Learning to Share is Tough:
The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Kelly Wright
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[Signatures]
Abstract

The century long struggle between the Israelis and Palestinians has transformed within the last twenty years and all points of view and opinions are vital for a complete understanding of the situation and possible solutions. In order to fully explore both the Israeli and Palestinian perspectives on the conflict, this paper not only looks at the political ideologies involved, but also at public opinion, including the results of the most recent elections. While the Palestinian and Israeli public opinion polls show that the masses are willing to compromise, the political parties in power are implementing policies that may hinder the peace process. The path towards peace looks to be long and difficult, but peace and reconciliation between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples must continue to be the ultimate goal.
Learning to Share is Tough:
The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The struggle between the Israeli Jews and Palestinian Muslims has now persisted for more than a century within the context of twentieth-century decolonization, world wars, genocide and evolving international understandings of statehood and nationalism.\(^1\) The ethnonationalist conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians has been centered around the core issues of borders, the status of Jerusalem, Israeli settlements and the Palestinian refugees' right to return, but the fundamental problem is that the two groups claim the same piece of land as rightfully theirs. As Gavron points out, "Somehow it [the land of Israel/Palestine] has to be shared and the generally preferred model for sharing has been partition of the land into two separate states," but the downfall of the partition plan has been that neither side will accept the borders.\(^2\) After the initial partition lines were drawn after WWII, Israel gained large amounts of land through wars until it occupied all of the Palestinian territory and more.\(^3\)

In the last twenty years, the conflict has taken on a new tone. The Palestinians are no longer part of a larger Arab cause; they are fighting against Israel in order to free themselves

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\(^3\) Rodolph, pg. 161.
from what they classify as Israeli Occupation. Gavron characterizes the Israeli-Palestinian violence as like a volcano, “sometimes relatively dormant, often erupting with sudden frenzy,” and this was painfully obvious in both of the Palestinian intifadas. These Palestinian uprisings in 1987 and 2000 unfortunately resulted in little more than deeper feelings of hatred and resentment between the two groups. Since 1945, the Israelis have been unable to crush the Palestinian’s demand for independence, but on the other hand, the Palestinians have gained little from their terrorist attacks and have failed to significantly advance their cause. Rodolph points out that the Israelis and Palestinians are at a stalemate, as “neither can defeat the other, yet the terms under which each is willing to end their conflict are unacceptable to the other side.”

As an exploration of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this paper will be broken into two large sections that will focus on the political and public opinions of the Israelis and Palestinians that are shaping the future of the conflict. The first section will examine the Israeli perspective. Israel’s political scene has historically been dominated by the hawkish Likud party and dovish Labor party. Although the Likud party was able to gain a large majority in the 2003 election, there have recently been two major developments that have not only shaken the Likud party but the entirety of Israeli politics: Sharon’s split from the Likud Party and his debilitating stroke a few months later. The Israeli public has strong opinions about the future of the conflict and they primarily want peace and security. The second section will then look at the Palestinian perspective. The Fatah party has dominated the Palestinian government since the first Palestinian election in 1996, but in the recent 2006 elections, the Hamas Party, which is deemed a terrorist organization by Israel, the United States and the European Union, won an

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4 Gavron, pg. 1. The term, “intifada” is an Arabic term for “uprising” and has been commonly used as the name for the two Palestinian movements against Israeli occupation.
5 Rodolph, pg. 168.
The overwhelming majority.\textsuperscript{6} The Palestinian public opinion is especially interesting, because they largely support peace with Israel, despite their support of Hamas and the use of violent tactics. Hamas has been able to build this support by offering Palestinians something they cannot afford to refuse: social welfare and security.

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\textsuperscript{6}Leyden, Jeol. "Israel Disgusted by EU Relations with Hamas Terrorists" Israel News Agency. <http://www.israelnewsagency.com/hamasisraeleuregev4800617.html>\
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A Land to Call Home: 
The Israeli Perspective

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has dominated Israeli politics since the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948. Since the first Intifada in 1987, the situation has deteriorated and become extremely volatile. This Palestinian uprising culminated in the Oslo Accords, which established the Palestinian Authority and granted it partial control over parts of the Gaza Strip and West Bank. Right-wing Jewish radicals could not stand the idea of giving up any part of Eretz Yisrael, the Hebrew term for the Land of Israel, and violently opposed the Oslo Accords, assassinating the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin to protest his support of the Accords. Despite the turmoil within the Israeli political sphere, there was a renewed hope for peace with the Palestinians during the July 2000 Palestinian-Israeli summit at Camp David. Unfortunately, the talks failed to reach an agreement and any remaining hopes for peace were forgotten after Likud leader, Ariel Sharon, visited the Temple Mount on September twenty-eighth 2000 to reassert Israeli authority, sparking the second, al-Aqsa Intifada.

This second, more violent Palestinian uprising caused many Israelis to turn away from the dovish Labor party. The Israeli people became more interested in security and hawkish parties such as the Likud. In the 2001 election, Likud’s Ariel Sharon declared that he was willing to make “painful concessions” for peace, but that there would be no retreat from Jewish settlements in the occupied territories or concessions on Jerusalem and its holy sites. On February 6, 2001, Sharon was elected prime minister and formed a unity coalition, including a

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9 Smith, pg. 500-501.
10 Peretz, pg. 591.
wide range of political views from the Labor Party to the National Religious Party. When he was reelected as Prime Minister in January 2003 he was able to form a coalition with Shinui, the National Union, and the National Religious Party.\textsuperscript{11} Despite the right-wing nature of his government, in the winter of 2003-2004 Sharon put forward his Gaza disengagement plan, proposing the withdrawal of Israeli settlements from Gaza as well as parts of the northern West Bank.\textsuperscript{12} The right-wing members of his coalition consequently resigned and in December 2004, the Labor party joined with the Likud to form a unity government in order to implement the disengagement plan. The completion of the plan was a milestone in the peace process and marked the first time Israel's settlement movement in the West Bank and Gaze had been significantly rolled back.

The importance of controlling Eretz Israel has been at the heart of the current political divide in Israel since the assassination of Rabin right up to the debate over the disengagement plan. Most right wing groups see it as a black and white issue; either Eretz Israel is being actively fought for or traitorously given away. As a comprehensive overview of the Israeli political and public opinion, this section will cover four topics. The first part will explore the different political viewpoints in Israel. There are many parties in the Israeli political system, so only the most influential ones will be discussed. The second part will focus upon how these political parties reacted to the most recent step towards Israeli-Palestinian peace, Sharon's Disengagement Plan. The third part will evaluate Israeli public opinion and the effect this has and may have upon the political situation. The Israeli public has an important part to play in the future of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process through elections and their relations with

\textsuperscript{11} Peretz, pg. 601.
Palestinians. The final part will look at the most current events in the Israeli political scene: Sharon’s departure from the Likud party, the establishment of a new centralist party and the recent March 2006 elections. These developments have the potential to transform the Israeli political scene and the prospects for peace.

