



THE INTIFADA: REVEALING THE CHASM

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The outbreak of a new Palestinian uprising (intifada) in September 2000 is analyzed by examining Palestinian perceptions and activities. This article discusses the causes of this development, analyzes Palestinian strategy, and talks of differing Palestinian and Israeli views on the course of the peace process. It also discusses the standpoints of leaders and of public opinion toward these events.

The outbreak of a new Palestinian uprising (intifada) at the end of September 2000, came as a seismic shock to most observers. Such widespread violent confrontations between Palestinians and Israeli forces seemed like ghosts from the past, wildly incongruent when 98 percent of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza strip (outside east Jerusalem) no longer lived under direct Israeli occupation. Accordingly, this implausible event made sense only if it had been, at least in some degree, deliberately planned and organized.

The question merits investigation, but analysis should not stop there. There are other questions that go beyond the issue of whether, and in what sense, the intifada was or was not deliberately provoked. Would something like this have happened, sooner or later, in any event? Could or should it have been anticipated? Whatever the role of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in instigating the intifada, what stance has it followed since then? How much control does the PA leadership, or Yasir Arafat personally, actually exercise? Does the PA actually have a strategy or game plan?

But perhaps most importantly, we should ask what the last year tells us about the chasm that separates Israelis and Palestinians. In the understandable push to conclude peace, have important basic differences in conceptions of the peace process been overlooked or understated? Since Palestinian attitudes are the key issue, we focus on Palestinian perspectives before and during the intifada, as conveyed in the Palestinian press, public

opinion polls, and other available sources. Insofar as it deals with Palestinian media and other Palestinian sources, the views expressed include officially sanctioned views within the PA, different views within the leadership, and finally, grassroots perceptions and attitudes. Since the Palestinian press is essentially controlled by the PA, it expresses the message that the PA wishes to convey to its own public. It also includes, however, some messages to the PA from that public. Given this focus on Palestinian leadership attitudes, inevitably less attention is paid to Israeli perceptions (about which, in any event, there is less debate).

EXPECTATIONS OF RENEWED VIOLENCE

In its first and most comprehensive statement regarding the causes of the intifada, made to the Sharm El-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee (the Mitchell Committee) at the end of December, the government of Israel ascribed the violence of the previous three months “at its most basic” to “the failure, and indeed refusal, of the PLO and the Palestinian Authority to comply with their essential responsibilities, pursuant to the various agreements concluded with Israel, to take such measures as are necessary to forestall acts of violence and terror against Israel and Israelis.” The intifada was thus “part of a calculated policy of the Palestinian leadership in respect of the conduct of its relations with Israel,” and preparations for it were evidenced in such pre-intifada activities as an increase in hostile propaganda, the military training of

Palestinian children in summer camps, the failure to confiscate illegal weapons, the release of known terrorists from detention, and the stockpiling of food and medical supplies.(1) In the first three months of the intifada, according to this report, there were about 2700 live-fire attacks initiated by Palestinians against Israeli civilians, police, and soldiers.(2)

Among Palestinians there were other indications of at least a general expectation or anticipation of renewed violence. In July the Fatah movement announced a general call-up of boys under the age of 16 for weapons training.(3) A group monitoring Palestinian media reported in early August that Palestinian television was contributing to an "eve of war" atmosphere by repeated broadcasts of military parades and video clips of violence against Israeli soldiers.(4) In late September Arafat reportedly met with leaders of Tanzim, a paramilitary group within Fatah, to warn that clashes might be imminent.(5) At around the same time the PLO Executive Committee issued a call "to exercise the maximum degree of vigilance and to be prepared for all eventualities."(6)

Throughout the intifada, the involvement of Palestinian security officers in the clashes has been reported and documented extensively. Israeli Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz testified to the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that Palestinian security officers were responsible for 40 percent of the Israelis killed in the intifada.(7) Israeli security sources noted the presence of a top Palestinian security figure, Tawfiq Dirawi, on the Temple Mount on the fateful day of September 29, lending further credence to the view that "Arafat lit the fire, even if he is now having trouble controlling the intensity of the flames."(8) The clearest claim of responsibility on the Palestinian side came from PA Communications Minister Imad Al-Faluji, who asserted that "this intifada was planned in advance, ever since President Arafat's return from the Camp David negotiations."(9) Such later claims may overstate the case.(10)

Our survey of Palestinian sources over this period, however, reveals a more complex picture, showing the extent to which the two

sides were living in different realities, with Palestinians openly expressing a sense of deep dissatisfaction that threatened to erupt at any time. In retrospect, there were numerous signs of a potential explosion that might be set off by any random event. In the Palestinian submission to the Mitchell Commission, only about one page, or 5 percent of the entire document, is devoted to the actual triggering event of the intifada (entitled, "Why Did Barak Instigate the Crisis?"). The emphasis is on "the roots of the current uprising" and condemnation of Israeli counter-measures taken after it began.

Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount was not the cause of the intifada; on this particular point Palestinian and Israeli observers are in agreement. In a typical Palestinian formulation, the intifada "was not just a reaction to a provocative incident.... It is a declared, unequivocal position by the Palestinian people on the bankruptcy of the negotiating option and the full rejection of the overall Israeli conduct."(11)

Hasan Khadir, a Palestinian author familiar with Israel, claims that to Palestinians it seemed that Israel was using the Oslo process not in pursuit of a "two-state" solution to the conflict, but as a means of getting rid of densely-populated Palestinian areas while maintaining "an improved occupation."(12) The fragmentation of the West Bank and Gaza into separated enclaves--"bantustans" in Palestinian parlance--was a major source of grievance and frustration. Bypass roads, many of them reserved for Jewish settlers, and checkpoints around PA-controlled areas meant that Palestinians had even less freedom of movement than they had had before the Oslo agreements. So while Israelis felt that occupation was all but over, since nearly all West Bank and Gaza Palestinians were now under PA civil authority, the perception on the other side was quite the opposite.

The most explosive issue, however, was the continued expansion of Jewish settlements in the territories. Though no new settlements were being established, the "natural growth" of existing settlements evoked a furious response among Palestinians that reached a crescendo in early September. *Al-Quds* claimed on September 13 that according to

official figures from the Israel Ministry of Housing, there had been a 96 percent increase in construction starts in settlements during the first half of 2000 compared to the first half of 1999.(13) Throughout the month headlines in the Palestinian press focused attention unremittingly on all new settlement activities.(14) When the intifada began settlements were singled out as targets of choice; the director-general of the PA Information Ministry wrote that “the settlements' fields and factories are a target for the rage of the Palestinian people.... We must continue to see them as targets for burning and destruction; this is our legitimate right...”(15) The anger against the settlers is typified by a columnist in the PA official newspaper: “The settlers are a dirty stain on our land.... It is time to begin expelling them by besieging them, cutting off their electricity, and contaminating their water.... They will become groups of rats gathering in their sewers before they are driven away into Israel.”(16)

Behind this was a pronounced sense of frustration over the deadlock in final settlement talks and the lack of prospects for any breakthrough in the foreseeable future. Even though they had rejected an Israeli offer that would have addressed most if not all of the above grievances--by eliminating all the settlements in the Gaza Strip and most of those on the West Bank--Palestinian negotiators returned from the Camp David summit in July with a strong sense of a yawning chasm separating the two sides. Muhammad Dahlan, head of Preventive Security in Gaza, labeled the Israeli position on Jerusalem as “no more than a kind of lunacy.”(17)

On the refugee issue, the stark differences laid bare at Camp David only hardened in the following weeks. Palestinian refugees mobilized to block any agreement short of an absolute right of return. A conference to develop a “unified Arab strategic vision” on the issue was held in Amman in early September.(18) The PLO Central Committee, on September 13, reaffirmed in the most unqualified terms the claim of a right of all refugees to return to their original homes in Israel, and it was becoming clear that this

position was not simply an opening gambit.(19) At about the same time, the PA Minister of Finance, Muhammad Zuhr al-Nashashibi, explained that for Palestinians the concept of compensation was not as a substitute for return but in addition to it, as payment for damage sustained by the refugees and their property during their absence.(20)

In this context, further postponement of the declaration of a Palestinian state put the PA leadership on the defensive with its own public, whose high expectations it had nurtured. Statehood had already been postponed once, at the end of the five-year transition period set in Oslo I. Another postponement, beyond the second agreed target date of September 15, 2000, required elaborate explanations by the PA to its public, including a long and agonized article by Bassam abu Sharif in *Al-Quds* on September 10.(21) A number of “national and Islamic” movements, including Fatah, signed a statement in favor of immediate statehood and demonstrated in support of it.(22) In June a poll of West Bank and Gaza residents had shown a significant 33.5 percent minority in favor of confrontation with Israel if no agreement was reached by September, and by September a 55 percent majority favored a declaration of statehood even if it led to confrontation with Israel.(23)

Again, it should be noted that a deal on the basis of the Camp David proposal could have quickly led to a mutually accepted independent Palestinian state. Having rejected this route, however, the Palestinian leadership was all the more under pressure to show that it was attaining results and successes.

