The development of the Palestinian national movement can be traced back at least to the beginning of the twentieth century, when the crumbling Ottoman Empire gave rise by the end of the First World War to the territorial expansion of the Western imperialist powers -- including France, Britain, and later the United States -- into the Middle East. Palestine, the provincial territory controlled by the Ottoman state, had for centuries been home to the Palestinian people. But while successful national uprisings in the Balkans and elsewhere in the Empire led to the establishment of independent nation states, the area inhabited by the Palestinians and the surrounding regions extending to the Persian Gulf and the Arabian peninsula came under the control of the European powers which intervened and turned them into mandates of one or another of the leading imperialist states of the period -- Britain and France.

This occupation of Arab territories by the Western powers intensified with the creation of the State of Israel on Palestinian lands at mid-century. The Zionist oppression of the Palestinian people in Israel, their forced expulsion from their homeland to neighboring Arab states as refugees, and their harsh treatment by the Zionist state in the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank during the 1970s and 1980s have given rise to a strong sense of national identity and to a struggle for national independence which culminated in the popular uprising known as the Intifada.

To understand the origins and development of the Palestinian national movement and the context in which this movement developed, we need first to examine the nature and structure of the Palestinians as a people. And for this we must look briefly at the Ottoman Empire, in which the Palestinians were situated.

**Historical Background**

The Ottoman Empire ruled Palestine from the sixteenth century until the final campaigns of the First World War. The empire had been the center of the world for many centuries and was directly or indirectly responsible for much that shaped today's entire Middle East region.

The Ottoman social formation foregrounded the social antagonism between city and country, between central state apparatus and rural direct producer. This conflict was epitomized in the household of the Ottoman ruler, the Sultan. The land and other assets of the empire were the personal property of the ruler, to be distributed for the usufruct of various members of the ruling class, who were concentrated around the central state. The social relationship between this state and the direct producer in the villages of the distant provinces of the empire was one of direct authoritarian rule; the subjects had no constitutional rights, and the sultan's power was absolute. Corresponding to the generalized domination was the exploitative economic relationship whereby the state extracted the surplus product from the masses (ra'iya). Exploitation characteristically took the form of taxation: first, there were taxes on agricultural production;
then, the taxes on various urban activities (commerce and handicrafts); and finally, the head
taxes (jizya) which were levied on non-Muslim communities within the empire./1/

By far the majority of Palestinians in the nineteenth century, perhaps over 80 %, were peasants
(fellahin)./2/ Some cultivation was based on sharecropping, with a division of the agricultural
product between peasant and the landlord of the state property (miri). Much was based on
peasant smallholding of miri land. By the second half of the nineteenth century, an increasing
portion of the arable land in Palestine was sown to winter wheat -- a cash crop -- which was
rotated annually with other, subsistence, crops. Around the larger cities, olive groves flourished;
and orange groves were prominent on the outskirts of Jaffa. Agricultural output increased in
Palestine during the late Ottoman period, largely due to an extension of the area under cultivation
rather than an intensification of agricultural productivity per se. As local strife and banditry
diminished following Ibrahim Pasha's departure from Damascus in 1840 and the Ottoman
reassertion of authority, more and more land could be safely cultivated. Moreover,
agricult[16/17]ural output was increasingly commodified, as cash crops replaced subsistence
production./3/

On the one hand, the countryside was clearly subject to social change, at least in a quantitative
sense. On the other hand, the nature of this change did not tend to be qualitative; hence the social
order remained the source of a sense of solidarity and group identity in the countryside. This
identity tended to be particularistic and local, however, rather than nationalistic.

Although the majority of the population of Ottoman Palestine were peasants, the urban groups
were the bearers of its civilization. Important urban centers toward the end of the nineteenth
century included Jerusalem, Acre, Nablus, Gaza, Hebron, Jaffa, and Nazareth. Three of these
cities -- Acre, Jerusalem, and Nablus -- were administrative centers for Ottoman districts (the
sanjaks)./4/ Urban social processes exhibited more change, and even qualitative change, in
contrast to those in the countryside. Economic activity had been organized by guilds of artisans
and shopkeepers. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, some of the industrial activity
had moved outside of the framework of the handicraft guilds.

In addition, the cities were the home of the Palestinian elite (the effendi) -- absentee landlords,
religious officials, and various Ottoman authorities -- as well as, in the late nineteenth century,
the intelligentsia. These literate and politically more self-conscious groups tended to be of
greater concern to the central state. Ottoman economic policy throughout the empire sought to
maintain the public finance and also to meet the needs of the urban population, at the expense of
the peasants.

The success of these policies, the relative comfort of the urban groups (particularly the effendi
and the intelligentsia) together with the Ottoman tactic of balancing the interests of the various
groups, all the while stressing the unity of the empire, tended to preempt nationalist aspirations
in Ottoman Palestine.

