Boycotts to Bombs: History, Causes, and Comparison of the Palestinian Intifadas

Leah Wilson

University of Kentucky, leahwilson1@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://uknowledge.uky.edu/honprog

Part of the International Relations Commons, Islamic World and Near East History Commons, Near and Middle Eastern Studies Commons, Other International and Area Studies Commons, and the Politics and Social Change Commons

Recommended Citation

Wilson, Leah, "Boycotts to Bombs: History, Causes, and Comparison of the Palestinian Intifadas" (2014). Lewis Honors College Capstone Collection. 15.
https://uknowledge.uky.edu/honprog/15
Boycotts to Bombs: History, Causes, and Comparison of the Palestinian Intifadas

Leah Wilson

INT 495: Global Protests

10 September 2014
Introduction

A popular topic in today’s narrative of the Middle East, the conflict between Israel and Palestine is one with a tumultuous history haunted by violence and very few prospects of hope for peace. Particularly pivotal in their history, the first Intifada in 1987 left a lasting impact on the sociopolitical mentality of both peoples. The second Intifada, though differing from the first, continues to mar the construction of healthy Israeli-Palestinian relations, and serves as a reminder that the conflict survives, despite many efforts to oversee its resolution. This paper will attempt to uncover the impacts of these protests and the relationship between the first and second uprising. Through a historical study of causes, tactics, and repercussions, I will attempt to draw conclusions to aid in the understanding of the complicated conflict between Israel and Palestine, and how further events such as these two revolts might be avoided.

In order to understand the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is necessary to first address the historical background of the greater Israeli-Arab conflict from the time of Israel’s sovereign declaration. It is important to note that, until the recognition of the Palestinian Liberation Organization by the Arab League in 1974, the surrounding Arab states carried out most of the fighting against Israel on behalf of the Palestinian people. After the creation of the Israeli state in May of 1948 in the Palestinian region, the Arab countries of Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon moved their forces to the Arab parts of occupied Palestine in defense of their Arab brethren.¹ The resulting war ended with armistice agreements in 1949, and the significant humiliation of Arab forces by the new Israeli military, which managed to actually gain control of areas designated for the Palestinian state. An invasion of Egypt by the Israeli forces in 1956 only added to the tremendous tension between Arabs and Israelis, and after a second preemptive strike

against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in 1967, hope for peace was effectively nonexistent. The following war of 1969 and the Yom Kippur war of 1973 proved to be significant losses for the Arabs, and after multiple defeats, the Egyptians were the first to sign a peace agreement in 1979, followed by Lebanon in 1983. Though the Arab nations had proven fairly ineffective at combating the Israeli occupation, the Palestinian people were not satisfied, and in 1987, the first Intifada broke out in Gaza.

The proposed research will provide historical context for the first and second Palestinian Intifadas, which is necessary in order to compare the natures and implications of these two profound protests. Through exploration of the root economic and sociopolitical causes of each separate Intifada, comparisons will be drawn between both the evolution and impact of these events on Israeli-Palestinian relations. Therefore, the research question is:

“What is the historical background of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and how did it influence the first and second Palestinian uprisings? How do these events compare in terms of causes, results, and impact?”

Throughout the paper, it will be demonstrated that the harsh economic penalties, the subjugation and humiliation of the Palestinian people by Israeli forces, the lack of international awareness and activism, and the continued failure of Palestinian nationalism to return basic human rights and sovereignty to its people culminated in the first Intifada; the failure to construct a fair and equally beneficial peace agreement, coupled with the continuation of the previous grievances and additional stressors, instigated the second uprising.

**Literature Review**

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
It is clear why the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has inspired prolific literature and research. Through this research, however, it is only clear that there is no apparent resolution to the question of Palestine. Disputed territorially, ideologically, legally, and culturally, the state of Israel faces contempt on all fronts from neighboring countries, yet does not attempt to achieve solutions or peace agreements. The history of conflict between Israel and Palestine has shaped the national identity of Israel, and given Arabs a singular enemy. Many attempts have been made to understand the origins of the conflict, from designating the first declaration of intent following World War I and the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948, to the relentless governance of the Israelis over their governed Palestinian subjects, to the unwillingness of the Palestinians to agree to the peace arrangements offered to them by Israel. It is necessary to recognize that the state of Israel was founded during a time of fear, post World War II, and after the extermination of roughly six million Jewish people. This greatly influenced the policies of Israel regarding security and government, which is made apparent in their treatment of the native Palestinian population, as the Israelis founded their country on the belief that the creation of a Jewish state was the only way to protect the Jewish people. Despite the initial intent, the state of Israel evolved from a small establishment of Jewish peoples into an oppressive, militarized government that ethnically cleansed the Palestinian territory of its native inhabitants in order to build its country.