**Political Opinions**

There is a wide spectrum of political parties in Israel. On one side there are those who are more than willing to sacrifice land for peace and on the other stand those who will actively fight such a plan. Centralist parties such as the Shinui are gaining influence and have become more powerful since the creation of Kadima, a new, successful centralist party. Most of the Israeli parties tend to fall into either the Labor, left-wing, or Likud, right-wing blocs, but even within these blocs there is a variety of ideologies.

**Labor:**

The Labor party has historically been the leading party in Israel, but it has struggled in the most recent elections. In the 2003 Knesset election the Labor and Meimad parties together won only 14.46% of the vote. According to the head of the Labor faction in the Knesset, Ephriam Sneh, the Labor party wants “to end the war with the Palestinians by reaching a final peace agreement.” The Labor Platform focuses on achieving comprehensive peace that includes an “United Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, under Israeli sovereignty” and establishment of the Jordan River as Israel's eastern border. The Labor Party does not recognize the right of the Palestinians to return to Israel, but it does recognize “the Palestinians' right to self-determination,

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and does not rule out in this connection the establishment of a Palestinian state with limited sovereignty.\textsuperscript{16} This falls in line with the Labor party’s concept of “Two states for two nations, political separation alongside economic cooperation.”\textsuperscript{17} The Labor party also opposes the construction of new settlements and the expansion of existing settlements before the final status agreements are reached.\textsuperscript{18}

The Meimad party has aligned itself with the Labor party in the Knesset and primarily follows a similar ideology. The Meimad Platform focuses on a settlement of the conflict and states, “The welfare of the Jewish people and its state takes precedence over holding on to the whole Land of Israel. For Meimad Party members, the pursuit of peace is a Jewish value.”\textsuperscript{19} Meimad does not agree with the hawkish stance of right-wing parties such as the National Religious because they think, “An extremist position, that places the Land of Israel above all other values, does not represent the Torah of Israel.”\textsuperscript{20}

\textbf{Yachad:}

The Yachad party was established in December 2003 by the merger of Meretz with Yossi Beilin's Shahar movement and Roman Bronfman's "The Democratic Choice" party.\textsuperscript{21} Yachad sees itself as the political representative of the Israeli Peace movement. It supports the exhaustion of every opportunity to return to the negotiating table and reach a political settlement with the Palestinians.\textsuperscript{22} Yachad also wants a comprehensive program to end the occupation that

\textsuperscript{16} Jewish Virtual Library. The Labor Party.
\textsuperscript{18} Jewish Virtual Library. The Labor Party.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
would include a border fence and the movement of settlers to within adjusted 1967 borders.\textsuperscript{23} Yachad even supports “the foundation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip” and demands the total evacuation of Israeli settlements and the retreat of the Israeli army from all occupied territories.\textsuperscript{24}

**Shinui:**

The Shinui party is a self-proclaimed “democratic, secular, liberal, Zionist, peace-seeking party.”\textsuperscript{25} During the 2003 campaign, Shinui presented itself as a balancing force between Likud and Labor and declared that they would curb “the Right’s aggression” and block the “Left’s conciliation.”\textsuperscript{26} They were successful in the election and won 12.28\% of the vote.\textsuperscript{27} The Shinui principles support the peace process, and their views on a settlement with the Palestinians are close to those of the Labor party. The Shinui party wants to let go of the isolated West Bank settlements that are clearly within Palestinian populations, while retaining large blocs of settlements along the Green Line.\textsuperscript{28} It also supports the establishment of a Palestinian state if the Palestinians renounce their right to return and believes that “at the end of the peace process, we will have to find a modus vivendi for Jerusalem, to enable both sides to coexist in peace, with respect for the holy sites of all the three religions.”\textsuperscript{29}

**Likud:**

As the Labor party has declined, the Likud party has become increasing popular and successful. In the 2003 elections the Likud party doubled its power by winning 29.39\% of the vote and

\textsuperscript{23} Highlights of the Meretz Platform.
\textsuperscript{24} Wikipedia. Yachad.
\textsuperscript{26} Peretz pg. 596-7.
\textsuperscript{27} Elections for the 16th Knesset. National Election Results.
\textsuperscript{28} Peretz pg. 597.
\textsuperscript{29} Shinui. Shinui Principles.
rising to thirty-eight mandates. The official Likud platform states that “the Jewish communities in Judea, Samaria and Gaza are the realization of Zionist values” and that the party will prevent the removal of these communities. It strongly condemns the creation of a Palestinian state and the division of Jerusalem, “the eternal, united capital of the State of Israel and only of Israel.” Recently, divisions within the party have culminated in an official split as Sharon left to form a new party. This alleviated some tensions within the party, but has also lead to its decline.

**Herut:**

The Herut party is the reappearance of the Kach party, which was an ultranationalist party that advocated the forcible expulsion of Arabs from Israel and the occupied territories. The party publicly criticizes the Likud party and claims, “Likud abandoned any remnant of its ideological roots, instead reinventing itself under the banner ‘unity of the nation.’ It became a party in search of an electorate, rather than leading the people to follow its (former) ideals.” Herut officially seeks “an Israel that is strong, independent, and whole” and its platform is built upon the concept of “Peace in exchange for peace.” Herut views the Land of Israel as the sovereign homeland of the Jewish Nation with an united Jerusalem as its eternal capital. It will not accept any territorial concessions to non-Israeli residents of Judea, and Samaria and Gaza, which are territories that Herut wants fully restored to Israeli jurisdiction. Herut supports continuation and expansion of

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30 Elections for the 16th Knesset. National Election Results.
35 Ibid.
the settlements throughout Eretz Israel, and opposes the practice of Arab family reunification within Israel. The Herut party has even proposed a Fair Relocation and Compensation Act that would “provide full compensation of property and estate sales for every Arab citizen that renounces his or her Israeli citizenship and permanently moves to an Arab country.”

National Religious Party:

Effi Eitam, a retired Israeli brigadier general, has recently taken control of The National Religious Party (Mafdal). Eitam has reshaped the party “into a more militantly nationalist faction opposing return of any territory and evacuation of any settlement or establishment of a Palestinian state.” The National Religious Party (NRP) presents a platform that “continues firmly on the path of Torat Yisrael, Am Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael.” They believe that Israelis have a religious and historical right to Eretz Israel and the “political left challenges the very foundation upon which we built this country” by not supporting further settlement. The NRP strongly supports and works actively on behalf of the settlements in Judea, Samaria, Gaza, the Golan and the Jordan Valley. They will not accept withdrawal from any settlements or any type of independent national Arab entity within the territory they perceive as Eretz Israel.