The preponderant religious group in Palestine under Ottoman rule was Sunni Muslim. This group
felt closely allied with the Ottomans in having a common religion, and it was closely allied to the
central state through the cooptation of the Palestinian effendi into Ottoman ruling circles. Among
non-Muslims (the dhimmis) the Greek Orthodox formed the most numerous community. Across
the entire Ottoman Empire, the millet system had traditionally provided not only for the relative
security of the various ethnic and religious minorities within the Dar es Salaam (the Islamic "Realm of Peace") but also for a measure of their political and cultural autonomy as well. The most important millets in Palestine were those of the several Greek Christian communities and the Jewish community (the Yishuv). Each millet was headed by its own religious leader. Non-Muslim persons were linked to the Sultanate through the millet, which was responsible for gathering taxes, providing education, and resolving legal issues within the community.

But these groups were not the juridical equal of the Muslim majority. The dhimmi paid the personal or head tax (the jizya), which was not levied on Muslims. The dhimmi could not testify at law against Muslims. While this systemic discrimination might well strengthen the sense of collective identity of these minority groups, that was not necessarily conducive to the emergence of Palestinian (or even Arab) nationalism. The rise of Zionist political parties, however, and armed provocations against the Arab community in Palestine during the first years of the twentieth century led to greater cohesion and collective identity among the Palestinians. The Palestinian response to Zionist provocations represented a first expression of political self-consciousness.

The Palestinian National Movement in the First Half of the Twentieth Century

Palestinian opposition to Zionist colonization, which had emerged even before the League of Nations gave Britain mandate over Palestine, became exacerbated by British military occupation of Jerusalem and other Palestinian territories at the end of the First World War. As the Palestinian opposition became increasingly intense, the British successfully pursued a policy of divide et impera which led to the Great Palestinian Revolt, the disarming of the Palestinian people, and the decline of traditional Palestinian political culture.

With the rise of Zionism, the Arab community of Palestine did not view itself merely as a set of ethnic groups, each distinct from the Jewish colonists and from each other. Rather it began to view itself in terms of its political identity. Muslim and Christian Palestinians petitioned the Ottoman central state, sent delegations to the newly reconvened Ottoman Parliament, and polemicized in their newspapers. This expression of Palestinian political culture further intensified Palestinian political identity after British occupation of Jerusalem at the close of World War I.

British interests in Palestine were geo-political -- protecting the northeastern flank of the Suez Canal, which London viewed as the life line of the British Empire. The Ottoman general Jamal Pasha had shown the British in January 1915 that Palestine under hostile control could be the base of an attack on the Canal. Those British interests were best served by a territory which was not ethnically so unified that the threat of self-determination was genuine. Those interests were also best served by a territory that did not have so much intercommunal conflict that a large British garrison was required.

British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour's well-known letter of November 2, 1917 to Baron Edward Rothschild, incorporating the Balfour Declaration, indicated that the British favored the establishment of a Jewish "national home" in Palestine, explicitly alongside "existing non-Jewish communities." Whatever other objectives which may be imputed to the British in this Declaration, it would guarantee an ethnically divided Palestine.

Ethnic conflict had erupted between Zionists and Palestinians during the period of British
military occupation even prior to the granting of the League of Nations Mandate. Haganah (the Defense Force) was formed in early 1920 and began training in Jerusalem. Violent ethnic clashes occurred there in April 1920. The Zionists called for increased Jewish immigration as the antidote. Palestinian political culture was already evidencing change. The newly formed Palestinian Women's Union called for an end to the Balfour Declaration and an end to British torture of Palestinian political prisoners. Even more violent clashes, provoked by the British police against the communist movement, occurred in Jaffa on May Day in 1921. The authorities then began to realize that the ethnic conflict might get out of hand. Had the British taken seriously the kind of requirements which they would soon accept as part of the League of Nations Mandate, and had the United States not passed the several Johnson Acts of the early 1920's -- which severely curtailed Jewish immigration to New York due to the spectre of bolshevism -- the interests of all sides in Palestine might have been accommodated. As it was, geopolitics continued to play a role: Jewish immigration to Palestine increased in the early 1930s as the economic and political situation in Europe deteriorated. After August 1929, in response to the heightening tensions in Palestine, the Palestine Communist Party (PCP) began to pursue a policy of Arabization.