Furthermore, the Israeli government established the tone for future interactions with Palestinians. Throughout the paper, it will be demonstrated how the aggressive history between Israel and Palestine influenced the uprisings of 1987 and 2000 and contributed to the inability of the two parties to reach lasting peace agreements. Additionally, it is necessary to note that references to Israel in any capacity throughout the paper are a reflection of the government of
Israel, as this paper does not accommodate factions within the Israeli public or government that were uncooperative or opposed to the actions of the government entity. Though these actors are important, they ultimately did not have a major influence on the practiced policies of the government and its actors.

First, it is necessary to establish a basis of reference and a common understanding of the principles of the conflict. While there is prolific literature documenting the history of the conflict, as well as each separate Intifada, there is relatively little reviewing both protests within the entire historical framework. The following literature provides some context for the territorial disputes, as well as the historical clash of cultures and religions that culminated in the first Intifada.

In his book *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One hundred Years of War* James Gelvin defines the territory of Palestine as the modern State of Israel, the Gaza Strip bordering the Mediterranean Sea, and the West Bank along the border of Jordan.\(^4\) While the state of Israel constitutes roughly 80 percent of land in the “Palestinian” territory, it only holds about 64 percent of the population, with 7.8 million Israelis, and about 4.3 million Palestinians in the other territories.\(^5\) Gelvin points out the significance of the Israel’s control of the seaport cities of Acre and Tel Aviv, as well as the inland city of Jerusalem, a city of great importance to three of the world’s great Abrahimic religions, to the conflict, for placing a stranglehold on seaport trade in Gaza.\(^6\) Though Gelvin’s work provides a multitude of factual evidence of inequalities and injustices regarding the conflict, his overarching theme is that the conflict is rooted deeply in


\(^{5}\) Ibid. 1.

\(^{6}\) Ibid, 5.
nationalism, and the construction of “a historical narrative that traces the unbroken lineage of a
group- a nation- over time,” and asserts the right of one group to occupy the area over another.\textsuperscript{7}
The direct manifestation of this is the self-proclaimed objective of Zionism to establish a Jewish
homeland in the occupied territory, and to express politically their inherent right to reside there.\textsuperscript{8}

In addition to identifying the conflicting nationalisms and identities as a root cause of the
Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Gelvin states that the Zionist attitude of the Israeli state was born out
of the anti-Semitic climate in Europe at the time.\textsuperscript{9} The events in Europe prior to 1948 created the
idea that the Jewish people must have a sovereign nation, and that rightfully, the area known as
Palestine should be that homeland. However, Gelvin states that this phenomenon was two-fold,
and that Europe’s impact on Israeli development surpassed the attitude regarding Jews. He writes
that it is natural to assume that the Jewish people would become nationalistic, and it was equally
likely to see the evolution of the Palestinians into a group of individuals who inspired to be a
nation-state.\textsuperscript{10} Caused by Europe’s increased nationalistic pride and emphasis on ideas of
Westphalian sovereignty, both groups would be forced to the realization that is was a necessity to
have a sovereign state in order to be recognized by the international community. Thus, the idea
was planted for the Israelis, and later, the Palestinians would begin their fight for a sovereign
state as well. It should be understood that, though Europe was the primary cause of the first of
Gelvin’s points regarding nationalism, the second must be expanded outside the bounds of
“Europe,” as the bipolar powers following World War II were the United States and Russia, and
these two states heavily influenced the development of the international climate post World War
II, inspiring heavy emphasis on nationalism throughout the world.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{7} Ibid, 6.
\item \textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{9} Ibid, 14.
\item \textsuperscript{10} Ibid, 15.
\end{itemize}
Gelvin’s idea that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict originates from nationalistic tendencies is supported in the work of Norman Finkelstein, the American political scientist, in his book *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*. Finkelstein cites the work of Yosef Gorney, identifying the principle tenent of the Zionist movement: Palestine should be a majority Jewish area.\(^{11}\) As Finkelstein notes, this notion is particularly detrimental to reconciliation with Palestinians and the general Arab world. Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism, stressed the natural tendency of a group of people with common ancestry to form a common state.\(^{12}\) Thus it is easy to conclude that if the majority of people in Palestine are of a common Jewish line of descent, the state itself will become Jewish.

Additionally, Finkelstein cites Labor Zionism and Cultural Zionism as the two other types of Zionism that contributed to the forging of Israeli national identity.\(^{13}\) Labor Zionism perpetuates the belief that the establishment of a Jewish state will only be achieved through the efforts of the working class, whereas Cultural Zionism stresses the importance of cultural heritage and tradition in the foundation of the Jewish state. However, all three types of Zionism agreed that the Jewish people’s historical homeland was in “the whole of Palestine, including Transjordan, the Golan Heights, and southern Lebanon,” and the conquest of this territory was necessary, and would involve a careful exclusion of the non-Jewish population. In other words, the Zionist nationalism desired the mass emigration of the native Arab population, which is clearly in conflict with the wishes of the locals.\(^{14}\)

---


\(^{12}\) Ibid, 8.

