

The al aqsa intifada the second intifada politics essay



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The Second Intifada, which is also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada to Palestinians, refers to the Palestinian-Israeli violence that began at the end of September 2000. This resulted in increased Israeli-Palestinian violence. This conflict began as a combination of riots by the general population of Palestine and increased interactions between the Israeli Defense Force and Palestinian civilians. There are various theories as to the exact cause of this conflict; however, the generally accepted cause of the Second Intifada was Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount. The Temple Mount is an area that is sacred in both Judaism and Islam. Sharon's visit prompted a large riot among Palestinians at the site, this riot led to a series of violent events between the protesting Palestinian crowd and Israeli soldiers. It must be mentioned that others contribute the start of this conflict to Friday September 29, 2000. This day is a traditional day of prayer to Muslims. On Friday September 29, 2000, Israeli police and military presences were introduced to Palestine, which led to major clashes, battles and deaths between the two states. Following the generally accepted theory that the conflict began on September 28, 2000, the blame for the beginning of this conflict falls upon Ariel Sharon. Sharon was a prominent Likud party candidate for Prime Minister of Israel at the time of this conflict. When he entered the Temple Mount he was being escorted by numerous Israeli security guards. It is said that when he entered the Temple Mount, Ariel Sharon essentially declared that the Temple Mount is the holiest site within the Jewish faith and therefore it rightly belongs to the Jewish people. Responding to this declaration, the Palestinians claimed this act was an act of provocation against the state of Palestine and responded as such.

(a)Players: Israel vs. Palestine

To better understand this conflict, there must be a thorough understanding of the players involved and the states they represented. The Second Intifada involved the state of Israel and the territory of Palestine. Israel has an active standing army that is known as the Israeli Defense Force. The Israeli Defense Forces are essentially “ the military forces of the State of Israel. They consist of ground forces, air force, and a navy. The IDF is the sole military wing of the Israeli security forces, and it has no civilian jurisdiction within Israel.”

(Wikipedia) Shin Bet is Israel’s internal security service. They are responsible for “ safeguarding state security, exposing terrorist rings, interrogating terror suspects, providing intelligence for counter-terrorism operations in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, counter-espionage, personal protection of senior public officials, securing important infrastructure and government buildings, and safeguarding Israeli airlines and overseas embassies.” (Wikipedia) The Israel Police is the civilian police force of the state of Israel. It carries the common duties that most police forces around the world must perform. This includes common crime prevention and traffic control. The main objective of the Israeli Police is the maintenance of overall public safety. The Israeli Border Police is the gendarmerie and border security branch of the Israel National Police. The Civil Guard is a volunteer organization of Israeli citizens. They primarily assist in daily police work with the Israeli Police

Palestinian forces include the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The PLO is comprised of groups who believe in different ideologies regarding Palestinian liberation; however, their common goal is the same: the liberation of Palestine. The PLO includes three prominent political groups:

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Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). Palestinian forces also include Hamas, the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine, the Popular Resistance Committees, and numerous independent political and military organizations. The main organization involved was the PLO. Established in 1964, the PLO is recognized as the exclusive legitimate representative of the Palestinian people by the United Nations. Fatah is a key political party and the largest faction of the PLO. Fatah has been closely identified with the leadership of its founder Yasser Arafat (1929-2004). The PFLP is a Palestinian Marxist-Leninist and revolutionary leftist organization that was founded in 1967. It is the second largest group that is a member of the PLO. The DFLP originated out of dissatisfaction within the PFLP. The party separated from the DFLP but retained support of communism. The party remains politically active and does maintain a military wing. It is the third largest group member of the PLO. Hamas is the Palestinian Sunni Islamist organization and maintains a military wing. It is known to be an active branch of the Muslim Brotherhood and is based on the principles of Islamic fundamentalism. The Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine is a primarily confrontational organization that uses terrorism to achieve its goals. This group has been labeled as a terrorist group by many western states, including the United States, the European Union and Israel. The Popular Resistance Committees are a federation of several militant Palestinian factions that are just beginning to become active in the political realm of Palestinian affairs. In addition to these main political and military organizations, there were various other independent and organizations that contributed to the Palestinian force during the Second Intifada.