National Union Party:

The National Union Party (HaIchud HaLeumi) opposes the establishment of a Palestinian state and any concessions by Israel in a peace settlement. The National Union Party’s platform is based on the concept of peace in exchange for peace and pledges that “another political entity

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38 Peretz, pg. 597.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 Peretz, pg. 597.
will not rise between Jordan and the sea."\(^{43}\) They believe that settlement of Eretz Israel is the realization of the Zionist dream. The National Union Party (NUP) wants an undivided Jerusalem as the "capital of the Jewish people in the land of Israel" and free access to the holy places for every Jew, including the right to ascend on the Temple Mount.\(^{44}\) One of its pillars is based upon the Moledet party that introduced the "transfer" concept to Israeli political discourse. They want to solve the Palestinian refugee problem through transfer by agreement (population exchange) in which the refugees would be settled in Arab countries in place of Jews who immigrated to Israel from these countries.\(^{45}\)

**Balad:**

It is important to also recognize the part Arab parties play in Israeli politics. The National Democratic Assembly (Balad) is an Arab party that received a great deal of Israeli and international attention when the Israeli parliament's election committee tried to ban the party from running in national elections in 2003. Balad was accused of not respecting Israel's Jewishness and of having a pro-terrorist leader.\(^{46}\) In the end, the Israeli supreme court allowed Balad to run and it was able to win 2.26% of the vote.\(^{47}\) The stated purpose of Balad is "to transform Israel from a Jewish state into a democratic state, a state with equality for all of its citizens, Jews and Arabs alike, and to eliminate all state institutions and laws which discriminate against Arabs in Israel."\(^{48}\) Balad advocates Israeli withdrawal from all the territories occupied in

\(^{44}\) Ibid.
\(^{45}\) Ibid.
\(^{47}\) Elections for the 16\(^{th}\) Knesset. National Election Results.
\(^{48}\) Wikipedia. Balad.
the 1967 Six-Day War, the establishment of a Palestinian state in the entire West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the return of all Palestinian refugees.49

Sharon’s Disengagement Plan

In the winter of 2003-2004 Prime Minister Sharon put forward his Gaza Disengagement Plan, proposing the withdrawal of Israeli settlements from Gaza as well as parts of the northern West Bank.50 The Gaza Disengagement Plan caused instability in the government as the right-wing parties objected and resigned from their positions. Despite the political uproar, Sharon was able to follow through with the plan and end the thirty-eight-year occupation of Gaza in August 2005. When the pullout was complete, the national support for the pullout rose to 59 percent, but Sharon’s standing in his own Likud party hit a new low.51 Political opinions were clearly split between parties such as the NUP and the NRP, which adhered to their traditional hawkish worldviews and condemned the plan, and the Labor, Yachad and Shinui parties, which rallied around it in support.

Ariel Sharon’s implementation of the Disengagement Plan was seen as a shift towards a more centrist position on political issues for the Likud party. Sharon, who had once supported the settlements, said that he saw “no future for Jews in Gaza, where the settlers are vastly outnumbered by 1.3 million Palestinians.”52 This move alienated him from many Likud supporters and effectively fragmented the party. Some members of the Likud party accepted the painful concessions of the disengagement plan because of their loyalty to Sharon as a leader. These moderate Likud members also believed that the traditional Likud stance on policy

50 US Department of State. Background Note: Israel.
51 Ephron. “Goodbye Gaza.”
decisions should be adapted in certain circumstances. On the other hand, many members were against disengagement because of their dedication to the Likud Party ideals such as a “Greater Israel,” no dismantling of settlements and opposition to a Palestinian state or unilateral withdrawals. They were also concerned that the disengagement would allow Palestinian terrorists to flourish and further threaten Israel’s security.

The right-wing parties were infuriated by Sharon’s disengagement plan. The NRP and NUP left the coalition they had formed with Likud in 2003 in protest. This left Sharon with a minority coalition in which he faced repeated votes of no confidence. The NRP, NUP and Shas were all strongly opposed to the disengagement plan, because they believed “the integrity and settlement of the Land of Israel is a fulfillment of Biblical prophecy, therefore a Jewish, Zionist ideal and duty.” The pullout from Gaza was seen as a step away from occupation of Eretz Israel and a step towards Palestinian statehood, which they also opposed. In addition, these groups were also worried about Israel’s security and increased terrorist activity.

After Sharon was abandoned by his right-wing coalition, the supporters of the disengagement plan on the left, such as Labor, agreed to form a unity coalition. The Labor, Yachad and Shinui parties supported the Disengagement Plan because they believed that withdrawing from the Gaza Strip meant they were losing a burden, not an asset. Isolated Israeli settlements within the Palestinian population were seen as obstacles in the peace process.

Labor and Yachad proposed that a viable Palestinian state will be necessary to ensure long-term

54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
56 US department of State. Background Note: Israel.
57 Klein, Robert. Positions for and against Disengagement
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
peace and security. These groups did not think that the risk of increased terrorist activity outweighed the huge step that the Gaza withdrawal made towards a final status agreement with the Palestinians.⁶¹

The Arab party, Balad, had a unique opinion about disengagement. They were against the disengagement plan but supported withdrawal. They believed that disengagement was intended to prevent the creation of a Palestinian state and would lead to permanent Israeli control over the Gaza Strip’s borders, air space, coast, and territorial waters, along with the right of military intervention.⁶² They were also concerned about the possible consolidation of Israeli control over West Bank settlements, which Balad wants dismantled.⁶³

**Israeli Public Opinion**

In the last ten years, the Israelis have painfully re-evaluated their dream of controlling Eretz Israel. This shift in public opinion was evident in the latest Knesset election in 2006, which were decisively against the hawkish stance of the Likud party.⁶⁴ Although the Labor Party, which has traditionally been a leading party, has consistently declined since 1992 and was reduced to its lowest number of seats ever in 2003, centralist parties such as Kadima have become increasingly popular.⁶⁵ As the following chart shows, in the 2003 elections, the Likud party was the only party right of center that did not lose ground. The Shas party, which has played a pivotal role in many coalitions, had the most dramatic decline of any party with a loss of 171,797 votes.⁶⁶

Pedahzur points out that “parties such as the National Union and the National Religious Party

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⁶¹ Klein, Robert. Positions for and against Disengagement
⁶² Ibid.
⁶³ Ibid.
⁶⁵ Peretz, pg. 589.
⁶⁶ Pedahzur, pg. 22.
that have criticized the peace process with the Palestinians failed to expand" as well. On the other hand, the centralist Shinui party did very well in 2003, and Kadima won the most seats in 2006. Despite Likud’s success in 2003, there has been a clear shift of public support towards centralist parties.