\(^{13}\) Ibid, 7.

\(^{14}\) Ibid, 16.
Though the significance of Zionism and nationalism are important to the discussion of the Intifadas (as these events pitted the Palestinian national identity against the Israeli nationalism), as well as the deeper history between Arabs and Jews, it is hardly sufficient to explain all the causes of the conflict. In order to understand the events of the first Intifada, one must look at the territorial and political conflicts from the start of the Israeli occupation. Since the creation of the state of Israel, both Palestinians and other Arab nations have conflicted with the Zionist state in multiple, devastating wars and border skirmishes totaling more than 150,000 casualties.\textsuperscript{15} According to Israeli linguist and commentator on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict Tanya Reinhart, the war of 1948, which is referred to as “The War of Independence” by Israelis and “The Nakba” or catastrophe by Palestinians, left nearly 1.4 million Palestinians without a home, and despite the UN resolution to allow those displaced by the war to return to their homeland, Israel refused their reentry.\textsuperscript{16} The ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian population continued into the 1967 Six Day War, when another 250,000 Palestinians were forced their homeland. In total, the conflict produced more than 750,000 refugees, including those removed by Israeli forces, and those who fled out of fear.\textsuperscript{17}

It is also pertinent to note that Israeli controls the vast majority of resources in the territory designated as Palestine. First and foremost, the exponential growth of Israeli territory has left little Palestinian land. After the war in 1967, Israel was in control of the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem, Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula, though it eventually withdrew from the Sinai

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, 1.
in 1982.\textsuperscript{18} The other occupied territories were relinquished and reoccupied throughout the course of the conflict. In addition to territorial expansion, the Israeli population has grown exponentially. Figure 1 demonstrates the growth of the Israeli and Palestinian populations from the British mandate in 1914 to recent years.

Figure 1: Israel/Palestine: Arab/Jewish Population\textsuperscript{19}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{population_graph.png}
\caption{Israel/Palestine: Arab/Jewish Population}
\end{figure}

As one can see, the population of Arabs was significantly lower than the population of Jews after the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948, until the 2000s. Israelis controlled the vast majority of land, and also controlled most of the resources. In 2013, according to the Palestinian Water Authority, Israel controls just over 85\% of the territory’s water resources.\textsuperscript{20}


The above issues are contributing factors to the root causes of Palestinian unrest. Conflicting nationalisms, as well as ideological disputes, human rights violations, and territorial conflict all contributed to the first Intifada. However, this paper will not attempt to address one of these causes in-depth. Rather, it will serve as an overarching analysis of the preexisting and created problems between Israel and Palestine, as a complete understanding of the grievances of both populations is necessary for any hope of achieving peace. Furthermore, analyzing the events and causes of the Intifadas must be done within a complete framework, because neither uprising was sparked by a single complaint or event.

As has been explained above, the sociopolitical climate during the infantile years of the Israeli state was riddled with complex historical justifications of rights to land, outcries of injustice, and brutal military clashes. It is clear, as Gelvin writes in his book, that the Zionist attitude of the Israel state emerged from the anti-Semitism expressed in European states at the time, as well as the nationalistic ideology sweeping the world. It is also established that the development of Israeli-Arab ties since the creation of the state of Israel has seen little improvement in actual peace (though it is possible to claim that mere reluctant tolerance has been established). This should provide a sufficient base in order to understand the attitudes of all parties going into the following years as well as a comprehension of innately conflicting ideologies between Israelis and Palestinians. However, the remainder of the paper will address a more comprehensive view of the Palestinian revolt, encompassing the influence of history, conflicting national, social, and cultural identities, and the culmination of decades of Palestinian mistreatment on the structure and evolution of both Intifadas.
The First Intifada

The historical context of the first Intifada has been primarily explained above, though it is necessary to have a basic grasp of the actor and the starting point of the first Intifada. Firstly, at this time, the Six-Day war had resulted in further, aggressive expansion of Israeli settlements, and in turn the growth of refugee camps in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan.\textsuperscript{21} Israel also maintained a stranglehold of the Gazan economy through careful regulation of trade, which resulted in a stunted economy unable to support the Palestinian workforce. Additionally, Israel was in control of both the West Bank and Gaza Strip, though Jordan had claims to the West Bank until 1988, at which time the Jordanian government recognized the legitimacy of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO).\textsuperscript{22} Though at the start of the Intifada territorial claims were greatly disputed, a voice had emerged from Palestine that would grow to be their representation to the international community. The PLO was founded in 1964 and gave representation to the Palestinians who sought separate representation from the Arab League.\textsuperscript{23} Shortly after the PLO was formed, it was identified as a terrorist organization by Israel and the United States for guerilla activity in the territories and during the invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

