape the Israel-Palestine conflict to this very day.

The division between the two prominent Palestinian parties within Gaza are Hamas and Fatah. These two parties have distinct characteristics as well as political ideologies. Hamas, the current governing party of Gaza, is considered among many countries, including but not limited to, the U.S. and Canada, as a terrorist organization. According to their charter, Hamas is an Islamist group that emerged from the Muslim brotherhood. "The Islamic Resistance Movement" is a distinguished Palestinian movement, whose allegiance is to Allah, and whose way of life is Islam. It strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine" ("The Hamas Covenant"). It believes in armed resistance and its goals are the liberation of the land of Palestine and the annihilation of the Zionist entity, stating that their goal is the "complete liberation of Palestine, and eradication of Zionist economic, political, military and cultural existence ("The Hamas Covenant").

Conversely, Fatah is perceived as a more moderate and secular Palestinian political party. Fatah was the main function within the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO,) which recognized Israel's right to exist within the pre-1967 borders and agreed to quiet terror for negotiations and peace with Israel. The PLO stated their devotion to "renounce terrorism and recognize Israel's right to exist in peace" ("Office of the Historian"). Following the Oslo accords between the Israeli government and the PLO in 1993, both sides agreed that a Palestinian Authority (PA) would be established and assume governing responsibilities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip over a five-year period ("Office of the Historian").



However, the PA's and Fatah's leadership was quite controversial. In *The Guardian*, Samira Muhammad, a 35-year-old mother of seven in the Gaza Strip, stated "It's typical of Fatah and the Palestinian Authority. They don't do anything. Maybe Hamas will. I'm sick of Fatah. There is so much corruption," ("Fatah Struggles"). The allegation regarding corruption, incompetence, and lack of transparency, accumulated through the following years and the Oslo accords, which further perpetuated the division. Hamas' firm opposition to the Oslo accords and continuous use of violence was utilized to portray them as more "patriotic" to the Palestinians. Hamas defined itself with its armed resistance and firm opposition to the Oslo accords. This fact helped them gain significantly more support.

The increasing support for Hamas was a strong incentive to keep the differentiation between them and the PA. By using violence and terror attacks, "Hamas is able to kill two birds with one stone. By attacking Israel, it boosts its popularity with Palestinians, and it elicits an Israeli retaliation that, in most instances, damages the PA and possibly paves the way to Fatah's disintegration" (Schanzer). This inner conflict that became increasingly prominent was later continued by the Israeli disengagement from Gaza in 2005, which gave the Palestinians the opportunity for a more extensive self-government. With Arafat's death in 2004 and the end of the PA term limit, a democratic election was held in 2006. This election "yielded a shock victory for Hamas, which won the most seats with some 44 percent of the vote." (Tharoor). The Gaza populace "were voting for opposition and voting against Fatah — against corruption, against nepotism, against the failure of the peace process, and against the lack of leadership" (Tharoor).

From the Israeli perspective, Hamas and its support amongst the Palestinian people is a reflection of the support for the extremism and violence against the Jews in the occupied territories, whereas for the Palestinians, the support expresses frustration, anger, and desire for a change of the PA leadership. There were several reasons why Palestinians weren't satisfied with the governing party, Fatah, which had dominated Palestinian politics for decades. Firstly, Fatah suffered from corruption at the helm of the PLO. Hamas, instead, was a protest movement which also provided social services to the population. Secondly, the PLO's focus was too much



in the West Bank although many Palestinians were refugees or lived in Gaza. Thirdly, the PLO's devotion to the two-state model was difficult to accept by many Palestinians. Finally, violence between Israelis and Palestinians and an elusive political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict pushed Palestinians to opt for change.

After the remarkable victory of Hamas, the conflict tensions grew as the parties couldn't reach a deal to share the government power. Fatah, which still controlled the PA presidency, the bureaucracy, and the security services, sought to "undermine Hamas through any means possible, including strikes and threats of dissolving the new parliament" (Brown). Ultimately, the Palestinian leadership went through "Battle of Gaza" in 2007, in which both sides suffered great losses. The battle eventually resulted in the separation of the Palestinian leadership into two entities: the West Bank, which is governed by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), and the Gaza Strip, which is governed solely by Hamas.

Following this sharp cultivation of the conflict, Hamas was internationally boycotted due to its extreme positions and "the United States refused to transfer vital assistance including renouncing violence and accepting the binding nature of past agreements" (Brown). As a complementary act, Israel imposed a blockade on Gaza in which "the Israeli authorities significantly intensified existing movement restrictions, virtually isolating the Gaza Strip from the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), and the world "(UNICEF). The blockade was and continues to be supported by Egypt. From the Israeli perspective, it is a vital precaution to prevent weapon smuggling, weaken Hamas, and ensure its citizens' security. However, from the Palestinian perspective, it is portrayed as an "air prison" due to the extensive control of Israel over the area and the difficulty to get out of Gaza.