In short, by all indications there was by late September a strong consensus among Palestinians, public and leaders alike, that (as one commentator put it) “coexistence between the occupier Hebrew state and the Palestinian people is impossible, even if there is a state, without ending all manifestations of occupation, primarily settlement activity. If there is insistence on this impossible coexistence, the alternative is war.”(24) This impending explosion was also seen as a threat to Yasir Arafat and the PA leadership; if they failed to represent this anger and frustration, they would also become a target of it. A

Palestinian living in Canada had this message for the PA: "We gave you the opportunity to restore the homeland and you have failed, so let us confront this enemy in the capital and cities of Palestine."(25)

Even the Palestinian media operating under the aegis of the PA reflected this critique. A leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) wrote in *Al-Ayyam* that "the PA structure and institutions are unqualified for work and for shouldering the burdens and responsibilities that are demanded of them under the new political situation, particularly in light of the intifada."(26)

The PA's posture, therefore, was to welcome any explosion but try to channel it away from itself and into "useful" directions; in essence, to ride the wave. Perhaps the best summary has been provided by Marwan al-Barghuti, the Fatah leader on the West Bank who became a central figure in the confrontation: "The explosion would have happened anyway.... But Sharon provided a good excuse."(27)

Palestinian figures provided numerous warnings of impending crisis from the time of the Camp David collapse. During the Camp David talks, a "high-ranking security official" told the Israel Arab magazine *Kul al-Arab* that "the Palestinian people are in a state of emergency against the failure of the Camp David summit. If the situation explodes they are ready for the next bloody battle against the Israeli occupation. The next intifada will be... more violent than the first one..."(28) Shlomo Ben-Ami, then Israel's Foreign Minister, recalls a conversation with Marwan al-Barghuti after Camp David in which he was told "Shlomo, if by September you don't finish this, things won't be good."(29)

In early September, Arafat warned the Palestinian Central Council of "five difficult weeks ahead" and said that "we must be prepared for the worst; our people can start all over again."(30) PA Planning and International Cooperation Minister Nabil Sha'th, said a few days later that the next six weeks would be critical and that failure to reach an agreement by the end of October would be "a disaster."(31) Only two days before Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount,

Muhammad Dahlan warned of "likely deterioration of the security situation" if agreement were not reached, and added that "the PA can confront the extremists in the ranks of our people, but it cannot confront all our people."(32)

On the following day, when Sharon's intended visit was made known, Palestinian sources again issued numerous warnings. The PA Ministry of Information posted a statement on its website that spoke of "devastating consequences that may arise...."(33) *Al-Ayyam* quoted Palestinian sources predicting "tragic consequences that will spill over to the entire region," and reported a Fatah call for mobilization to bar Sharon's entry.(34) The PA newspaper editorialized that "Sharon's visit will have unpredictable consequences" and that "the Jerusalem issue will lead to an explosive and destructive situation...."(35) Jibril Rajub, head of Preventive Security on the West Bank, who had previously told Israeli authorities that his forces could handle the visit without any trouble, now warned at the last minute that "riots will not be limited to Jerusalem, but erupt everywhere in the territories" and that the PA would not try to calm the riots "since they would be the result of a blatant provocation."(36)

The serious violence began on Friday, September 29, the day after Sharon's visit, when four Palestinian demonstrators were killed on the Temple Mount and three died in confrontations elsewhere. From this point Palestinian calls to continue and expand the uprising were general and constant; the term "intifada" came into general use within two or three days. Calls for "resistance" came from individual figures and movements and from the PA-controlled media. School was suspended on the third day, releasing students for participation in demonstrations, and sporadic efforts by security officers to control the crowds were gradually abandoned. Public support for continuing the intifada has remained high, registering 70 percent in December and 80 percent in April.(37)

Once the violence had begun, Israel's countermeasures became an additional source of grievances among Palestinians. To the previous fragmentation of the West Bank and

Gaza was added the policy of closure and hundreds of roadblocks that made movement between towns almost impossible. Salim al-Za'nun, speaker of the Palestine National Council, claims that Gaza had been divided into 16 separate enclaves and the West Bank into 31 pieces.(38) As a result life has come to a standstill. The loss in gross domestic product is estimated at 50 percent. In a poll conducted by the Development Studies Program at Birzeit University in February, 27 percent of families reported a loss of all income and the remaining 73 percent all reported a loss of some income, 42 percent had difficulties in access to health services, 60 percent suffered loss of access to education, and 75 percent said they had suffered psychological trauma.(39)

The question of Yasir Arafat's personal role may be of less importance than at first appears. Within the Israeli defense establishment debate has raged between those (mostly in military intelligence) who argue that Arafat controls the level of violence and others (Shin Bet and the government coordinator in the territories) who conclude that Arafat's hold on matters is shaky at best.(40) Both sides agree that Arafat has done little or nothing to put out the flames, but they disagree on the reason. The weight of evidence seems to favor those who see Arafat's control--or at least his desire to seek to take control of the situation--as limited.