Knesset Election Results

![Knesset Election Results](image)

Israeli voters are no longer attached to the ideology of controlling Eretz Yisrael. They simply want a safe and peaceful place to live. In a public opinion poll taken during March 2005, 85% of Israelis supported a return to negotiations on a comprehensive settlement and 67% supported the dismantling of most of the settlements in the territories as part of this settlement. Pedahzur claims that “The main interest of this large group [the Israeli public] is to seek the removal of the

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67 Pedahzur, pg. 22.
security threats, especially the threat of terrorism,” but the public is uncertain about how disengagement will affect their security in the future. According to the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, “36% of the Israelis believe that if Israel disengages fully in the Gaza Strip, Palestinian armed attacks against Israeli targets outside the Gaza Strip will decrease, while 27% think they will not change and 31% think they will increase.” On the other hand, 62% of the Israelis support the construction of the barrier surrounding Jerusalem and 73% believe the barrier will increase the level of security in the Jewish neighborhoods.

The percentage of Israelis supporting the dismantling of most of the settlements in the territories as part of a peace agreement with the Palestinians decreased considerably following the disengagement. While 67% supported such a step in March and 62% supported it in June just before the disengagement, 54% support it now. However Israelis’ assessments of the settlements’ contribution to Israel’s national security did not change following the disengagement. According to the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, “38% of the Israelis believe that the settlements contribute to Israel’s national security, while 36% believe they hurt it.” Alpher claims that those Israelis who are supporting unilateral disengagement are opting for demography over geography because they believe that “the country is better off becoming geographically smaller if this means it has fewer Palestinian Arab citizens.”

The decline of public support for disengagement might be the result of Israeli pessimism about the peace process. As the following chart shows, while 59% of Israelis believe that a

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69 Pedahzur, pg. 32.
70 Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research. Palestinians and Israelis Disagree.
71 Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research. Two Thirds among Palestinians.
72 Ibid.
73 Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research. Two Thirds among Palestinians.
comprehensive settlement is currently impossible, only 37% believe it is possible. In addition to this, "22% of Israelis believe a political settlement is not possible ever, 30% believe it will be achieved in the next generation or many generations to come and 39% think it will be reached in the next decade or the next few years." Israelis who are not confident about the future of the peace process are not as interested in giving up territory to the Palestinians.

Concerning the next steps that should be taken in the course of the peace process, the majority of Israelis prefer a gradual step by step approach as opposed to a final status solution of all issues at once. In addition to this, the general support for reconciliation among Israelis has increased and stands now at 84 percent compared to 80 percent in June 2004. The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research found that "41% of the Israelis now expect full reconciliation to be achieved in the next decade or in the next few years compared to only 32% who thought so in

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75 Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research. Two Thirds among Palestinians.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
78 Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research. Palestinians and Israelis Disagree.
The majority of Israelis also support mutual recognition of Israel and Palestine after the establishment of an independent Palestinian state and the settlement of all issues in dispute.\textsuperscript{80}

\textbf{The Opportunity for Change and Progress}

On November 21\textsuperscript{st} a shockwave rocked the Israeli political scene. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon announced that he was leaving the Likud Party, which he helped found more than three decades ago, in order to form a new political party, Kadima. Aides to Mr. Sharon said, “He wants to break with party hardliners who opposed the Israeli withdraw from Gaza.”\textsuperscript{81} Sharon’s move transformed the political situation in Israel. Labor politician Yitzhak Herzog said the split in Likud helped both his party and the peace process with the Palestinians: “This development opens the door for a fascinating coalition of moderate forces after the election.”\textsuperscript{82}

Sharon left Likud because he wanted to pursue his policy of unilateral disengagement from some occupied Palestinian land, while cementing Israel’s hold on East Jerusalem and major settlement blocs. Removed from the constraints of Likud, Sharon would be free to pursue the more moderate line he has followed in recent years. Many in the ruling Likud party have been bitterly opposed to handing any land at all to the Palestinian Authority, frustrating Mr. Sharon and slowing down the disengagement process.\textsuperscript{83} Sharon’s departure has weakened the Likud party’s public support, but many Likud members are not sad to see him go. Uzi Landua, a senior Likud figure who opposed the Gaza withdrawal, said Mr. Sharon’s departure represented a “new hope for Likud with clean politics.”\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{79} Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research. Two Thirds among Palestinians.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{81} BBC News. Israel’s Sharon Quits Likud Party. 21 November 2005.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{84} BBC News. Israel’s Sharon Quits.
Sharon's departure turned Likud into a hard-line party that opinion polls correctly predicted would be the main loser in an election. After the split, Prime Minister Sharon continued to enjoy great popularity with "34% of those surveyed saying that they trust Sharon to steer the country along the right course." Unfortunately, Sharon was unable to participate in the March 2006 elections and rally the Kadima party. Before his devastating stroke on January 4th, Ariel Sharon had the potential to steer Israel on a new centralist path that it has never followed before, but once again, the Israelis have lost a leader that looked as if he could lead them towards compromise with the Palestinians. Kadima's strong support by the secular Israeli mainstream was clear in a newspaper poll released the same day Sharon was hospitalized that "gave it 42 seats in the 120-seat Knesset, a bit more than double the projection for Labour and three times that for the Likud." Although Sharon may yet survive, his inability to participate in the March elections hurt Kadima's results. Not only did Kadima not have a strong leader, but it also had no set platform and consisted of an "unstable mix of ambitious rivals drawn from opposing parties." In Sharon's absence, Binyamin Netanyahu has once again become the leader of the Likud and "following the creation of Kadima, the Likud is even less a party of the center than it was a decade ago."

Kadima's new centralist position gained the support of many Israelis, despite the loss of Sharon, and in the 2006 elections the party received 29 Knesset seats, the most of any party. The Likud party’s quick rise to power in 2003 seems to have came to an end with the absence of Sharon and many of its more moderate members. The party received only twelve seats,

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85 "Israeli Poll Says 88 per cent Doubt Leaders' Integrity, Honesty" BBC Monitoring International Reports. November 6, 2005.
87 Ibid.
compared to the thirty-eight it won in 2003. With only 29 seats, Kadima will be forced to put
together a coalition with other parties in order to establish a government. This coalition will be a
vital part of the conflict as Hamas and other militant Palestinian groups continue to threaten
Israel’s security.
To Fight for What You Have Lost:

The Palestinian Perspective

Although the century long struggle between the Israelis and Palestinians has been transformed within the last twenty years, the story and opinion of the Palestinians have continued to be overshadowed by suicide bombings and missile attacks. The Palestinians’ struggle is based on the same issue as it is with the Israelis: that is, they both fight for the “Land of Palestine,” which both claim is rightfully theirs.

To better articulate the Palestinian perspective of the conflict, a brief summary of the more influential events is necessary. For approximately four hundred years, the Ottoman Caliphate ruled over Palestine, with its reign coming to an end following the First World War. By 1922, about eighty-eight percent of its population was Arab Muslim, Christian or Druze. Although Jews had begun to slowly migrate to Palestine in the late 19th century, by 1947 the Jewish community owned only 6-8% of the total land and made up roughly a third of the population. The United Nations General Assembly voted in favor of Resolution 181, which called for the creation of two states in Palestine and gave the Jewish state fifty-six percent of the territory, despite their statistical minority.