British divide et impera policies were not limited to manipulating inter-communal tensions. They manipulated the competition among the Palestinian effendi as well. As we have already observed, it was Ottoman policy to balance the interests of the various Palestinian groups against one another. British policy intensified this competition by playing off the one against the other. In particular they pitted the Husseini family against the Nashashibi family, to the ultimate benefit of neither. The Husseini family led the Majlis (the Supreme Muslim Council), secured the appointment of Haj Amin al-Husseini as the mufti of Jerusalem (the highest Muslim authority there), and had an extensive coalition of followers in the Majlesiyyoun (council supporters). As evidence of the change of Palestinian political culture, the Majlesiyyoun had its own organ of popular opinion, a newspaper called al-Jami'a al-Arabiyya (the Arab League). On the other side, the Nashashibi family led the Mu'arada (the Opposition), and secured the election of Ragheb al-Nashashibi as Mayor of Jerusalem. It too had numerous followers, organized in the Mu'aridoun (Opposition supporters); its newspaper was al-Karmel, published in Haifa. The schism within Palestinian political culture became so deep that the two groups held competing Islamic Congresses in December 1931, one at the Rawdat al-Ma'aref school and the other at the King David Hotel, both in Jerusalem.

In 1932, dissatisfaction with the ineffectiveness of the political culture reached the point that Awni Abdul-Hadi, Hamdi al-Husayni and others formed the Istiqlal (Independence) Party, the first purely Palestinian political party, and began to promote a policy of non-cooperation with the Mandatory authorities. Indeed, by 1933, the Palestinian masses had begun to run ahead of their leadership and confront the British occupiers as well as the Zionist colonizers. A general strike was called during October of that year, and bloodshed ensued. The Mu'arada was so disorganized that it was unable to participate in the developments. Subsequently, some of the Mu'aridoun broke ranks and organized another faction, which secured the election of Dr. Hussein Fakhri al-Khalidi mayor of Jerusalem in the 1934 elections.

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The next two years saw the birth of a multitude of Palestinian political parties, including the Arab Party (of the Majlesiyyoun), the National Defense Party (of the Mu'aridoun), and the National Reform Party (led by Dr. Hussein Fakhri al-Khalidi). As a Palestinian working class
began to emerge, the traditional political culture proved to be inadequate and new forms came into being. Under these divided conditions, the struggle against Zionism matured. Sporadic violence continued after the 1933 disturbances, culminating in the Palestinian general strike begun in 1936 and the Great Palestinian Revolt (in 1938 and 1939). England’s Peel Commission, which investigated the strike, recognized that the inter-communal tension was becoming uncontrollable and in 1937 recommended partition.

Partition would have involved population transfers on a large scale, which the British government was unwilling to sanction. Despite aggressive land appropriation policies, the Zionists owned less than 6 percent of the land in Palestine in 1938. The Jews were concentrated in Tel Aviv and other cities and in settlements scattered about the countryside. Thus there was no possibility of fulfilling the condition of territorial contiguity that is necessary for establishing a viable nation-state, let alone the condition of a developed and extensive home market for the Zionists; their communal aspirations were unrealistic. In any case, no one was able to draft a plausible partition plan. The Zionists pressed the British to enact a policy of population transfer; the British resisted.

The British arrested dozens of Palestinian leaders in late 1937, including most of the Palestinian leadership of the PCP; this triggered the Great Palestinian Revolt. Guerilla war raged throughout 1938 and well into 1939. The PCP increasingly threw its support behind the Palestinian movement. Meanwhile, Zionist terrorism mounted. Irgun (the self-styled National Military Organization, which split from Haganah in 1935) began to bomb Palestinian civilian targets in 1938. As the Great Revolt wound down in late 1939, the Palestinians were carefully disarmed by the Mandatory authority -- but the Zionists were not. Finally, the official British White Paper on Palestine of 1939 called for an end to the Mandate within ten years and the establishment of an independent state in Palestine. This would be neither a Jewish state nor an Arab state, but one wherein the "essential interests of each [community] are secured."

Pious official proclamations aside, there seemed to be no way to resolve the conflicting interests there. British geopolitical interests in the colonies were served by a measure of ethnic heterogeneity. Zionist interests would be served only by large-scale transfer of the Palestinian population, which would effect a radical ethnic homogenization. Perhaps because of their common European heritage, these two political cultures tended to deny the legitimacy of Palestinian interests. And the Palestinians, divided as they were (into traditionally organized family groupings, then into nascent party groupings) were unable to express their own interests effectively. But the outcome of the colonial era was to transform Palestinian political culture decisively. And with this change, political identity was transformed as well.

**Palestinian Nationalism from 1948 To 1967**

By mid-century the success of Zionist war plans against Palestinian civilians had lead to a diaspora. By 1947, two-thirds of the people in Palestine were Palestinian Muslims and Christians, while one-third were Zionist settlers. As Palestinian political culture was re-established within Israel, several diverging tendencies emerged. Likewise, as Palestinians in the diaspora began to mobilize, a number of trends developed, including Pan-Arabism on the one hand and "pragmatic" nationalism on the other. Finally, the overarching Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was founded in 1964. These various tendencies, however, did not become effectively coordinated until after the June 1967 War.
As we have seen, in 1939 the British had proposed ending the Palestine Mandate within a decade. When World War II ended, the exhausted empire proceeded to 'unburden' itself of all but the most vital interests. The costs of keeping a garrison in Palestine were perceived as greater than any possible geo-political benefits that could be derived from maintaining a presence there. This imperial assessment became clear to the Zionists, who continued to arm themselves and prepared to seize state power in Palestine.