First of all, there is the general pattern of Arafat's leadership historically. As Barry Rubin says, "Arafat never made a serious effort to impose his will on a PLO splintered by ideologies, fiefdoms, and loyalties to different Arab states."(41) Or in the words of Shlomo Ben-Ami, "Arafat is not a leader who faces the waves, but rather he rides them."(42)

Secondly, Palestinian leaders seem to see this diffusion of responsibility as an advantage in the current intifada. The PA leadership can keep its distance from controversial actions, while the Tanzim, or Fatah generally, can claim credit for supplying the muscle. Marwan al-Barghuti has stated that "there is a division of labor, each has its own role and mission. The Fatah movement is proud of launching the intifada

and is leading it.... The intifada expresses the [will] of the masses. It did not begin with an order and will not end with an order."(43) The ambiguity of the intifada's organization is part of its strength, as it is difficult to blame the PA leadership for events in which its role is kept unclear. In other words, "Arafat must be assumed not to have deviated from his time-honored custom of not leaving fingerprints on the trigger of the Palestinian rifle."(44)

In these circumstances the precise extent of Arafat's control will not become clear until it is tested, and it will not be tested until Arafat has a strong motivation to end the confrontation, including some concrete political gain to show for it. In the meantime, he does not need to give orders, but simply allow others to act. Israeli government sources have made much of the involvement of PA officials in the violence, claiming that 70 percent of attacks in the first three months were carried out by members of Fatah or the security organizations.(45) The response of Palestinian officials to such accusations is stated succinctly by Muhammad Dahlan: "Let them go to hell with their proofs. We will not disconnect ourselves from the people, and we will always lead it."(46)

One consequence of the Palestinian division of labor in the intifada, however, has been a flow of power and authority from the "national" and "governmental" institutions of the PA back to the PLO and to the "fighting" movements both within and outside the PLO. Some Palestinians have described this as a return to the atmosphere of the 1970s and 1980s. Arafat is even praised for having left this revolutionary infrastructure intact to fall back on, "perhaps due to calculations that have to do with what is happening now."(47)

TWO PARALLEL UNIVERSES

What the intifada has revealed, however, is not just a chasm between Israelis and Palestinians on final status issues and on the realities in which both sides operate, but also diametrically opposed conceptions of the peace process itself. Surveys indicate that a strong majority of both Israelis and Palestinians continue to support "the peace process" in the abstract, even after months of clashes, but closer examination shows that

they associate quite different meanings to the term. For Israelis, the peace process is a negotiating model. In this negotiation, each side trades off assets that it considers less valuable for more valued concessions from the other side, arriving at a balanced agreement that is better for both than the point of departure--though the relative advantage gained inevitably reflects the bargaining leverage of the parties. Since the concessions made are mutually dependent, keeping the bargain is essential; the agreement becomes a new point of reference that must be respected.

This is the most common view of international negotiation, and is the best model for understanding--among other things--the conclusion of peace treaties between Israel and Egypt and between Israel and Jordan. It is the preferred U.S. approach, as when President William Clinton in December urged Israel and the PA to "split the difference" on remaining final status issues.

A corollary of the negotiating model is that negotiation and violent confrontations are mutually exclusive, if not contradictory. Violence, it is felt, undermines the atmosphere of trust necessary for successful bargaining. Adherence of the Israeli public to this model is seen in survey data from December, in which 74 percent of respondents favored negotiations with Palestinians, 13 percent favored confrontations, and only 5 percent thought it was possible to pursue both options simultaneously.(48)

The Palestinian conception of the peace process is quite different. Palestinian analysts, in various formulations, resist the idea that negotiations should reflect the balance of forces between the two sides, or in particular the "military imbalance of power."(49) Instead, "The Palestinian people view the peace process as a strategic road that is supposed to regain the Palestinian people's national and sovereign rights and secure the return of their territories."(50)

This strategic model does not assume equal concessions on both sides. As one of the Palestinian Camp David negotiators expressed it, "the American administration requires 'flexibility' and 'concessions' in equal measure from the Palestinian and Israeli

sides.... Such a policy ignores the fact that the Palestinians are the victims of Israeli aggression and that the land the Israelis are offering to 'give up' is Palestinian land occupied by military force."(51) The Palestinians therefore tend not to make counteroffers in response to the proposals of others. At Camp David, Clinton's National Security Advisor Sandy Berger reportedly lashed out at the Palestinians: "We gave you a territorial proposal and you may reject it if you wish, but you have to reply with a methodical counter-proposal."(52) But the Palestinian view is that they do not have to make a counteroffer, as they have nothing left to give: "Rights, by definition, are neither negotiable nor exchangeable."(53)