The situation for the Palestinians further deteriorated following the 1949 war, in which Israel established itself as an independent state, capturing seventy-seven percent of Palestine. Neighboring Egypt maintained control over the Gaza strip and Jordan claimed sovereignty over

91 Rodolph, pg. 163.
92 Ibid.
the West Bank. This loss, known to the Arabs as the nakba, or catastrophe, led to a massive amount of dislocation and economic deprivation among the Palestinians and left them fragmented, disillusioned, and incapable of representing themselves on the international scene.

In 1974, following years of discontent and multiple failures to resolve the conflict through diplomatic and military means, the Arab League finally recognized the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), led by Yasir Arafat, as the official representative of the Palestinian people. This leadership was exiled to Tunisia following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, but several years later, the Palestinians were finally able to mobilize against their Israeli occupiers in the 1987 intifada; responses included coordinating strikes, demonstrations, tax resistance, and boycotts of Israeli products.

After years of negotiations, the Declaration of Principles (DOP) was signed in 1994, which stipulated that Israel must eventually surrender to the Palestinian National Authority, day-to-day civil authority over parts of the Gaza Strip and West Bank. In addition, as part of the DOP, the Palestinians successfully held elections on January 20, 1996, in which Yasser Arafat was elected president of the Palestinian National Authority. However, to the dismay of many Palestinians, the Israelis maintained the right to build settlements and confiscate land, which ultimately led the Palestinians to once again mobilize against Israeli occupation in 2000. This second Intifada, sparked by Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount, was extremely violent and ultimately resulted in the death of hundreds of people, both Israeli and Palestinian. After Israel and the United States refused to hold talks with Arafat, who was seen as a terrorist, the position of Palestinian Prime Minister was created in March 2003, and Mahmoud Abbas, also known as

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93 Rudolph, pg. 163.
94 Ibid.
95 Ibid. pg. 164.
96 Ibid. pg. 166.
Abu Mazen, accepted the position.

The turbulent political situation in the Palestinian territories became even more stressed in November 2004, when Arafat died, and Abbas was subsequently elected as the Palestinian Authority president in January 2005. Since then, relations with the Israeli government have not improved, as the Gaza Strip has been completely fenced off, not only from Israel, but from Egypt as well. Moreover, Israel is building a “separation fence” along its border with the West Bank, which is negatively impacting the lives of many Palestinians.  

In order to fully explore the Palestinian perspective on the conflict, this section will discuss the Palestinian public opinion, the stance of political groups, and the results of the most recent elections. First, Palestinian public opinion is arguably the most important factor defining the Palestinian perspective on the conflict. Currently, the Palestinian people seem highly receptive to peace and negotiations with Israel, but they are not comprehensively amenable to making compromises on several key issues. Second, the Palestinian political parties can be broken down into three broad groups: Nationalists, Islamists, and Marxists. Although they all desire Palestinian independence, their varying ideologies have led them to pursue different paths, from being politically active to organizing suicide bombings. Finally, the public’s immediate needs, focus on local, economic issues, and contempt for past governmental policies, was made apparent in the January 2006 elections, in which the militant Islamic party, Hamas, won by a wide margin. These elections will certainly change the path of the peace process and possibly the chances for any sort of resolution in the near future.

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Public Opinion

Palestinian public opinion is a fundamental aspect of the peace process. Its ability to influence Palestinian leaders was especially apparent during the second Intifada, during which, "it deterred Palestinian leaders from cracking down on violence and gave political and social support and comfort to those who resorted to violence." The perceived effectiveness of violence, and willingness to support compromise on permanent-status issues such as borders, refugees, and Jerusalem are the focus of Palestinian public opinion.

An examination of Palestinian opinion polls suggests that the Palestinian willingness to compromise is at its highest point ever, yet they still widely accept violence against Israel. The collapse of the Oslo accords and eruption of the Intifada in 2000 led the Palestinians to

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99 Ibid. pg. 8.
100 Ibid. pg. 1.
question the effectiveness of negotiations with Israel and turn to more violent approaches such as those used by Hamas.\textsuperscript{101} As the previous chart shows, a recent decline in Palestinian public support for violence to resolve the conflict has occurred since the 2004 cease-fire, but it still remains at a significant level of 38%. Shikaki points out that “once a mutual cease-fire was instituted, Palestinian threat perception diminished and so did the level of support for violence and suicide attacks.”\textsuperscript{102} Clearly the path towards peace must be paved with mutual agreements, as opposed to unilateral actions, in order to stop the violence.

Sixty-eight percent of Palestinians believe that armed confrontations have succeeded in ways that negotiations could not. The recent unilateral Israeli disengagement from the Gaza strip is one development that has fostered this belief, with eighty-four percent of the Palestinians viewing the disengagement as a victory for armed resistance.\textsuperscript{103} Despite this, the vast majority of Palestinians want peace, with seventy-five percent supporting the current ceasefire.\textsuperscript{104} No more than 36\% of Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip support armed resistance and sixty-one percent of all Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip oppose bombing attacks or the launching of rockets from the Gaza Strip.\textsuperscript{105}

Despite the clear desire for peace, only forty-seven percent of Palestinians support the collection of weapons from armed groups in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.\textsuperscript{106} However, within the Gaza Strip, support for collection of arms from Gazan armed groups reaches sixty-eight percent.\textsuperscript{107} Instead of the collection of arms, the vast majority of Palestinians would rather

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\textsuperscript{101} Shikaki, pg. 1.  \\
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid, pg. 9.  \\
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.  
\end{flushright}
see the armed groups from Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Fatah absorbed into the Palestinian security services.\textsuperscript{108} It is not surprising that 78% of Palestinians oppose the establishment of an independent Palestinian state that would have no army; even it was protected by a strong United Nations security force.\textsuperscript{109}

Although the majority of the Palestinian public supports a compromise on ending the conflict that would result in a comprehensive permanent status agreement, their willingness to actually make concessions on key issues is declining.\textsuperscript{110} While 63% support a two-state, mutual recognition solution, support for final borders based on the 1967 lines, except for about 3% of the West Bank, has dropped from sixty-three to fifty-five percent since 2004.\textsuperscript{111} Palestinian support for a refugee settlement based upon UN resolutions 194 and 242, which would allow Israel to restrict the number of refugees given Israeli citizenship, has also fallen since December 2004, from forty-six to forty percent.\textsuperscript{112}

The right of return for Palestinian refugees is an especially interesting issue, because while Palestinians demand that Israel recognize the right of return for the refugees, surveys among refugees have actually found that they are not interested in returning. Only ten percent of 4,500 refugee families living in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jordan and Lebanon, want to live in Israel, while only one percent wanted citizenship.\textsuperscript{113}

Palestinian opposition to a compromise in which East Jerusalem would become the capital of the Palestinian state with Jewish neighborhoods coming under Israel sovereignty has

\textsuperscript{108} Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research. Palestinian Public Opinion Poll No. 18.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid. & Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, Palestinian Public Opinion Poll No.18.
\textsuperscript{112} Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, Joint Palestinian-Israeli Public Opinion Poll.
\textsuperscript{113} Shikaki, pg. 11.
increased from 54% to 65% since December 2004. The final status of Jerusalem has been a hot button issue for decades and still contributes to the faltering of the peace process. As the following chart shows, the Palestinians are supportive of the broad concepts of peace and reconciliation, but their support declines as the issues becomes more specific and personal. They seem to want peace, but on their own terms.