Moreover, the Zionist minority was by then very well organized. Its apparatus had completely supplanted the traditional Yishuv (the Jewish millet). It was prepared to take any measures to enlarge its territory and to eliminate its ethnic antagonists. One of its Haganah commanders, Yigael Yadin, had presented the notorious "Plan Dalet" as early as March 1948, which proposed the mass expulsion of Palestinians from their homes and the destruction of their villages to clear the land for Zionist endeavors. This Plan was implemented by Haganah by early April 1948, that is to say before the British Mandate had ended. On April 9, for instance, Irgun, under the leadership of Menachem Begin, massacred 254 Palestinian men, women, and children at the 'pacified' village of Deir Yassin near Jerusalem, and then stuffed the mutilated bodies down the village wells in an exercise in ritual pollution. Subsequently the Zionists publicized the atrocity and promised more; the Palestinians began to flee their homes en masse.

War broke out on May 14, 1948, one day before the date on which the British planned to end their Mandate. The Israeli Haganah had about the same number of troops as did its Arab opponents taken together, but by all accounts Haganah had superior firepower, and its efforts were better coordinated. By June 11, 1948, the first phase of the war had ended in a UN-sponsored truce. The Israeli cabinet of David Ben-Gurion agreed on June 16 to prevent the return to their homes of the hundreds of thousands of Palestinian civilians who had by then been displaced by the war. The war then resumed; the Palestinians were further displaced. Indeed, according to the UN Relief and Works Agency and others, more than seven hundred thousand Palestinians were displaced as a result of the 1948 War. This Palestinian diaspora (the Palestinians themselves refer to it as al-Ghourba or al-Shatat) constituted approximately 60 percent of the more than 1.3 million Muslims and Christians who had resided in historic Palestine before 1948.

The 1948 War is called al-Nakbah (the Catastrophe) by the Palestinians, an apt characterization. Their community was shattered, the people who fled the Zionist terror were consigned to refugee camps in Lebanon, Jordan, and Gaza, hundreds of Palestinian villages were obliterated -- razed to the ground -- and those Palestinians who were permitted to remain within Israel after 1948 were subjected to military occupation until 1965. The majority of these lived in some one hundred villages and towns in northern Israel, in the region around Nazareth, almost completely separated from the Zionist settlers.

For a decade following the 1948 War, the majority of Palestinians had to devote themselves totally to the tasks of physical survival. Political culture was further transformed. For those inside Israel, there were two main tendencies -- a declining one, which was associated with the traditional political culture of the elites and which gave support to the Mapai (the Labor Party); and a developing one, which was associated with Maki (the reconstituted Communist Party). The traditional tendency continued its decline, and even more rapidly than before al-Nakbah, because the elites had been thoroughly discredited by the war, and their base had been largely dissolved by the proletarianization of the Palestinian masses. The
progressive tendency, by contrast, sought to represent the interests of the oppressed Palestinians in Israel while avoiding the pitfalls of what it viewed as the narrow nationalism which supported Gamal Abdel Nasser's Pan-Arabism. This included an ambivalent relationship to al-Ard (the Land), a Palestinian nationalist movement which had emerged in the 1950s. Of course this nationalism had progressive aspects (the anti-imperialism on the part of the Nasserites and the struggle for democratic rights on the part of al-Ard) and regressive aspects (the suppression of the communists and other opposition movements by the Nasserites and the romantic isolationist tendencies of al-Ard).

Among the Palestinians in the Diaspora the same ambiguities manifested themselves as the political culture was reestablished. The Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM) was founded by George Habash in the early 1950s, stressed a Pan-Arab identity; early on, it received support from Nasser. Its political organ was al-Hurriyyah (Freedom). The ANM sought to extirpate imperialism and Zionism from the Arab world (from Morocco to the Gulf emirates) and to create in its place a united Arab state; this would solve the Palestinian problem at the same time. This movement found its greatest support among the Palestinian and wider Arab middle class, a literate class no longer submerged by the effendi and not beholden to any foreign power. As the movement matured, it spun off many of the `leftist' organizations of the contemporary Middle East./18/

On the other side, Fatah, founded by Yasser Arafat in the late 1950s, stressing from the start a `pragmatic' nationalist orientation. Its magazine was Filastinuna (Our Palestine). The task of the moment, according to Fatah, was "the liquidation of the Zionist entity in all the occupied territory of Palestine -- in its political, economic, and military forms,"/19/ not the `unity' of the Arab world, nor any other `ideological' issue. Of course, pragmatism is itself an ideology.