The PLO was granted UN observer status in 1974 in resolution 3210, when the UN recognized the PLO as the representative to the international community of the Palestinian people.\textsuperscript{24} That same year, in resolution 3236, the United Nations recognized the rights of the


Palestinian people to “self-determination without external interference,” as well as “national independence” and the right to a sovereign state; the UN also declared their rights to return to homes and property from which they have been displaced, and the leadership organization to be the PLO.\(^{25}\) This implicit declaration of support for the Palestinian cause would theoretically signify an international interest in the peace process between Palestinians and Israel, and one that would recognize a fair agreement between both parties, leading to a sovereign Palestinian state. However, this was not further pursued by the UN, and no doubt caused frustration among Palestinians, for though they had a spokesperson, most powerful change-makers in the world were not listening to the Palestinian calls for justice and freedom.

It is no doubt the compounded failure of their Arab brethren to rescue Palestinians from Israeli oppression the lack of international concern regarding their plight, coupled with the increasingly harsh occupation and economic suppression that created the environment for the 1987 uprising. After years of enduring militant Israeli repression, the Intifada began in the Gaza Strip, but it quickly spread throughout the malcontent Palestinian territories. Starting on the 9\(^{th}\) of December 1987 in the Jabaliya Refugee Camp in Gaza, the uprising was the result of many years of humiliation and anger suffered by the Palestinian people, though it was started when an Israeli truck killed four Palestinians in a crash.\(^{26}\) The Intifada was a grassroots movement, mainly sustained by the hopeless youth who sought to establish Palestinian sovereignty.\(^{27}\)

Though not directly organized by a specific activist group, the Intifada resulted from collaboration amongst various Palestinian organizations working for liberation. Curiously, the PLO was not a participant in the movement, as they were attempting to maintain a façade of

\(^{25}\) Ibid.
\(^{27}\) Ibid.
control to the international community in hopes of being granted the governing role in a future Palestinian state. The Intifada was executed utilizing the connections between activist groups, as well as existing social communications, including familial connections and the common ancestral, cultural identity uniting all people of Palestinian heritage. Various types of civil disobedience were adopted throughout the territories, including “strikes, demonstrations, refusal to pay taxes,” and boycotts.\textsuperscript{28} Palestinian sit-ins and rallies were greeted with tear gas, mass arrests, and baton-beatings, and through this deliberately brutal response, Israeli forces were eventually able to suppress demonstrators, resulting in over 1,000 deaths, and tens of thousands of injuries.\textsuperscript{29} Additionally, Israeli defense forces enforced strict curfews throughout the occupied territories, including an 8 pm to 7 am lockdown of the entire population of Gaza from 1987 until the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993.\textsuperscript{30}

However, protestors persisted despite increasing limitations on mobility, organizing mass strikes through printed leaflets and continually protesting unfair tax and permit systems by refusing to pay taxes. In Jerusalem, representatives from Palestinian activists groups, supported by actions taken by the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas, would meet to discuss plans, and then return to their cities equipped with leaflets to inform residents of protest activities for the month.\textsuperscript{31} After the Israeli assassination of two of the movement’s leaders, responsibilities for the direction of the Intifada fell to Fateh founder Yasser Arafat, which ultimately began the fall of Palestinian hopes for change.

The Intifada resulted in a condemnation from the UN Security Council regarding the massive Palestinian casualties in the first month of the Intifada, though action was not taken.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{30} Cobban, Helen.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
against the state of Israel. However, the international community (driven by the United States) desired a resolution to the brutality and aggression between the two peoples. After failed meetings in Madrid, the PLO and Israeli officials began a series of fourteen secret meetings in 1992, sponsored by the Norwegian Foreign Minister Jorgen Holst, in an attempt to reach a lasting peace agreement. The product of these secret meetings was revealed in August of 1993 as the Oslo Accords. It was a declaration that created hope for a breakthrough in the longstanding conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, recognizing mutual legitimacy and an effort to create a peaceful coexistence, and signaled the end of the first Intifada. Such a seemingly successful cooperation caused celebration throughout the West Bank and Gaza, as Palestinians hoped for an end to their oppression, though it was met with opposition on both sides.

Yet, unrest remained throughout the region as surrounding countries suspiciously eyed the Israeli government and Palestinians hesitantly resumed normal daily activities. The Palestinian organizations that organized the collaboration during the first Intifada remained displeased with the arrangements and the PLO, which had succumbed to Israel and secretly negotiated an agreement without their input. In essence, the accords did little to fix the underlying problems of Israeli-Palestinian relations because they did not address the most significant and disputed issues, including “the status of Jerusalem, the future of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, the right of return of Palestinians living in the Diaspora, security arrangements, borders,” and relations with surrounding states. The Accords quickly proved to be an unfair arrangement as Israel continued expansion throughout the West Bank,

---


33 Ibid.
walled off different parts of Palestine, and fenced the Gaza Strip.\textsuperscript{34} To add to the crushed hopes of the Palestinian people, the distrusted and disliked PLO leadership returned with an even greater role in Palestinian progress as they worked to disestablish the organizations responsible for the Intifada.\textsuperscript{35} Palestinians returned to a state of despair as more forces worked to limit their rights, mobility, and voice while the peace process continued between the corrupt PLO and the Israeli government.