The Israel-Hamas War

October 7th, 2023, was a day marked by terror, violence, and bloodshed— as it would be described from the Israeli perspective. Hamas, which is sworn to Israel’s destruction, led a coordinated surprise attack, one of which Israeli and American intelligence were unaware of, on a Jewish holiday known as Simchat Torah. Many Israeli Defense Force (IDF) soldiers were stationed in the north to focus on Israel’s border with southern Lebanon as opposed to focusing on the Gaza Strip, which allowed for Hamas militants to easily breach the borders due to the lack of Israeli military presence. During the opening salvo of rockets, “Hamas used more than half the total number of rockets launched from Gaza during all of 2021’s 11-day conflict” (“Britannica”). Simultaneously, around 1,500 Hamas militants and Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ) infiltrated Israel by breaching the border, killing 1,200 people, 815 of whom were civilians, and took 251 hostages, including both women and children.

On the other hand, October 7th to the Palestinians was a day categorized as a prison break from the open air prison of Gaza. Unaware of Hamas’ actions at first, many civilians became informed of the event through social media and began to flood the streets, celebrating their long-awaited sense of freedom, as it was perceived by them. In one video, a Palestinian man can be seen chanting “Allahu Akbar [God is the Greatest]! Hit it guys!” (Barghouti). With the Israeli occupation of Gaza restricting civilian movement as well as suffocating their economy, the October 7th attack, in a sense, was liberating as the destruction of the fences was symbolic of this freedom. Dalal Saeb Irqiat, an associate professor at the Arab American University Palestine, stated that her views of justifying October 7th are a “reflection of 76 years of apartheid, of Israeli military occupation, of settler colonialism, of land confiscations, and of ‘extrajudicial’ killing” (Pazzanese).

Amidst the Israel-Hamas war, the Biden administration has provided both political and tangible support for Israeli efforts to eliminate Hamas rule in Gaza and ensure the return of the hostages being held there. Since the beginning of the war, the U.S. has sent over \$12.5 billion in



military aid to Israel, despite these two countries not having a mutual defense pact. However, “Israel is among a short list of ‘major non-NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) allies’ and has privileged access to the most advanced U.S. military platforms and technologies” (Masters, Merrow). The United States’ unequivocal loyalty to Israel has enabled its army to deflect terrorist attacks by its neighbors, a prime example being when Iran sent airstrikes out of retaliation to Israel in April of 2024, and over 99% of the incoming weapons were intercepted due to Israel’s defense system and their allies. In addition to providing both military and financial aid, the U.S. provides large-scale political support to Israel, having used its United Nations Security Council veto power 42 times against resolutions condemning Israel (“United Nations”). However, in an exclusive interview with the former Minister of National Security in Israel, Avigdor Kahalani stated that “even with U.S. involvement, it is solely Israel’s responsibility to defend itself, and that the American government should shift its focus to Iran and become more involved with their affairs” (Kahalani).

While the U.S. and its Western allies have expressed their support for Israel and have condemned Hamas, countries of the Muslim world, including the Axis of Resistance, have expressed support for the Palestinians. Several countries have strongly advocated for a ceasefire and de-escalation of the war, as an extended war involving Iran would greatly disrupt regional stability in an effort to preserve its hegemonic position in the Middle East. On October 27, 2023, the United Nations General Assembly “passed a resolution calling for an immediate and sustained humanitarian truce and cessation of hostilities, adopted by a vote of 121 states to 14, with 44 abstentions” (“United Nations”). Since the war began, “over 280,080 tons of aid has entered Gaza on 15,207 trucks” and “more food trucks have entered than prior to the war, with about a more than 50% increase per day” (“AIPAC”). Despite large quantities of resources entering Gaza, the IDF has repeatedly filmed Hamas terrorists taking over aid trucks since October 7th, even releasing a video “in which Hamas terrorists are shown stealing food and humanitarian aid from civilians in Gaza City’s Shujaiya neighborhood and assaulting them” (“FDD”).



The Israel-Hamas war has been covered by the media and news outlets around the globe, comprising a wide variety of narratives and perspectives from either side. Throughout the entirety of the war, Israeli soldiers have been condemned by the international community for posting videos displaying abuse and destruction in Gaza, prompting internal investigations to be conducted by the IDF. However, on the other side of the conflict, Hamas has been banned from almost all social media platforms excluding Telegram, while the Israeli military has been utilizing several platforms to garner support for their actions.

Despite this, there is an evident disparity between pro-Israel and pro-Palestine support circulating among the Internet. Humanz, an Israeli tech company showed that during October of 2023, there were “7.39 billion pro-Israel tagged posts on Instagram and TikTok, while there were 109.61 billion posts with pro-Palestine tags published on the sites in the same time” (Kabir). On both sides, propaganda and misinformation have presented a notable problem as it has created a conflict outside of where the war is being fought, between people who are both uninvolved and blindly misinformed. The danger of misinformation circulating on both sides has escalated tensions and caused divisions within societies, a prime example being the U.S. Yet, this fear has been proven inevitable as “distinguishing fact from fiction is difficult due to the conflict’s intricacies” (Ibrahim). At this moment, this war is continuing to ravage the Gaza Strip and Southern Israel, and having a nuanced approach to understanding the complexities within both Israeli and Palestinian perspectives is the way forward in ending intractable conflicts such as this one.



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