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It should also be noted this conflict can be classified as having occurred on multiple levels. The conflict occurred on both the interstate and intrastate levels. When the state of Israel and the territory of Palestine began their conflict with one another, the situation became an interstate conflict because it involved parties of more than one state. The intrastate aspect becomes a bit more significant as the conflict advanced and grew. Hamas and Fatah were fighting for control over Palestine and the Palestinian government. Both of these groups are Palestinian political groups with corresponding militant wings. Essentially the war between Israel and Palestine is being compounded and magnified by the struggle for control within Palestine by the numerous organizations who are struggling for dominance. This intensifies the situation greatly and increases the risk of future conflict.

(b) Casualties, Contrasting Opinions and Tactics

The Second Intifada claimed over 5000 Palestinian Arab casualties, over 1000 Israeli casualties and the lives of 64 foreign citizens. These casualties include civilian and military deaths, as well as foreigners. It is believed that there were more combatant deaths than noncombatant deaths.

Palestinian opinions favor towards the Second Intifada being viewed as yet another aspect of the county's perpetual struggle for liberation stemming from the desire for the Israeli occupation of Palestine to be over. The Israelis, unsurprisingly, consider the Second Intifada as just another wave of Palestinian terrorism that was initiated and collaborated by Palestine.

The strategies employed by the Palestinians were broad in nature. They were the hallmarks of all-out warfare, strategic and guerrilla. Palestinians utilized

both social and paramilitary tactics. Social tactics included mass protests and general strikes. Paramilitary tactics included the use of suicide bombers, launching mortars and rockets into Israel, kidnapping soldiers and noncombatants, pre-planned shootings, assassinations, stabbings, stonings, and lynchings. On the opposite spectrum, Israeli forces mainly concentrated on curbing general Palestinian movements. They accomplished this through the administration of stringent curfews in cities and by establishing checkpoints throughout the occupied lands. The Israelis also focused on attacking Palestinian Authority infrastructure that included water facilities, electricity grids, police stations, and prisons housing Israeli captives.

Causes

There were many causes that have been cited for the violence that erupted throughout this conflict. The most prominent of which was the fact that discontent among the Palestinians had been steadily increasing after the failure of the Camp David talks during the summer of 2000. Palestinians and Israelis disagree on the exact cause of the Second Intifada. However, among the causes cited by both sides there are four main events that receive the most attention. Those four events are: the Temple Mount Incident, the violence of Friday September 29, the killing of Muhammad Al-Dura, and the accusation by Israel that it was deliberately planned by the Palestinians.

The Temple Mount Incident refers to the day of September 28, 2000. On that day, Ariel Sharon visited the Temple Mount, which also houses the Al-Aqsa mosque. The al-Aqsa mosque is known as the third holiest site of Islam. The international community acknowledges that this visit served as a

provocation to the Palestinians. What is disputed is where or not Sharon
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intended the visit to be viewed as such. Evidence providing his objective of intentional provocation includes the well-known fact that Sharon sought to undermine and discredit the then-current Israeli government by interrupting the peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine. This tactic succeeded greatly. However, it should be noted that if the Palestinians were not also concerned with increasing violence at this time, the incident wouldn't have caused as much provocation as it had. On the previous day, September 29, Muslims who were worshipping at the Al-Aqsa mosque burst forth in fierce demonstrations. The Israeli police were not prepared to handle such a crowd and the situation quickly escalated out-of-control. The crowd advanced and assaulted an Israeli police station, which resulted in seven Palestinians killed and over 70 Israeli police were wounded.

On Saturday September 30, French television crews supposedly filmed the death of a 12-year-old child named Muhammad al-Dura. The child was apparently caught in the cross-fire in Gaza. In recent years, the film has been confirmed to have been profoundly modified and portions were removed. Supposedly, this was done to better create and narrate a story that would be consistent with the claim that al-Dura was intentionally targeted by Israeli soldiers. Immediately following this event, the Israeli authorities did not contest the claims made by the film. Later, however, ballistics experts showed that the Israeli soldiers could not have carried out the execution of the 12 year-old child due to the angles from which they were stationed. At a later trial, the French television officials were incapable of yielding several minutes worth of the original recording of the incident. The lasting result of

this incident was the accepted martyrdom of Al-Dura, independent of whether he had really been killed or not.

A diverse assortment of Palestinian leaders and organizations, including current members of the Palestinian Authority, supported the notion of beginning an armed insurrection. This concept led to the establishment of Fatah summer camps throughout Palestine. These were utilized to prepare Palestinian youths for violent confrontations. As early as 1999, A Fatah leaflet declared that a series of protests will force the “ settlers” to leave Palestine forever.” For a brief period that involved no violence whatsoever, this leaflet was regarded as basic Palestinian rhetoric. This rhetoric provided no credible threats and throughout this time, the Palestinians had openly embarked upon a mission to end the violence within its state that was brought about by the Oslo accords. During the years following the onset of violence, many Palestinian sources have disclosed unambiguously that the violence was intentionally premeditated, although it is not clear as to what degree of conflict was intended from the planning of this event.