In part this bifurcation reflected the fundamental problem noted earlier of the depth and extent of the domestic market. A solid domestic market is a precondition for a nation-state, and the Palestinians did not have one. The question was what to do about that. Some felt that the territory of Palestine (let alone the Occupied Territories) was not large enough to allow the people to institutionalize their autonomy within a nation-state, at least within the antagonistic social order. For these people some form of Pan-Arabism would seem necessary to achieve Palestinian self-determination, either to enlarge the salient territory or to transcend the society which moves in its antagonisms. Others believed that the territory was large enough, but that the people were not strong enough to attain autonomy on their own. For these people the liberation movement was necessarily dependent upon resources available from the current Arab regimes (including their good-will) and thus must acquiesce to the current nation-state system by remaining `above' or `outside' the politics of the Arab states, which would of course continue to pursue their social antagonisms.

These trends came to be subsumed within the framework of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) through a process that began with the Iraqi Revolution of July 1958. The Iraqi Revolutionary Command Council leader, Abdel-Karim Kassem, supported the notion of the development of an autarkic `Palestinian entity' regardless of the unity of the Arab people. Nasser convened what has come to be called the `First Arab Summit' in Cairo in early 1964, to address the threat posed by the Israeli National Water Project, which would divert Jordan River water into the Negev Desert. At the same time, and not to be outflanked by Kassem, the Summit called for organizing the Palestinians to achieve self-determination. The PLO was therefore founded in
May 1964 in East Jerusalem, with veteran Arab League diplomat Ahmed Shuquairy as its first chairman. At its founding conference, it endorsed the Palestinian National Charter. The ANM indicated it would support the PLO, if the new organization were `revolutionary.' The leadership of Fatah seems to have been initially wary of the PLO's Nasserite links, but maintained liaison with it./20/

The emergence of the PLO, and the increasing presence of Fatah, occasioned the development by the ANM of the National Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which conducted its first military operation against Israel in November 1964. The first Fatah military operation was conducted by al-Asifa (the Storm) on January 1, 1965, and was directed against the Israeli National Water Project.

Thus as tensions between the Arab countries and Israel rose during the mid-sixties, the liberation movement of the Palestinians in the diaspora reflected ambiguities which would only be resolved after the 1967 War, called al-Naksah (the Setback). What was clearly a strategic setback for the liberation movement was also an occasion for the deepening and unifying it. [24/25]

From Setback to Resistance: The June 1967 War to the Intifada

After years of careful planning, Israel attacked its Arab neighbors on June 5, 1967. As Israeli general Ezer Weisman put it, this war was "a direct continuation" of the 1948 War./21/ By nighttime, Israel had destroyed the airforces of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Without air cover, the Arab armies were left in an impossible situation. The war ended within a week, and represented a shattering defeat for the Arab states, especially for the Nasserites. Again, as a `direct continuation' of previous Zionist strategies of territorial acquisition, the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights were seized and vast numbers of Palestinians were driven from their homes.

The UN Relief and Works Agency has estimated that some four hundred thousand Palestinians were displaced as a result of the 1967 war./22/ About half of them displaced for the second time. This number amounted to about one-third of the more than 1.1 million Palestinians who had resided within the areas of Gaza and the West Bank before the war. To put it another way, about three-fourths of all Palestinians in the world had become displaced by the cumulative effects of Zionist policies during the two decades following 1948. In addition, it is worth mentioning that some one hundred thousand Syrian civilians were displaced from the Golan Heights after the June 1967 War. This constituted over 90 percent of the population of that territory, which was thereafter annexed by Israel./23/

The war had a number of results. The credibility of the Pan-Arabists within the Palestinian movement dropped drastically because of the set-back. This led to the founding of a new movement by the ANM, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), in late 1967. The PFLP took a more sophisticated view of the liberation struggle: four forces opposed to Palestinian self-determination were now identified -- the state of Israel, the world Zionist movement, world imperialism led by the United States, and Arab reaction. The other wing of the movement underwent a rapid transformation of another sort; the forces of Fatah conducted an important defense of the Karameh refugee camp in Jordan on March 22, 1968, and its ability to confront the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) in open combat led to greatly increased support within the camps. In addition, the earlier conception of the goal of the liberation movement -- the elimination of the Zionist presence from historic Palestine -- was refined in 1969 with the
complementary concept of a "democratic secular state," which would replace the chauvinist Israeli institutions.