Shlomo Ben-Ami, in explaining the Camp David failure, concluded that when Arafat signed the 1993 Oslo agreement he thought that he could get all of his demands, and that the Palestinians had already made all their concessions.(54) What remained, in the Palestinian view, was not negotiation but simply the implementation of principles set down in existing agreements or, more importantly, in the relevant United Nations resolutions and international legal instruments. Appeals to international law and to the implementation of "resolutions of international legitimacy" are omnipresent in Palestinian media, reflecting the view that the peace process is basically not about negotiation but about the implementation of recognized national rights.(55) Hence, Arafat was unwilling to accept anything less than one hundred percent on Jerusalem or the refugee issue at Camp David, suggesting that the two sides were not even close to reaching an agreement.

It could be argued that, to a great extent, Arafat locked himself into this perspective of negotiation, whether consciously or unconsciously, by consistently promoting it to the Palestinian public and providing little room to move or adjust. One possible explanation for this situation, many Israelis have concluded during the post-Camp David crisis and conflict, is that Arafat's ultimate aim goes beyond a stable two-state solution and seeks to lay the basis for a long-term effort to eliminate Israel entirely. In this view,

he would reject any solution, no matter how generally favorable, that might stand in the way of this long-term strategy.

At any rate, notwithstanding the real concern within the Palestinian community for the final status issues--most notably Jerusalem and the refugees--it has been well-documented and recently noted by Dennis Ross that since the signing of the Oslo accords, Arafat has done nothing to prepare the public for compromise on these key issues.(56) Rather, Arafat sold to the public the maximalist negotiating positions and this perspective of negotiation, arguably molding Palestinian public opinion to be even more rigid than the leadership itself to these final status issues and this concept of negotiation.(57)

The corollary to this conception of the peace process is that agreements reached in the course of implementing these basic principles are relative to that aim. If agreements do not advance the achievement of Palestinian rights, or if Israel does not meet its obligations, then Palestinians cannot be held to the precise provisions of these agreements. In any event, the Interim Agreement governing the five-year period of transition expired with the end of this period in May 1999, and Palestinians are bound to it only to the extent that Israel observes its provisions--many of which, in the Palestinian view, it does not.(58) Consequently, a final status agreement that fell short would not necessarily be respected; a poll at the time of Camp David indicated that only 42 percent of Palestinians believed that a majority of their community would abide by an agreement that might be reached at the summit, while 38 percent believed that a majority would not abide by such an agreement.(59)

Prior to the intifada there were many calls among Palestinians to break out of the "confines" of the Oslo process. Ahmad Quray' (Abu Ala) called for a series of steps to "break the constraints" that had been imposed on Palestinians during the transitional phase.(60) Mustafa Al-Barghuti wrote that "Palestinians have options outside the Oslo negotiations" and reminded his readers that "negotiations are a strategy for achieving human rights and a just peace, not

an end in themselves."(61) After the outbreak of the intifada, thousands of Palestinians, led by a number of prominent figures, petitioned the PA to "liberate itself from all restrictions imposed by the interim agreements which prevent the building of the Palestinian state, to immediately start building the state's institutions on the ground, and not to return to the same framework of bilateral negotiations with Israel which reached a deadlock at Camp David."(62)

So long as Israeli occupation continues, according to this view, the Palestinian people have a natural right of resistance that supersedes other legalities. In the words of a member of the Fatah Central Committee, "it is the right of the Palestinian people to choose any form of resistance against the occupation" and furthermore "this right is guaranteed by international law."(63) It is hypocritical for Israel to denounce Palestinian violence "as if the occupation was a peaceful action."(64) In fact, argued a PA legal team in a memo for negotiators, "the lack of visible resistance to Israeli occupation from the Palestinian side... has created the false impression that the 'process' of achieving peace could substitute for peace itself."(65) The right of resistance also has considerable international support, as seen in the reception of Israel's "White Paper," detailing Palestinian violations of the Oslo agreements in November 2000. In a rather remarkable statement reportedly made during an Israeli Cabinet meeting, Foreign Minister Ben-Ami reported that he had stopped dissemination of the document because "the world doesn't get very excited when it's told that peoples which live under conquest fail to honor agreements."(66)