Barriers to Resolution

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is very complex and cannot be solved in a matter of simple terms. However, the main issue that is preventing a standing resolution from occurring is the fact that Hamas remains in power in Gaza. Hamas, unofficially under the control of Syria and Iran, in control of Gaza has led to a situation where there can be no peace negotiation or final settlement accord. This lack of negotiations and resolution is brought about by a few basic reasons. First, Hamas is opposed to peace in principal with

Israel and they continue to disrupt negotiations and perpetrate terror attacks
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against the Israeli people. Next, the Israeli public will not back the essential staid concessions to the Palestinians as long as Israeli conservative radicals are able to continue convincing the Israeli public that there is a stern and perceptible danger that the establishment of a Palestinian state will result in a terrorist state controlled by Hamas and other extremists. Last, the Palestinian leadership cannot make the required sincere concessions to Israel as long as Hamas and the followers of extremists' views of Jihad disseminate the philosophy of martyrdom and radicalism accompanied by their rhetoric that any concessions to Israel is essentially disloyalty to the Palestinian Cause. These three main issues are essentially preventing peace in Palestine. Until Hamas and Israel learn to accept that each other have a right of existence, there will be no chance of a mutually beneficial resolution within Palestine or Israel.

Outcome

The outcome of the Second Intifada is very muddled, to say the least. There has technically been no official end date to the conflict. This exists due to the competing views of the conflict itself. For example, Palestine views it as a continuation of their ongoing struggle of liberation and relief from Israeli occupation. This means they do not recognize the conflict as a separate event, but rather another struggle the Palestinian people had to endure. By the same accord, Israel does not view it necessarily as the sole conflict. They hold the belief that this was merely another Palestinian uprising which instigated a surge of pre-planned terrorism. Despite these official views of the states involved in the conflict, the international community has identified the Second Intifada as its own separate conflict. It is collectively decided,

from an international standpoint, that the end date was February 8, 2005. However, in spite of this date, violence exploded once more in 2006 immediately following the election of Hamas and their subsequent coup on Palestinian government.

In 2006, Hamas gained control of the Palestinian government through legitimate elections. Hamas secured an astonishing majority of 74 seats in the Palestinian government. In comparison, Fatah managed to win 45 seats and the various Independent parties were able to capture 13 seats. Clearly, Hamas had gained control of the Palestinian government. This upset Israel and stunned international observers who believed that Hamas would only score a minority of seats. Due to the election of Hamas as the major party in control of Palestine, numerous outbursts of violence commenced following the election and implementation of Hamas policy among Palestinians.

There are numerous examples of continued violence from both Palestine and Israel in the years following the accepted end date of the Second Intifada. In June 2006, an incident occurred that angered Palestinians and prompted Hamas to end the ceasefire it had declared in 2005. This resulted in the resumption of attacks upon Israelis. Following this event, on June 25, 2006 an Israeli military installation was attacked by Palestinian militants. This interaction led to a gun battle resulting in 2 Israeli soldier deaths and 3 Palestinian militant deaths. During the course of battle, the Palestinians were able to capture a prominent Israeli corporal by the name of Gilad Shalit. This prompted Israel to send in tanks, APCs, and troops into the Gaza Strip on June 28, 2006. This date was the official commencement of the Israeli's

Operation Summer Rains, which continues to run autonomously in regards to <https://assignbuster.com/the-al-aqsa-intifada-the-second-intifada-politics-essay/>

the intifada. As the conflict simmered for months, there was a truce implemented on November 26, 2006. This truce held fairly well until December 27, 2008 when the Gaza War occurred. This was brought about by Israel launching a military campaign, Operation Cast Lead, which targeted Hamas members and Palestinian state infrastructure such as water processing plants and electricity grids. The Israelis stated that this campaign was brought about by continued rocket attacks from Hamas in the Gaza Strip upon Israel. The Israelis maintain it was a defensive response. Finally, in January 2009, Israel announced a voluntary ceasefire that was conditional upon Hamas abolishing their terrorist attacks from within Gaza. Shortly after, Israel began implementing a withdrawal plan that took place over the course of the next several days following the ceasefire announcement. At an unspecified date, Hamas announced its own ceasefire that included a list of its own demands. Hamas demanded that Israel completely withdraw from Gaza and Palestine and that the border crossings be reopened for Palestinians. Although this is not the end of Palestinian-Israeli tensions, it signaled the “end” of the Second Intifada’s aftermath to those that study the conflict within the international community. All violence that has occurred after January 2009 are considered separate conflicts and not related to the Second Intifada.