Overall, Palestinian public opinion is complicated by their dire economic condition, which has caused feelings of hopelessness, anger, and desperation. It is clear that Israeli policies, such as the "separation wall," which further isolates and degrades the Palestinians, only encourages these feelings of anger and the desire for revenge. Palestinians often believe that it is the Israelis who are not interested in the peace process and a lack of normal interaction with Israelis fosters this type of misperception. Despite this, the Palestinians have steadily become more willing to

114 Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, Joint Palestinian-Israeli Public Opinion Poll.
115 Shikaki, pg. 1, 13.
compromise and seventy-five percent of Palestinians support the reconciliation of the two peoples after the establishment of a Palestinians state.\textsuperscript{116} But as far as the Palestinians are concerned, the future of the Palestinian state is uncertain. Only 52% see the disengagement as the beginning of the end of Israeli occupation and fifty-five percent feel that the Gaza Strip has become a big prison.\textsuperscript{117} In addition to this pessimistic attitude, only forty-two percent expect the evacuation of most or some settlements in the West Bank, while 45% actually expect the building of more settlements.\textsuperscript{118}

**Political Opinions**

The ideological divisions between the Palestinian parties are based upon Islamic, Nationalistic, and Marxist beliefs. The Islamic position includes Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, who ultimately want to institute Islamic law in Palestine. Fatah, the most prominent nationalist party, has had the most control over Palestinian politics so far, but has quickly lost power to the Islamists. In addition, there have been many Palestinian Marxist groups, the most successful of which have been the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and the Palestinian People’s Party.

Palestinian political parties have struggled with the dilemma of either choosing to work together and fight for the Palestinian cause or fight against one another and gain political power. According to Mannes, Fatah began coordinating closely with the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hamas, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine following the al-Aqsa Intifada.\textsuperscript{119} Since then however, local elections


\textsuperscript{117} Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, Palestinian Public Opinion Poll No.18.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.

have become fiercely competitive and as the following chart illustrates, a two-party system dominated by Hamas and Fatah has emerged.\textsuperscript{120}

\begin{figure}
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chart.png}
\caption{A comparison of the 1996 and 2006 election results}
\end{figure}

\textbf{Hamas:}

Hamas, an acronym of Harakat al-Muqawma al-Islamiyya, meaning Islamic Resistance Movement, was formed in 1987, in Gaza by Sheikh Ahmad Yassin and has played a major role in the recent Intifada.\textsuperscript{122} Since then, this Islamist organization has been violently committed to destroying the “Zionist entity” and replacing it with an Islamic state in all of Palestine.\textsuperscript{123} The Hamas Charter is severely anti-Semitic, pulling most of its claims from the notorious Protocols of the Elders of Zion. The charter not only claims that Jews have “control of the world media [and use their] wealth to stir revolutions,” but also that “there was no war that broke out

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Shikaki, pg. 7.
\item Mannes, pg. 113-115.
\item Ibid, pg. 113.
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anywhere without their fingerprints on it...”\textsuperscript{124} Hamas is not interested in any form of peace talks or compromises with Israel, because, as stated in their charter, “renouncing any part of Palestine means renouncing part of the religion [of Islam].”\textsuperscript{125} For Hamas, jihad is the only answer. Hamas’ clear desire to destroy Israel, along with its frequent use of suicide bombers to carry out attacks on Israeli civilians led Israel to declare Hamas an illegal organization in September 1989.\textsuperscript{126} Since then, Hamas leaders have been the target of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), including the founder and spiritual leader of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, who was killed by the IDF on March 22, 2004.\textsuperscript{127}

Hamas has been fighting for the independence of Palestine and the destruction of Israel as a militant terrorist organization and a mass social, political, and religious movement. Along with its underground Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades that carry out attacks on Israel, Hamas also operates social programs such as building schools, hospitals and religious institutions.\textsuperscript{128} In addition, Hamas also holds summer camps where “children are indoctrinated in Islamist ideology and trained how to participate in violent protests.”\textsuperscript{129} Furthermore, as much as eighty-five percent of Hamas’ estimated seventy million dollar budget may come from abroad and evidence suggests that Iran alone may provide as much as ten to twenty million dollars a year.\textsuperscript{130} Hamas also receives money from U.S. based organizations such as the Holy Land Foundation, which raised about thirteen million dollars for Hamas in 2000, but was closed by the FBI in the wake of

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{126} Mannes, pg. 114.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid, pg. 122.
\textsuperscript{129} Mannes, pg. 125.
The deteriorating social and economic conditions in the territories have allowed Hamas to expand its influence among Palestinians within the last decade. Despite its refusal to participate in the 1996 election, Hamas, represented by the List of Change and Reform, won a landslide victory in the recent January 2006 election. As the primary rival of Fatah, Hamas campaigned on domestic issues, such as political corruption and social welfare programs.

**Palestinian Islamic Jihad:**

Fathi Shiqaqi and Abdul Aziz Odeh, two refugees from Gaza, started the Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement (PIJ), Harakat al-Jihad al-Islami al-Filastini, as a splinter group of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood in the mid-1980s. Since then, it has become a radical terrorist organization, participating in the two Intifadas and coordinating attacks with Hamas in the mid-1990s. The PIJ also advocates an armed struggle against Israel and views any compromise with Israel as impossible. The radical views of the PIJ are rooted in their interpretation of the Quran, from which they have concluded that “Palestine is the focus of the religio-historical confrontation between the Muslims and their eternal enemies, the Jews.”

Because of this belief, the PIJ is committed to the liberation of Palestine, the establishment of shari’a (Islamic Law), the elimination of Israel and pan-Islamic revival, which they believe are foreordained by God’s words in the Quran.

According to Mannes, the PIJ receives most of its financial support from Iran, which pays

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131 Mannes, pg. 127.
134 Mannes, pg. 196-197.
135 Palestinian National Authority, Islamic Jihad Movement.
137 Ibid.
millions for successful attacks against Israel. Thankfully, the PIJ has not become a mass movement like Fatah or Hamas. However, it did gain some support after the second intifada in 2000, but still only has the support of four to five percent of the Palestinian population. This lack of public support is due to the PIJ’s focus on its radical goals and disregard for wider political considerations. The PIJ’s effectiveness and frequency of operations have also suffered since October 1995, when the Israeli Mossad assassinated its leader, Fathi Shqaqi.