**The Second Intifada**

The flaws of the Oslo Accords were quickly made apparent, as was the fact that the agreements could hardly be claimed as beneficial for the Palestinian population. In fact, the overall economic and sociopolitical condition of Palestinians fell tragically within the first five years of the Accords’ implementation. Per capita income in Palestine continuously decreased after falling by 25 per cent in the first five years, and Israeli forces, which were supposedly required to withdraw from parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and grant autonomous governance to Palestinians in those designated areas, maintained control of 60 per cent of the West Bank, and joint control of another 27 per cent.\textsuperscript{36} The Accords had granted Palestinians the right to govern their territory under the Palestinian Authority (PA), of which Yasser Arafat was to lead, though sovereign rights, as demonstrated by these statistics, never reached full capacity throughout Palestine. It is essential to note that internal Palestinian politics brought the Fatah party, which was founded by Arafat, to the forefront of representation, despite their history with terrorism. Fatah has since been a major faction of the Palestinian government.

\textsuperscript{34} Cobban, Helen.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
Furthermore, Israelis continued to control 80 per cent of water resources in occupied areas, compounding the existing problem of settler population expansion and settlement development, which included a system of Israeli-only roads running through occupied territories. The Accords purposefully did not resolve any of these major issues regarding Israel’s control of land, borders, and resources, as these were to be arranged during cooperative periods and future negotiations. However, the final talks at Camp David in 2000 failed to reconcile the traditional issue of land division. Palestinian representatives refused the two state solution proposed by US President Bill Clinton and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak that divided the West Bank, though no alternative proposals were given.

In late September of 2000, after the failure of the Camp David negotiations, candidate for Prime Minister Ariel Sharon visited the Temple Mount complex in Jerusalem with an escort of over 1,000 Israeli officers. Sharon claimed that the al-Aqsa mosque and the Dome of the Rock would continually remain under Israeli control—implying that Jerusalem would also perpetually remain under Israeli domain. Many cite this incident as a purposeful provocation of Palestinians and an attempt to halt the fragile peace Oslo peace process, which Sharon heartily opposed. Indeed, after his visit to Temple Mount and the start of violent conflict, incumbent candidate Ehud Barak was ousted from office by Sharon, which effectively ended any hope for successful reconciliation through the Accords.

37 Ibid, 9.
40 “Shattered Dreams of Peace.”
The days following Sharon’s visit to Temple Mount saw the start of the second Intifada, which is frequently referred to as the al-Aqsa Intifada after the Muslim mosque in Jerusalem. It is narrow to say that Sharon was the cause of this uprising, as it is equally too simplistic to cite Yasser Arafat’s history of involvement with violence as an alternative cause. Rather, Sharon acted as a catalyst for an event that was a reaction to many factors, including the lack of results produced by the Oslo Accords, the escalated arrests of Palestinians and confiscation of land, as well as failing economy. Sharon’s controversial declarations in Temple Mount were spread through media, as was the resulting protest, and Palestinians seized the opportunity to protest their continually diminishing standards of living.

The al-Aqsa Intifada was born of a bloodier nature than the first uprising, with the death of demonstrators following Sharon’s visit and a violent Palestinian retaliation. Whereas the first Intifada had seen a much more peaceful protest from Palestinians, who utilized organization and nonviolent tactics to protest unfair Israeli policy and regulation, the second uprising was immediately characterized by an extremist tenor. Public support for Islamists in Palestine doubled between the start of the Intifada and mid-2004, indicating public support for their violent tactics. As Palestinians became increasingly confined by Israeli security forces, checkpoints, and the security barrier around the West Bank, and hope for ever reaching peaceful resolution was dashed publicly by the government under Sharon, groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad manipulated the circumstances to gain favor among the Palestinian people and


43 Ibid.
place themselves in a position to assume leadership with the failure of the PA. The groups involved in sustaining the second Intifada were mostly designated as terrorist organizations by Western states such as the US and members of the EU, as they cultivated their public image by inflicting retribution for Palestinian deaths with quid pro quo deaths of Israeli civilians.