Neither the Palestinian leadership nor the Palestinian public accepts the oft-repeated Israeli premise that they must choose between peace and terror.(67) Both negotiations and the intifada are seen as legitimate methods for achieving basic rights, and they can be used simultaneously with no contradiction. In Nabil Sha'th's words, "historically many people fought and negotiated at the same time."(68) Another formulation is "putting the force option on an equal footing with the peace option and placing force into the service of peace."(69) When asked in a poll

whether they favored an intifada with “popular” (i.e., non-military) or military characteristics, 62 percent of Palestinian respondents said they favored both.(70)

Behind this thinking is a scenario in which Israeli opposition is broken down step by step by a combination of the various pressures, and past history is cited as evidence. In an important speech delivered in March 2001 in Beirut, PA Minister Faysal al-Husayni argued that in the first intifada Palestinians had succeeded in breaking important Israeli “taboos”—that there was no Palestinian people, that there would be no Palestinian state—and that in the second intifada they had succeeded in breaking taboos regarding Jerusalem and the refugees.(71) In similar language Oreib Rantawi wrote of “breaking the invariable strands of the Israeli consensus” and concluded that “Israeli arrogance was broken several times, in Lebanon and in Palestine, and what seemed impossible one day seems to be possible nowadays.”(72) Hani al-Masri has written that “most of the sacred Israeli cows were slaughtered at Camp David... the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital and the approval of the right of return are two realistic objectives that can be achieved in the foreseeable future.”(73)

Confidence in the strategy of wearing down Israeli opposition is derived, in part, from the Lebanese model. Palestinian sources refer constantly to Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon as a precedent. So long as it does not escalate to war, it is felt, attrition can gradually force Israel to pull back.(74) Key to this is the assumption that Palestinians “are prepared to make sacrifices in order to achieve independence; as for the Israeli people, it cannot tolerate the consequences of continuing violence and bloodshed, from a psychological, economic, and social standpoint....”(75) In this framework even the election of Ariel Sharon as prime minister of Israel can be cast in a positive light from the Palestinian perspective: Sharon is seen as “the last arrow in Israel’s quiver,” and when this arrow fails to reach its target “Israel will have only one way to go, the way toward peace.”(76)

STRATEGY AND GOALS

The declared goals and strategies of the intifada for Palestinians have evolved through its course. Insofar as the goal was declared at onset, the intifada was to persist until the end of occupation and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Arguably, no more was involved, and yet no less. One of the many such voices, Col. Muhammad Dahlan succinctly stated on October 10: “The Palestinian side will not go back to the negotiations unless Israel recognizes its withdrawal from the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem.”(77) In line with this demand, with an additional precondition of Palestinian statehood, the Finance Minister al-Nashashibi declared, “The Aqsa Intifada will continue until the liberation of the Palestinian soil and the establishment of the independent state with *al-Quds* al-Shareef [as its capital].”(78) Al-Nashashibi also stressed that the Palestinian leadership was committed to providing the necessary support, and ensuring the sustainability of the intifada, in order to guarantee its success.

At a November 5, 2000, rally in Ramallah, Information Minister Yasir Abd Rabbu defined the goals of the intifada less expansively. Abd Rabbu demarcated three objectives, with a special emphasis on internationalization. These aims included a resumption of negotiations that would be based on withdrawal (rather than territorial trade-off); the enlargement of the international sponsorship of the negotiations to include partners beyond that of the United States; and finally, an international presence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for the duration of the negotiations.(79) The theme of internationalization—taking the form of “an international conference” to broaden the sponsorship of the negotiations and also that of an international presence to protect Palestinians—became the main demand in the following period.(80) Some have speculated that Arafat wanted to achieve internationalization by provoking a massive Israeli response that would remind the international community of Kosovo, and thus trigger international intervention to force an Israeli withdrawal.(81) Even more radically, it

has also been speculated that Arafat was ready to bring about the collapse of the Palestinian Authority itself in order to force international intervention.(82)

With the prospect for internationalization fading over time--a result of consistent U.S. vetoes, combined with the inaction of Arab states, only limited interest in direct intervention within Europe, and a growing Palestinian disillusionment with Arab support, reaching a high of almost sixty percent--energy was channeled towards defining more focused, achievable goals. Most notably, this translated to the freezing of settlements.(83)

Indeed, by March-April, the freezing of settlements had become the main condition for ending violence and returning to the negotiations. On the popular level, settlements have always been a significant issue for Palestinians, but nowadays, reflective in Palestinian discourse, there is a much firmer stance toward a total evacuation of settlements.(84) It could be said, as Palestinian academics Hammami and Tamari poignantly argue, "What began as an uprising for al-Aqsa and Palestinian control over Jerusalem has increasingly become a battle against the settlements."(85) Yet in June and July 2001, the Palestinian leadership was either unwilling or unable to fulfill a ceasefire that, with U.S. support, would have led quickly and directly to such a freeze.