Realism vs. Constructivism

Realism is based upon the belief that all people are fighting for control and power. The theory condones that most conflicts arise from this issue and therefore since everyone is fighting for power and control, there can be no trust involved. Realism endorses the thought that true peace can only be

attained through the equal balance of power and control among players involved. Through the implementation of this idea into the Second Intifada, it is clear that there is little to no hope of this conflict ever reaching a binding, peaceful resolution. Both parties involved are constantly struggling for an upper hand on power and control within the region. This proves true in areas of mutual interest such as water rights and access, land reform, negotiation processes, etc. Based upon this analysis, all treaties will fail due to the lack of mutual trust amongst the players involved. This leads to the diagnosis of there being no hope of the situation resolving itself through a realist perspective.

Constructivism is basically the theory that ideas and human awareness are important in regards to its constituting effect on the international system. It is based upon the belief that wars are primarily fought with those that are the least similar or most different from those of the aggressor. For instance, a Catholic country is less likely to attack another Catholic country. When the constructive view is implemented into this situation, it is evident that resolution is just as hopeless as the realist perspective. Essentially Palestine and Israel both are extremely different states. Israel is primarily a Jewish state and Palestine is a majority Muslim Arab state. These profound differences lead to very different cultures, views and outlooks in life. This makes it very difficult for both states to compromise and see a mutually beneficial resolution implemented. The only aspect that will lead to peace in this situation would be the eventual learning of both states to identify with the concerns of one another and make concessions ease those concerns.

Possible Resolutions

There are fundamentally two main schools of thought concerning possible resolutions to the Second Intifada, or the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as a whole. Both conflicts are essentially two faces of the same card and the resolutions are therefore dual-purpose. Another way of looking at it is that the binding resolution that ends the overall Palestinian-Israeli conflict will also end all conflict stemming from the Second Intifada. The two prominent solutions are simple in nature: first is the option of implementing a two-state solution and last is the option of a one-state solution. The first is widely supported in other Arab and Muslim countries and is gaining support in Europe and the second is supported in numerous western countries, including the United States.

The two-state solution basically refers to a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that is currently under discussion. This solution demands a creation of two separate states for two separate peoples. It agrees to the formation of a sovereign Palestinian state that stands alongside the State of Israel. The two-state solution differs from other solutions which call for an autonomous Palestine in that it requires direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine. For the two-state resolution to be effective, the negotiations must address and resolve numerous fundamental issues, which include border resolution, citizenship and immigration/migration, refugee status on both sides, and the future of East Jerusalem.

In contrast, the one-state solution approaches resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict by the avocation of a single state comprised of Israel, the

West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. The one-state resolution calls for a single
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citizenship status among all Arabs and Jews within the single state.

Supporters say that this allows equal rights for all people, regardless of ethnicity and religious belief. The core supporters of this solution are essentially supporters due to ideological reasons; however, there are others who support it due to their belief that this is the inevitable situation or reality that the Palestinian and Israeli people must learn to accept.

Prospects for Enduring Peace

Based upon research and the current state of Palestinian-Israeli relations, the prospect for enduring peace is very unlikely. This stems from the fact that there remain too many core issues unresolved. These issues include such basic ideas of territory allocation and mutual recognition, border establishment, water rights, citizenship status, refugee status, and many other fundamental disputes. In addition to the core issues, there are numerous secondary issues that will need immediate, bipartisan support and implementation to be effective. Secondary issues are reparations to harmed families among both states, tribal territories of indigenous peoples, outside influence from surrounding countries, establishment of common military and defense protocols, and resource or private land allocation and reclamation. To facilitate peace within the region, Palestine must become more stable as a state, improve living conditions, and cease utilizing Islamic martyrdom as a means of negotiation and terror. In turn, Israel must recognize Palestine's right to exist and prosper, ease restrictions of goods flowing in and out of Palestine, and overall have a goal of compromise and concessionary actions that both sides will support. These ideas will not usher in immediate enduring peace, but will provide a solid foundation for continued peace talks

that could gain more momentum in the long term approach to resolution of this conflict.