Primarily, the second Intifada saw the introduction of suicide bombing as a common tactic of retribution, organized by terrorist organizations and perpetrated by common Palestinians. Throughout the uprising, Palestinians had access to “machine guns and homemade mortars,” but the favored tactic was “especially suicide bombings,” because they were the easiest attacks, and caused the highest number of casualties. The period from 2000 until the end of the second Intifada in 2005 saw nearly 150 suicide attacks, whereas the years of the Oslo Accords saw roughly 20. The asymmetrical warfare of the second intifada undoubtedly contributed to the popularity of the suicide terrorism tactic, as did the willingness of young Palestinians to die for the liberation of Palestine. Though research has no conclusive explanation for the causes of one’s decision to act as a martyr, it may be explained through a combination of personal experience and despair, history, socioeconomic standing, and nationalism; these factors are exploited by organizations such as Hamas or Islamic Jihad in order to cultivate a candidate for suicide terrorism. Unfortunately, these groups had access to innumerable young people willing to sacrifice themselves for the betterment of their people.

44 Ahmed. 87.
The resulting retaliation by Israeli forces was severe. The government under Ariel Sharon was intolerant of Palestinian protest of any kind, and launched Operation Defensive Shield in 2002 as wide-sweeping retaliation and punishment of Palestinians for the violence. Israeli forces utilized “tanks, missiles, and attack helicopters to suppress Palestinian protesters,” as part of the operation, and utilized a number of methods to attack leadership of the uprising. Among the tactics used to curb the spread of the Intifada were targeted killings of important leaders or the restriction of their movements, the establishment of a security barrier around Palestinian territories and increased border security, and resettlement of Palestinian territories. The construction of Israeli settlements actually increased dramatically over the course of the second Intifada, as did water consumption and limitation of Palestinian mobility, which extended to high-ranking personnel, including Yasser Arafat. Before the end of the year, more than 170 Palestinians had been killed and approximately 6,000 injured, not including six dead Israeli civilians and eight dead soldiers.

The severe retaliation of Israeli forces during the second Intifada inhibited true protest following in the character of the first Intifada. In October of 2000, the UN Security Council approved resolution 1322, which stated their disapproval of the actions of the Israeli state leading up to the start of the Intifada, as well as the response of Israeli security forces to the situation. Despite the deteriorating situation in Palestine, the UN took no further action, but the fighting between Israelis and Palestinians was seen around the world, and many responded with horror at

the conditions. Throughout the uprising, Palestinians had communicated using electronic media, radio, and personal electronic communications, but the presence of Arab satellite television stations was what truly revolutionized the uprising, as the broadcast of the Intifada was captured and seen in live transmission.\textsuperscript{51} Access to firsthand footage around the Arab world resulted in outrage at Israeli mistreatment of Palestinian noncombatants in Arab countries and abroad. However, Israel continued with its “offensively defensive” strategy, and Palestinian organizations continued retaliation with Molotov cocktails and suicide bombers.

**Comparison and Impacts of the Uprisings**

The overall connection between the first and second Intifada is the continued repression of the Palestinian people through Israel’s economic and social manipulation of the territories. In addition to preventing the establishment of a fair two state solution, the Israeli government denied basic human rights to the Palestinian people, subjecting the Palestinian population to humiliation and mistreatment since 1948. Not only has this proved detrimental to the peace process, but also it has augmented existing sentiments regarding Israel throughout the Arab world. As the more powerful actor, Israel has controlled the tone of relations with Palestine and with surrounding states, yet the government has detrimentally sustained the persecution and intimidation of Palestinians. The failure of the Israeli state to recognize their missteps in policy regarding Palestine created the conditions that culminated in the first Intifada, and their inability to negotiate a fair peace agreement or cease the abuse of Palestinian people was the direct cause of the second uprising.

\textsuperscript{51} Kuttab, Daoud.
Despite the common thread of injustice that ties the two events, they are separate uprisings with separate events, tactics, and outcomes. In order to understand the lasting impact of these two events, it is necessary to identify their differences, where each failed, and why the goal of peaceful coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians remains intangible. It is too simplistic, as most research has done, to address only one or even a handful of factors that have contributed to the longevity of this conflict. Rather, it is more appropriate to analyze the Intifadas from a big picture perspective, attempting to grasp at the scope and integration of the problem throughout history to present, while understanding that no amount of inquiry may find satisfactory results. An attempt will be made to compare the Intifadas with the hope that understanding why each was unsuccessful will prevent future replication of these errors.