Meanwhile, the unexpected nature of the Intifada led many Israelis to believe that Palestinians were aiming for more than an end to the occupation. These perspectives were often reinforced and/or confirmed by the emphasis on the return of refugees to Israeli territory. Nonetheless, apart from some of the predictable sources--mainly Hamas, religious preachers, and some on the radical left--the Palestinian focus has usually, though less than previously, been restricted to the 1967 lines.

Contributing to the confusion regarding the Palestinians' "true intentions," in the intifada, religious exhortations were often broadcast live and could be heard on official PA television. One such sermon given on October 14, 2000 by Dr. Ahmad Abu Halabiya, from his mosque in Gaza, proclaimed "Even if an agreement of Gaza is signed--we shall not forget Haifa, and Acre,

and the Galilee, and Jaffa, and the Triangle and the Negev, and the rest of our cities and villages...[Indeed] have no mercy on the Jews, no matter where they are, in any country. Fight them, wherever you are. Wherever you meet them, kill them."(86) And there were repeated extreme statements by the PA-appointed mufti of Jerusalem. In one of his many rousing sermons he stated "There is no room for compromising solutions with regard to occupied Jerusalem. Israeli citizenship is forbidden for Palestinians according to Shari'a... those who have already acquired it should give it up because it does not honor them particularly since Israel's days are numbered."(87)

Among establishment figures there was less open reference to "pre-1967" issues. One case was Faysal al-Husayni: speaking in Beirut to a forum of Arab lawyers, Husayni stated: "We may lose or win [tactically] but our eyes will continue to aspire to the strategic goal, namely, to Palestine from the river to the sea."(88) Also, PA Minister Abd Rabbu hinted at an existing ambiguity regarding what will happen after the establishment of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders: "There is almost a consensus among Palestinians that the direct goal is to reach the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the June 4, 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital... [but] regarding the future after that, it is best to leave the issue aside and not to discuss it."(89)

Further adding to the confusion and ambiguity, PNC Speaker Salim Za'anun announced at a press conference in Cairo the founding of the "Commission of National Independence" whose platform reaffirms the validity of the PLO Covenant with direct reference to the articles calling for the destruction of Israel and "armed struggle as the only way to liberate Palestine."(90) The commission's platform declares, "The establishers [of this organization] consider that the PLO Covenant remains in place inasmuch as the PNC has not until now met to ratify the changes which were previously suggested, particularly that a legal committee was not formed to adopt the demanded modifications."(91) Attracting major attention in the Arab press, this commission reportedly

includes many on the official leadership level and Arafat himself "gave his blessing to it [the Commission] and any notes it distributes." (92)

On the other hand, others deny having any intention and/or aim of destroying Israel. One such commentator, Hani al-Masri, argues that this is a dangerous falsity preoccupying Israel, as it serves to justify violent Israeli measures against Palestinians. (93) From a different angle, Dr. Mar'i Abd al-Rahman, a PLO official, criticized the escalation of rhetoric which accompanied this intifada, extending beyond the political agenda adopted by the PLO in 1988, and urged all to remember that the goal is "the establishment of a Palestinian state on the land occupied in 1967, with Jerusalem as its capital." In other words, he declared, "We [Palestinians] recognized Israel." (94) Reflecting the chasms and the ambiguity within the Palestinian community, the poll data itself shows a multi-faceted split. In December 2000, 47 percent of Palestinians preferred the two-state solution, 20 percent the binational state solution, 16 percent other solutions--usually implying a unitary Palestinian or Islamic state--and 11 percent believed that there is no solution. The figures for March 2001 were very similar. (95)

PALESTINIAN GAINS AND SECOND THOUGHTS

Notwithstanding the declared goals, this intifada has had a different impact on Israeli opinion from that of the first intifada. In the late 1980s, Israel had a government willing to offer far less to the Palestinians, there was no Israeli-Palestinian peace process, occupation was in full swing, and Palestinian protest had a generally populist character. The result was to discredit the status quo; Israeli opinion moved significantly in a dovish direction, laying the foundation for the peace process a short time later. For example, in Asher Arian's surveys, the percentage of those willing to return territories increased from 43 percent in 1986 to 60 percent in 1993. (96) If Israelis thought they had an acceptable alternative that would provide real peace and security--even if that route required extensive concessions--they were willing to take that course.