Habash was arrested in Syria in the Spring of 1968 and was incarcerated [25/26] there until November of that year. During this time, the PFLP began to drift, until in late 1969 a faction of the PFLP under the leadership of the Jordanian Nayef Hawatmah seceded to form the [Popular] Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP); the DFLP kept control of al-Hurriyyah, and the PFLP founded another paper, al-Hadaf (the Target) as its own organ./24/ Arafat assumed the chairmanship of the PLO in 1969, and most of the Palestinian movements had entered the PLO by 1970, providing an important framework for coordination of efforts. By early 1970, the PLO had become strong enough to give birth to an elaborate system of autonomous institutions in the refugee camps. This occasioned sharp conflict, especially in Jordan, where more than half of the Jordanian population was Palestinian and the Hashemite royal family was especially wary of Palestinian political expression. There was sharp debate within the PLO about strategy; the `revolutionary' wing saw further conflict with Arab regimes, especially the Hashemites, as inevitable; the 'pragmatic' wing sought to remain above the politics of the Arab states. But conflict could not be avoided; the tensions led to "Black September" later in 1970, when King Hussein's forces attacked Palestinian positions in Jordan./25/ After negotiating a truce between Palestinians and the Hashemites in the internecine war, Gamal Abdel Nasser died suddenly on September 30, 1970. The PLO began to shift its institutions and activities from Jordan to Lebanon.

When the October 1973 War demonstrated that Israeli military invincibility was a myth, some Arab leaders began to believe they might negotiate with Israel from a position of strength rather than weakness. This energized the elements within the PLO which also sought negotiations. Lines quickly became drawn: in October 1974, the PFLP and several other liberation groups founded the Rejectionist Front in Baghdad, opposing such negotiations; later that month, the Seventh Arab Summit at Rabat recognized the PLO as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people," and on November 13, 1974, PLO Chairman Arafat delivered his famous "gun and olive branch" speech before the United Nations in New York./26/

In Beirut, the same sharp debate within the PLO recurred in 1975, now regarding PLO strategy toward the Lebanese Civil War. The `revolutionary' wing wanted to support Kamal Jumblatt and its other allies in the Lebanese National Front. The `pragmatic' wing again sought to remain outside the conflict. But again events ran ahead of the leadership. The Lebanese right-wing Phalangists besieged the Tel al-Zaatar refugee camp in early 1976. This brought in the PLO in defense of its own as well as its Lebanese [26/27] allies, and its fighters would remain embroiled in Lebanese politics until August 1982.

Meanwhile the desire of some Arab leaders to enter negotiations with Israel came to a conclusion of sorts. Menachim Begin became Israeli Prime Minister on June 21, 1977, and there was momentary doubt whether American Jewish circles would be able to support him. On October 1, 1977, after months of indecisive diplomatic wrangling, the United States and the Soviet Union issued a proposal to convene a Middle East peace conference in Geneva by that December, to include "representatives of the Palestinian people," a people who had "legitimate rights."

Begin objected to the contents of the proposal. Within a week, Zionist pressure had prevailed; the United States and Israel issued a new proposal, which deleted any reference to "legitimate
The outcome was predictable. A peace treaty was signed between Egypt and Israel on March 26, 1979. Relieved of the threat of a 'western front,' Israel applied itself even more ruthlessly to the oppression of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. When the Palestinian popular resistance intensified into early 1982, the record of abuse became so scandalous that the Begin government almost lost a Knesset vote of 'no confidence' on March 24, 1982. In an attempt to divert world attention from the mounting violence in the Occupied Territories and on the most transparent of pretexts, Begin and Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, with the complicity of U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig, ordered the invasion of Lebanon on June 6, 1982./29/

After one of the most remarkable displays of courage in face of the sophisticated IDF military juggernaut, after enduring relentless aerial bombardment for days without end, PLO fighters with their weapons in hand evacuated Beirut under UN auspices. Chairman Arafat was among the last to leave, on August 30, 1982. Two weeks later, despite United States security guarantees, thousands of Palestinian civilians were massacred by Phalangist irregulars, whose attack on the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps was coordinated by the IDF./30/

Overall, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon served to underscore the lesson of the October 1973 War. Israeli military invincibility was debunked again, this time in a 'people's war.' The I.D.F. continued to be battered by mobilized Lebanese patriots even after Israel took thousands of 'hostages;' it finally was obliged to pull its troops back to the current 'security zone' [27/28] north of the Israeli border. The heroic resistance of the Lebanese people provided a beacon for the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories in their own search for liberation. The dialectics of the process are straightforward: the Palestinian struggles in the Occupied Territories during the early 1980s led to the attack on Beirut; the Lebanese struggles against the Israelis in the mid-Eighties were reflected back into the Occupied Territories, leading to the Intifada at the end of the decade. In the meantime, the solemn United States security guarantees were proven untrustworthy by the blood of Palestinian women, children, and old men, all dead in the camps around Beirut.