**Fatah:**

Fatah was established as a Palestinian nationalist movement in January 1959 by Yasser Arafat, Khaled Al-Hassan, Farouq Qaddumi and Kalil Al-Wazzir. The name, Fatah, is an acronym for Harakat al-Tahrir al-Falistiniya, the Palestinian Liberation Movement, with the first letters in reverse order, spelling Fatah, which means conquest by Jihad. The Fatah constitution includes many principles that align with those of Hamas. The Israeli existence in Palestine is described as “a Zionist invasion” and Fatah envisions the Palestinian struggle as “part and parcel of the worldwide struggle against Zionism, colonialism, and international imperialism.”

Fatah’s ultimate goals are what set it apart from Hamas. These goals do include the “complete liberation of Palestine, and eradication of Zionist economic, political, military, and cultural existence,” but focus primarily on the establishment of “an independent democratic state with complete sovereignty on all Palestinian lands, and Jerusalem as its capital city,” as opposed to an Islamic state.

Fatah does have an armed wing, the Tanzim, which has conducted an enormous variety

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138 Mannes, pg. 200.
139 Mideast Web. Palestinian Organizations.
140 Mannes, pg. 197.
141 Ibid, pg. 242.
142 Ibid, pg. 223.
144 Ibid. my emphasis
of terror attacks in its four decades of existence.\textsuperscript{145} The Tanzim is financially supported by the Palestinian Authority and indoctrinates young Palestinians through summer camps and courses in order to prepare them to confront Israel.\textsuperscript{146}

As Fatah's candidate, Abbas won an overwhelming victory in the January 2005 presidential elections. Despite this, Fatah's public support has suffered from being associated with the corruption and incompetence of the Palestinian Authority.\textsuperscript{147} Fatah has also been experiencing internal conflict between the traditional, old guard leadership and younger activists, such as Mohammad Dahlan and the imprisoned Marwan Barghouti. According to the Anti-Defamation League, the younger members are frustrated with Fatah's corruption and the old guard's decision to exclude the younger members from key positions on the party lists.\textsuperscript{148} Indeed, this lethal combination of internal conflict and declining public support caused Fatah to lose control of the PA in the January 2006 election.

\textbf{Marxist Parties:}

The role of socialist, Marxist parties, such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and the Palestinian People's Party (PPP), in Palestinian politics has declined since the fall of the Soviet Union and the popularity of the Islamist Hamas party has increased. These groups are open to negotiations with Israel and ultimately want to establish a Palestinian state in which both Palestinians and Jews can live together. Despite their minimal power, the PFLP continues to be the second largest faction of the PLO and ran as the Martyr Abu Ali Mustafa List in the January 2006

\textsuperscript{145} Mannes, pg. 139.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid, pg. 234-236.
\textsuperscript{148} Anti-Defamation League. Parties in the Palestinian Authority Legislative Election.
The DFLP and PPP ran as part of a joint list called al-Badeel, The Alternative, along with Palestine Democratic Union (FIDA) and independents. This list was led by the DFLP leader, Qais Karim Khadir, and ran on a platform of social issue reform. It received 2.8% of the popular vote and won two of the Council's 132 seats.

Democratization of Palestine and the Recent Elections

The most recent Palestinian election on January 25, 2006, has once again confirmed that the Palestinians are building a fledgling democracy. Democratization of the Arab world has not proceeded quickly or easily, but the Palestinians seem to have a chance for success. Unfortunately, the institution of democracy in the Palestinian territories may not bode well for the peace process. Shikaki claims that if the Palestinians do manage to establish a democracy, “it will be one dominated by the rise of Hamas and a declining prospect for peace with Israel.”

The Palestinians themselves are not very positive about their ability to create a democracy, with only nineteen percent of Palestinians believing that there is a high chance that a democratic system will be established in the Palestinian Authority or a future Palestinian State. Despite this, the election of Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) on January 9, 2005, and the smooth shift of power thereafter, “marked the institutionalization of Palestinian democracy,” and the recent elections have strengthened this process.

In the January 2006 elections, Palestinians elected a legislature for the first time in ten

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149 Anti-Defamation League. Parties in the Palestinian Authority Legislative Election.
150 Ibid.
151 Ibid.
154 Shikaki, pg. 2.
155 Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research. Palestinians and Israelis Disagree.
years and expanded the legislative council from 88 seats to 132.\textsuperscript{157} These elections, which were seen as a test for democracy in the West Bank and Gaza, were a huge success, with 74.6 percent of the 1.3 million Palestinian voters participating.\textsuperscript{158} Although the Oslo II agreement signed by Israel and the Palestinian Authority in September 1995, barred candidates from running for office who "pursue the implementation of their aims by unlawful or non-democratic means," Hamas was allowed to participate and ultimately win the majority of the seats.\textsuperscript{159} Although many had speculated that Hamas might do well prior to the elections, Hamas' landslide victory as the "List of Change and Reform," was still a shock to the international community. As shown in the following chart, in the end, Hamas ended up receiving seventy-four seats, while only forty-five went to Fatah. Only four other parties were able to win a few seats.\textsuperscript{160}

The Hamas victory was a clear demand for change by the Palestinians, but it may not reflect the public's opinion about the peace process. While the majority of Palestinians agree with Fatah’s

\textsuperscript{157} Anti-Defamation League. Parties in the Palestinian Authority Legislative Election.
\textsuperscript{158} BBC News. Palestinian election: results in detail.
\textsuperscript{160} BBC News. Palestinian election: results in detail.
platform at the national level, which focuses on reviving the peace process and restoring law and order, the majority of voters favored the Islamists, because of local issues, such as clean government and efficient social services. The PA, under the control of the Fatah party, was seen as corrupt by eighty-six percent of Palestinians and sixty-five percent did not feel safe and secure. On the other hand, the Islamists, who have consistently fought against the peace process, have remained transparent and focused on providing social services that the Palestinians desperately need. Hamas promised everything that Fatah was not providing: action, strength and transparency. Discontent with the dismal results that Fatah was able to achieve through the peace process also spurred Palestinians to vote for Hamas. One Palestinian man, Mr. Shaik said, “Fatah was the majority, but they achieved nothing but the apartheid wall,” in a bitter reference to the barrier Israel has built. It seems that the voters ignored the fact that Hamas intends to cease all negotiations with Israel, which will cause the peace process to come to a halt. Mr. Saleh, a Palestinian living in the West Bank said, “They [Fatah] didn’t bring us peace, but the reverse.” It is clear that Israeli unilateral disengagement policies such as building a separation wall and withdrawing from Gaza without negotiations have proven to many Palestinians that Israel is not interested in working with them and that violence can pay off.