The first and most obvious distinction between these two events is the condition in which each began. It is clear that the first Intifada had a revolutionary spirit fed by the grassroots participation and organization created by the entire Palestinian community. Fighting together against an oppressive government, Palestinians collectively resisted Israeli attempts to crush their hope for liberation through strategic nonviolent strategies and communication between activists and civilians. Though the first Intifada was costly, it was the first time Palestinians had truly mobilized as a group and attempted to precipitate change. This is not to say that the first Intifada should be considered a success, as they did not ultimately achieve their goals, but it was the first time an organized effort was made, and the first time Israel, “discovered that its military occupation of Palestinian land had a heavy price,” and that perhaps it would be necessary to open a dialogue.\textsuperscript{52}

Despite the progress made in the first Intifada, it was unlikely that the second could be considered as successful given its starting conditions. Rather that a rally against long-term humiliation and oppression, the second Intifada began as a cry of frustration at the botched attempt at a peace agreement. The hope of peace that was presented with the collaborative Oslo Accords set expectations for both Palestinians and Israelis, yet the agreements had no real substance. Palestinians and Israelis alike saw their hope for peaceful resolution destroyed as boycotts were replaced with bombs and demonstrations erased with bullets. The fighting of the second Intifada revolved less around the grassroots communication and inspiration that drove the first uprising, and more around acts of terror and retribution. The al-Aqsa Intifada possessed none of the ideology, but all of the anger.

Perhaps the most important point is that the failures of both Israeli officials and the PLO representatives in the first Intifada to achieve resolutions to the disputed issues led to the second Intifada. Had an actual agreement that produced benefits for the Palestinian population been implemented, the people of Palestine would not have had cause to revolt a second time. This is an unmistakable failure of the two parties in conflict, as well as the Western powers to hold Israel accountable for its actions. Though the PLO had the recognition of the international community, they were in a poor position to negotiate on behalf of the Palestinian people, given that they were neither liked nor trusted, and seemed more content to appear as benevolent politicians to the world than solve the problems of their people. Even more concerning is the fact that the Accords were drafted under the supervision of a third party, and the subsequent meetings, such as those at Camp David, were mediated by the United States, whose blatant bias
toward Israel undoubtedly worsened the resolution process.\textsuperscript{53} It is difficult to see how anyone involved could have predicted the success of these Accords knowing that Israel, which had failed to grant Palestinians sovereignty, liberties, and even some basic human rights, was backed by the most powerful country in the world against an opponent that is not even considered a state.

A complete analysis of the failure of the Oslo Accords’ design is rather difficult, given the changes to domestic and international politics over the course of the 1990s. Frequently, researchers either cite the failure of the Oslo Accords as the reason for the uprising, or the uprising as the reason for the failure of the Accords. It is true that, had the Oslo peace process been successful, it isn’t likely that Palestinians would have rioted. However, it is also worth noting that the process was disrupted, and inhibited, by the violence of the second Intifada. Since 1948, neither party acknowledged the other, nor had they committed to peaceful resolution. The Accords were designed to be gradual, postponing more difficult resolutions to later negotiations. The agreement to mutual recognition and the prospect of discourse in negotiation made the Accords a historic collaboration alone, and, as it established high expectations on both sides, this is also perhaps an important contributory factor to their failure. Palestinians agreed to forfeit 78\% of historically Palestinian territory, with the hope that the remainder would become a sovereign state.\textsuperscript{54} Israel, in return for agreeing to a supervised period of Palestinian self-rule, expected Palestinians to police their own state in the interest of security.

However, the continuation of settlements, destruction of Palestinian community and heritage, and lack of independent government in Palestine throughout the peace process was an


indicator that the agreements would not hold, nor were they necessarily designed with the intention of granting Palestinians their supposed rights. Not only were these acts a violation of the intent of the Accords, but also an indication that Israel was not willing to witness the establishment of a two state solution. This is most likely caused by the shift in domestic Israeli politics to an uncompromising and conservative Likud party in 1996, which marked the beginning of the new government’s attempt to subvert and disintegrate the agreements with Palestine in no covert manner.55 The anti-Oslo rhetoric only continued into the second Intifada, when hope for their success had virtually failed.

It is obvious how a combination of high expectations, poor construction, lack of accountability for Israel, and changing internal politics altered the circumstances of the second Intifada, but it is also necessary to compare the resulting implications of these factors. In addition to originating during a different time and with a different purpose, the second Intifada was far more violent than the first. Whereas the first Intifada was a mobilization of the entire Palestinian community, and therefore could not be suppressed in the same way, the second Intifada was contained by Israeli forces simply because it consisted of pointed confrontations at important locations, such as religious sites and military checkpoints.56 Though organizations such as Hamas were involved in the first Intifada, they were not the primary organizers of protest, and the violent tactics they frequently utilize were also not seen in the first Intifada. The 40,000

55 Ibid., 2013
Palestinian police were also not a factor in the first Intifada, and so the use of brute force could not be justified, as it would be when Palestinians were supposed to be controlling themselves.\textsuperscript{57}