During the twenty years that followed 1967, the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza sought to subjugate the Palestinians through the official violence of the military and paramilitary apparatus and through the so-called structural violence of political, economic, legal, and social institutions. Israel sought to recoup the costs of occupation by taxing its victims. The occupied people responded by deepening and maturing its nationalist movement. Finally, in December 1987, the Occupied Territories exploded in the uprising known as the Intifada (the uprising against, or the 'Overturning,' of, the Israeli occupation). It is to that important event that we must now turn.

The Intifada and the Prospects for Palestinian National Self-Determination

The protests that marked the beginning of the Intifada broke out in the Jabalia refugee camp in Gaza following an automobile collision on December 9, 1987 in which four Gazans were killed by an Israeli vehicle./31/ On that first day, the Israeli authorities shot and killed a number of Palestinians, including an infant, Fatmeh Alqidri of Gaza City. The protests spread to Nablus on
the West Bank the next day, where the Israeli authorities shot and killed more Palestinians, including eighteen-year old Ibrahim Ekeik. Protests broke out in East Jerusalem on December 13, and by the end of the first week, a general strike had paralyzed all of the Occupied Territories. This was the beginning of the Intifada.

There are certain analogies between the Intifada and the Great Palestinian Revolt, but the differences seem to be more important since the Palestinian political culture was just emerging in the 1930s while in the 1980s it had matured. Let us consider some of those crucial particularities.

Knowledge of several demographic factors is necessary for understanding the Intifada. Gaza is one of the most densely populated areas on earth. About 60 percent of the approximately 650,000 Palestinians who resided in Gaza in 1987 were under fifteen years of age. This population was expected to more than double by the year 2000. On the other hand, there are very few Zionist settlers in Gaza; yet they occupied one-third of the land and used one-third of the water. Finally, of the approximately 100,000 Palestinians in the Gaza labor force in 1987, about half worked as day laborers in Israel. The labor force today was highly proletarianized, as well as being brutally oppressed. Truly Gaza was, as Danny Rubinstein of the Israeli newspaper Ha-aretz once told me, "the Soweta of Tel Aviv."

Even though the two Occupied Territories are separated by Israel, the events of Gaza are almost instantly the news of the West Bank, and vice versa. There is no way that the two regions can be isolated from each other. Consequently, the Intifada spread instantly from Gaza to the West Bank and even inside the so-called `Green Line' (the boundaries of Israel in 1948) itself.

The Palestinian people under occupation, like their counterparts throughout the Middle East, are among the most highly educated people in the region. In light of the limited occupational opportunities available to them in the ethnically chauvinistic labor market of Israeli society, the Palestinians in Gaza as well as the West Bank might even be considered to be over-educated. Often a Palestinian worker will be more educated than his or her Israeli boss. Israeli occupation policies have been designed to ensure that a generation of young Palestinians will be less educated. The escape valve for these over-educated Palestinians, especially the young men, has traditionally been emigration to the Gulf area for jobs. With the downturn of world oil prices in the early 1980s, however, this alternative began to close off. By 1987, the emigration rate had fallen to one-third its level in the early 1980s. The result was an increasing frustration of personal, let alone the national, aspirations among the Palestinian people under occupation, especially the youth.

Several political factors must also be considered. The violence perpetrated by Israeli settlers against Palestinians had markedly escalated prior to the Intifada. Since the settlers were heavily armed, this violence can only be described as terroristic. The escalating level of violent incidents made the unarmed Palestinian people increasingly desperate. In addition, the spring 1987 PLO meeting in Algeria brought a notable unity to the ranks and orientation of the liberation movement, one with a distinctly progressive direction. This raised the morale of all Palestinians, including of course those living under Israeli military occupation. Finally, there was the fall 1987 Arab Summit held in Amman, Jordan, within sight of the West Bank. That meeting virtually ignored the plight of the Palestinian people under occupation, thereby strengthening their resolve that they must act on their own behalf.
In response to all these considerations -- the increasingly severe population pressures, the frustrations of unfulfilled lives, and the growing militance of Palestinian national consciousness - there was a rise in the number of Palestinian retaliations against Zionist settlers in the Occupied Territories. It has been estimated that there was a ten-fold increase in violent incidents during the 1980s, all before the beginning of the Intifada. It was becoming increasingly clear to the Israelis that the Occupied Territories were already -- or would very soon become -- ungovernable, even by the IDF military authorities.

Several aspects of Intifada policy should be stressed. Most generally, the Intifada represents the coming to full maturity of Palestinian political culture. The political mobilization of the Palestinian Diaspora in the 1960s was reflected back into the Occupied Territories after 1967, giving rise to the resistance which led in turn to the Israeli military debacle in Lebanon after 1982 -- all of which came together and found its dialectical expression in the Intifada.