Implications for the Future

The results of the recent Palestinian elections have placed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on a new and uncertain path. Although the Palestinian people themselves are not an impediment to the peace process per se, Shikaki claims that the election of Hamas, an organization opposed to

161 Shikaki, pg. 4.
162 Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, Palestinian Public Opinion Poll No.18.
163 Shikaki, pg. 7.
165 Ibid.
166 Shikaki, pg. 5.
Palestinian-Israeli peace and a nationalist-secularist Palestinian state, threatens the future of the Palestinian state and the peace process.\textsuperscript{167} The PA will no longer be able to blame the "militants" for suicide attacks against Israeli civilians, because now the "militants" are the ruling party – the militia of Hamas. This fact will force Hamas to make some tough choices about how they will carry out their agenda. In fact, at an election rally in Gaza, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyah stated, "The constants and the strategy of Hamas do not change according to circumstances. Hamas will stay faithful to jihad, to resistance, to guns, to Palestine and to Jerusalem," but this sort of position will make the future very difficult for the new, Hamas led Palestinian government.\textsuperscript{168} The Palestinians are the most foreign-aid dependent society on earth and the United States provides about one-third of the nearly $1.1 billion in aid that the Palestinians receive.\textsuperscript{169} Moreover, with the recent Hamas victory, the United States, Israel, and the European Union are threatening to cut off monetary aid, which could possibly cause the Hamas government to fail and force new elections to be held.

The future of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict lies partially in the hands of the radical memberships of Hamas and the Palestinian people themselves. The masses have the power to demand peace with Israel from the Hamas led government and Hamas must decide how to proceed with Israel. Although more violent means have been somewhat effective in recent years in the Palestinian perspective, the desired end has yet to be achieved. Thus, intuitively one could argue that a greater concentration on more peaceful means to bring about a resolution to the conflict would be in the Palestinian's best interest. Furthermore, self-empowerment by the Palestinian people could bring about pressure on the Hamas-led government from within, which

\textsuperscript{167} Shikaki, 4.
\textsuperscript{168} Ismail Haniyah, Hamas leader, at an election rally in Gaza, January 20, 2006, \textit{Gulf Daily News}, Bahrain. & Anti-Defamation league, Hamas in their own words.
could make peace with Israel more likely. Perhaps such a cultural change is occurring, as this section implies, that will allow for a resolution to this age-old conflict.
Looking to the Future

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not only complicated by differing opinions between the Palestinians and Israelis, but also by internal divisions and external factors. This century long conflict has persisted because of deeply entrenched ideologies, fostered by ethnonationalism. Few other nationalist movements have succeeded in the way that Zionism has by establishing a modern ethnic state. Despite the fact that Israel was founded as the sanctuary for Jews throughout the world, it has been in a state of permanent war since 1948. On the other hand, the Palestinians were forced to surrender their homeland to the Jews, and have been fighting to get it back ever since.

In spite of the continuing violence, the time is ripe for a permanent-status agreement. As Shikaki points out, “For the first time since the start of the peace process, a majority of Palestinians support a compromise settlement that is acceptable to a majority of Israelis.” Despite this, obstacles remain, both political and ideological, to a peace settlement. Any Israeli coalition in the coming years will probably be unable to sustain more than a partial peace process before collapsing under the weight of internal coalition contradictions. This fact is even apparent in the most recent elections, in which no one party was able to win a majority. Another obstacle is that both the Palestinians and Israelis are “righteous victims,” which undermines the prospects for future peaceful coexistence. While Palestinians blame blatant settler expansionism on their land for their anger and violence, Israelis invoke legitimate security concerns in light of unprecedented attacks on their normal way of life.

171 Ibid. pg. 112.
172 Shikaki, pg. 15.
173 Alpher, pg. 2.
174 Adam, pg. 7.
In addition, there are international factors to take into consideration, and the policies of external actors have only tended to exacerbate the tensions. Currently, Iran and the United States have a strong influence on the conflict. Iran has emerged as a formidable supporter of Palestinian nationalism, particularly Islamist factions, such as Hamas and the PIJ.\textsuperscript{175} Israel is also conscious of the danger posed by a nuclear-armed Iran, which might cause Israel’s neighbors to take a more aggressive stance toward Israel.\textsuperscript{176} In recent decades, the United States has attempted to take a leading role in managing the conflict and has worked to exclude the United Nations from participation. The American Christian Right has strongly pushed for U.S. support of Israel, because they believe that the second coming of Christ will require that the Jews be “ingathered” again in Zion.\textsuperscript{177} This close relationship between Israel and the United States has hampered the ability of the United States to serve as a neutral mediator, and since the United States and its allies have declared a war on terrorism, management of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has not been a priority.\textsuperscript{178}

Having reached the conclusion that the territory between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River must be shared but cannot be sensibly partitioned, only one acceptable alternative remains: Israeli-Palestinian coexistence in one nation. According to Gavron, “this is the improbable solution that remains after eliminating the impossible.”\textsuperscript{179} Despite the support of the Israelis and Palestinians, many scholars have eliminated the two-state option as a practical solution for two reasons. First, Jewish settlements have carved Palestinian territory into an area too small to sustain a viable national society. The Israeli security wall has contributed to this by cutting through Palestinian farmland. Secondly, even if a Palestinian state were declared in this

\textsuperscript{175} Adam, pg. 169.
\textsuperscript{176} Alpher, pg. 1.
\textsuperscript{178} Rodolph, pg. 165-167.
\textsuperscript{179} Gavron, pg. 229.
dismembered territory, it could only bring continuing instability. Radicals on both sides would inevitably fight to regain all the territory that they believe has been given to them by their god.

There are two alternatives to the two-state solution. The first would be Israel’s forced expulsion of the Palestinian population out of the country, which reflects the “hard transfer” endorsed by some right-wing Israeli-Zionists. The second alternative is the one-state solution, which would resolve the entire conflict and is already an impending reality. The one-state solution would erase the borders between Israel, the West Bank and Gaza and build a single, secular Israeli/Palestinian state. In theory, a common state solution would solve many of the problems that negotiations have struggled with. For example, it would solve the refugee problem, because the law of return would apply to both Israelis and Palestinians equally and settler evacuation would become a non-issue. Jerusalem would remain intact with both sides maintaining access to the religious sites. The move towards a one state solution does not seem likely in the near future, because currently no Palestinian party and only a few intellectuals as well as a few Jewish post-Zionists and anti-Zionists advocate a common state and support for reconciliation based on a two-state solution remains solid despite the past five years of armed confrontations. Those Israelis who do not want a Palestinian state next door do not want to have one in their midst either. It seems that the Palestinians as a whole could accept a one-state solution and live side-by-side with the Israeli Jews as long as they were treated as equals, but it is unclear if the Jews and Arabs could build a united, democratic state together. The reconciliation

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181 Ibid, pg. 6-9.
182 Adam, pg. 177.
of the two peoples will ultimately depend on their ability to put the past and ethnonationalist ideologies aside and focus on sharing a land that each group envisions as its homeland.
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