Though many claimed the violence of the second Intifada was the result of one side antagonizing the other, in reality both Palestinians and Israelis had been preparing for violence since the late 1990s. As early as 1997, Israel began preparations for the use of tanks and helicopters in an extensive and carefully planned operation designed as a harsh display of force, in addition to public warnings that any violence from the Palestinians would result in severe retaliation.\textsuperscript{58} In turn, Palestinians responded with collaborative military organization between Fatah (the group in control of the PLO), and other Palestinian nationalist movements. These arrangements neglected fissures within each group, as well as discrepancies between each groups’ ideology, but the leaders solidified plans and communication in the event of confrontation. PA leader Yasser Arafat had “incorrectly assumed that he could use the violence to improve the Palestinian position,” which would instead lead to brutal repercussions for the entire Palestinian population.\textsuperscript{59} Additionally, the Palestinian Authority would lose all respect from its constituents as violence increased, the economy failed, and the PA lost its ability to maintain control of its constituents, or present a plan; this only worsened the disparaging attitude of Palestinians and their willingness to succumb to violence.

Ultimately, it is the culture of violence created by the living conditions in Palestine that perpetuated the willingness of young Palestinians to resort to suicide terrorism. Though suicide bombing occurred before the second Intifada, it was not until this event that it became a tactic of

\textsuperscript{57} Hammami, Rema, and Salim Tamari. "Anatomy of Another Rebellion." \textit{Middle East Research and Information Project} 30 (2000).

\textsuperscript{58} Kuttab, Daoud.

\textsuperscript{59} Kuttab, Daoud.
warfare in Palestine. The causes of one’s willingness to volunteer for martyrdom cannot be adequately explained here, but it is often considered a psychological response to a situation that one deems to be worse than death. This is not to say that it is logical, but suicide terrorism is inspired by living conditions where violence and cruelty are predominant; this is applicable to those growing up through the first Intifada.

It is not sufficient to say that the two Intifadas only differ in the circumstances of their origination, the levels of violence, and the alteration of objectives between the first and second Intifada. Of greater importance is the marginalization of Palestinian public voice in the second Intifada, which left virtually no room for the participation of the common people. Resulting directly from the disestablishment of the grassroots communication efforts of the first Intifada through the joint Israeli and PA system of control, the most important and most greatly impacted people were left in the second Intifada to suffer the consequences without the opportunity to express their frustrations on a political platform. This may help explain a shift in mindset toward violent protest, and how more Palestinians were convinced to join violent groups, but it does not show promise for a true compromise. If the objective of the first Intifada was to create more ways for Palestinians to be heard, the inverse was achieved during the 1990s and into the 21st century. Those placed in charge of protecting Palestinian interests lusted for power, which was granted by Israel through the Oslo accords, and in order to maintain that power, the Palestinian Authority and its related organizations and collaborators crushed the very heart of the revolution.

---

60 “Suicide Bombers,” 73.
Conclusion

Though the territory of Palestine has endured longstanding conflict and survived two full-blown revolts in 1987 and 2000, the progress of the Palestinian people is incredibly limited. The first Intifada brought the opportunity for political expression in Palestine and saw the involvement of a large portion of the public, in addition to ending with the first real peace agreement arranged between Israeli and Palestinian representatives. Despite the fact that the Oslo Accords were poorly designed, they were a monumental step in relations between Israel and Palestine. However, these positive impacts on Palestinian society and the hope from the peace agreements were negated with the events of the second Intifada. The first Intifada was a movement that sought to change the lives of the everyday people, but none of that momentum and ideology lasted through the second uprising. Not only did the second Intifada bring about the complete failure of the Oslo Accords, but it also precipitated a swift and severe punishment of the Palestinians that has nearly halted their attempts for equality and sovereignty. The shift in approach from grassroots protest to terror tactics is indicative of the Palestinians’ collective loss of hope, as well as the lasting imprint of the uprisings on the mentality of Palestinians and Israelis.

It would be insufficient to say that the first Intifada was a failed precursor to the second uprising, as the impact of the failure of the peace process undoubtedly left a resounding impression on both sides that there was little hope for peace. The sense that efforts to achieve a peaceful resolution are futile undoubtedly changed the course of action on both sides during the second Intifada, resulting in a more violent conflict. Most importantly, the events of 2000
continue to linger through “practices and institutions,” of fear and terror, policy, and mutual mistreatment. It is a great tragedy that to this day, the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians only worsens. Though the legacy of these uprisings is dismal, and the negative impact on psyche and relations apparent, there is a little hope created for the people of Palestine in these two events. The failure of these two Intifadas to precipitate change is a measure of slow progress and painful recovery; yet, there still hope that the efforts of the participants will eventually lead to change and equality for the people of Palestine. Despite years of enduring mistreatment, being forced from their homes, facing discrimination, conflicting nationalisms, and a lack of international awareness and activism, and surviving a mangled economy and lack of resources, the Palestinian people have proved through the first and second uprising that they will not tolerate such management and manipulation forever. Perhaps that is the spirit that will carry them forward and see a change for peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

---

Bibliography