But the second intifada took place with an Israeli government that had offered more than any predecessor; it violated existing Israeli-Palestinian agreements; and it quickly degenerated into military firefights rather than popular protest. The result, for most Israelis, was to discredit the peace process itself. According to a March poll by Mina Tzemach of the Dahaf Institute, 37 percent of those surveyed reported that they had become more hawkish as a result of the Intifada, against only 13 percent who had become more dovish; a full 63 percent now believed that it was impossible to achieve a peace treaty with the Palestinians. (97) If further proof were needed, the fall of Ehud Barak and the election of Ariel Sharon--a far more hawkish prime minister--should make the point. The point is that if Israelis thought they had no alternative and that further concessions would risk both their personal security and the survival of their state and society, they would refuse, be willing to fight long and hard.

Sophisticated Palestinian observers have recognized the different impact that this intifada has had on the Israeli populace compared to the first. But even then, many claim there have been some gains in the Israeli public opinion. Some have argued that it has created a more promising atmosphere for the dismantling of settlements and for a negotiated settlement giving them everything up to the 1967 borders. (98) On the popular grassroots level, there is a belief that this intifada, similar to the first intifada, has succeeded (and will continue to succeed) in achieving many gains for Palestinians. It is recognized as having unified and motivated the Palestinian people, while demonstrating to themselves, the world, and even as a pseudo-warning to their leaders, the public's steadfastness in the struggle to achieve their national aims and aspirations. It is perceived as having been successful at gaining Arab and international attention and sympathy, and furthermore, as having reinforced Arafat's popularity and prestige among Palestinians and Arabs generally.

Perhaps most telling, the majority continues to cling to the belief that the intifada will force Israelis into giving greater concessions and/or coming closer to meeting

Palestinians' demands. In fact, according to a poll conducted by the Jerusalem Media Communication Center, a striking 69 percent of Palestinians believe that the intifada will increase the Israeli readiness to meet Palestinian demands, though only 26 percent of Israelis agree with this assessment (compared to 53 percent who believe that it has done the opposite and has decreased the Israeli willingness).(99)

Notwithstanding the perceived success of this intifada, from the beginning there were calls to retain and/or restore the popular and peaceful character reminiscent of the first intifada. In one such instance, Dr. Saleh Abdel Jawad argued that Palestinians are not prepared for a military face-off and that the use of arms would constitute both political and military suicide.(100) Palestinian newspapers rejected this article and it only became publicly available by being posted on a web site. By early March 2001, there were more voices against the militarization of the intifada. For example, Hani Al-Masri argued that Palestinian resistance could not be compared to the Lebanese national and Islamic resistance, as the intifada is hardening Israeli opinion rather than softening it.(101) Even Marwan Al-Barguti called for emphasis on popular opposition rather than military force, although later he denied this was a new strategy. (102)

There is also broader criticism of the intifada, to the extent that a few intellectuals have called for a return to negotiations and a halt to the intifada. For instance, Amin al-Mahdi, an Egyptian intellectual, distinguishes and elucidates the differences between the first intifada to this latter uprising, belittles the Lebanese analogy, and claims that the only solution is negotiations, as war just brings more Arab casualties and defeats.(103) Another commentator, Isa al-Sh'aybi from Jordan, exclaims that the absence of moderation in the intifada has led to a critical loss of Israeli public opinion, contradicting both Palestinian needs and national objectives.(104) Another commentator challenged the basic Palestinian conception of negotiations and/or in his words, the policy of "wanting to get everything or nothing." Poignantly, he argues: "Peace is the result of

negotiations... and negotiations mean reaching compromise solutions from which both sides gain but that do not give the two parties all what they want."(105)

But these are the views of a small minority. In the short run, the likelihood is for further escalation. The PA leadership has clearly calculated that it cannot or is not ready to move toward a meaningful deescalation, and test its control of militants within its own ranks, without a clear--and perhaps very substantial--political gain.

Having spoken so openly and repeatedly in favor of the proposition that Israeli concessions prove the Palestinians should maintain or even increase their demands, however, makes it even harder to persuade Israel to take such steps. In practice, this makes Israelis less inclined to make concessions, believing their past ones have been interpreted as signs of weakness and desperation, thus unintentionally encouraging more Palestinian demands and even violence. Further, the current Israeli government is committed with equal determination to the proposition that the violence must end without any "reward" to the Palestinians. The likelihood, therefore, is for a continued testing of wills on both sides, not to the point of a general war (none of the states in the area would welcome that) but to a level of violence that would be a long-term test of the capacity of each to endure pain.

Equally painful is that even a return to negotiations is clearly no magic solution. The basic issues remain as they were before. We are in the tunnel at the end of the light. It will take far more time before we reach the light at the end of the tunnel.

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