More specifically, 'popular committees' emerged as the form of Palestinian opposition to Israeli occupation measures. For example, the FACTS Information Committee, based in East Jerusalem, was one of a network of popular committees that developed as an aspect of Palestinian resistance and nation-building efforts. FACTS began publishing in January 1988, in order to disseminate the local Palestinian understanding of the Intifada and to provide a Palestinian voice to the English-speaking world. It has published Diaries from a number of Palestinian villages, including al-Yamoun, Arroura, Idna, Kufr Rai, and Yatta, as well as from the Jenin refugee camp. These give day by day accounts of life under Israeli occupation from the viewpoint of the oppressed. FACTS has also translated and reprinted many of the Communiques of the Unified National Leadership (U.N.L.) of the Intifada, beginning with the first, issued in Gaza nine days after the beginning of the Intifada.

By July 1, 1988, the Israeli Central Command declared all these popular committees to be illegal. On August 18, Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin reiterated that they were "illegal organizations" and were the "moving force behind the uprising" and an "alternative to the military government." Rabin sought to justify the deportation of Palestinians -- in contravention to the fourth Geneva Convention of international law -- by claiming that the deportees were "committee activists."

The Intifada has also pursued policies of nation-building -- that is of establishing an independent government and independent socioeconomic structures in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In pursuit of this policy, Palestinians resigned from the local police forces and from the civil administration, and Palestinian shopkeepers attempted to set their own hours and prices. The goal of disengagement was to demark clearly the boundaries between Palestinian society and Israeli authority.

This has had several consequences for Palestinian political culture. After refusing to deal with the PLO for decades, the United States finally entered into low-level public negotiations with the PLO in Tunis in December 1988. These negotiations were terminated on a pretext by the State Department just before the outbreak of the Gulf Crisis in 1990.

Then, after much posturing during the Gulf Crisis about the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, the United States pressured its Israeli client to enter peace negotiations in late 1991, first in Madrid and then in Washington. The new relation between Palestinians of the
Diaspora and the Occupied Territories was symbolized by the diplomatic role Professor Hanan Ashrawi of Bir Zeit University (still closed by Israeli authorities) played in those negotiations. But at the same time, Islamic forces in the Occupied Territories, organized as Hamas, as well as the Rejectionist Front within the P.L.O. had the potential for drastically radicalizing the Intifada if the diplomatic effort were to stagnate.

Over the course of the twentieth century, Palestinian aspirations for national self-determination developed to the point that they came to represent a coherent and realistic strategy and tactics for attaining Palestinian objectives. In strategic terms, the shift from seeking the overthrow of Zionism, to creating a democratic secular successor to the Zionist state, to creating a state that would be geographically contiguous to the Zionist state represent stages in a maturing understanding of what the objective of self-determination entails at different historical moments. Likewise, in tactical terms the rise of armed resistance, the development of diplomatic alternatives to armed resistance, and the emergence of systematically organized and broadly based forms of civil disobedience, along with institution-building even under military occupation, represent an enhanced repertoire of responses for the Palestinian community in the face of continued oppression. It appears that the Palestinians have throughout all this retained the integrity of their community;/ hence, the likelihood of successful nation-building in the longer term -- given the end of occupation -- seems high. By contrast, their direct oppressor, Israel, seems to have failed in its nation-building efforts. The future of the Zionist project, sustained today by little more than manufactured fear in the hearts of the Israeli citizenry, is bleak. In the meantime, the short-term prospect for the Palestinians is not so bright, either. So long as their indirect oppressor, the United States, is unchecked in its hegemony, in the "New World Order," the likelihood of Palestinians exercising their internationally recognized right of national self-determination[31/32] is slim. But history is the graveyard of empires, and will continue to be. It took two hundred years for the last Crusader to be driven out of Palestine. Palestine will at last be free.

Notes
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5. The major Zionist political parties in Palestine during this period were HaPoel Hat-zair (the Young Worker Party), a predecessor to Mapai (the Labor Party), and Poale Zion (the Workers of Zion Party), founded in 1905. Poale Zion had a socialist left wing led by Nahum Nir, a nationalist right wing led by David Ben Gurion and Itzhak Ben-Zvi, and a romantic-populist tendency led by Israel Shochat. As the right wing came to he dominant, the party went on to become Achdut HaAvoda (the United Labor Party) in 1919. A left-wing faction espousing an increasingly anti-Zionist line split off at this time and began organizing among Palestinian workers and subsequently went on to become the Palestine Communist Party (PCP). See Joel Beinin, "Communism in Palestine," MERIP Reports, no. 55 (March 1977); Musa Budeiri, The Palestinian Communist Party (London: Ithaca Press, 1979).

6. As Ben Gurion’s right wing of Poale Zion became increasingly dominant, Ben-Zvi and the leader of another faction, Shochat, both former members of Jewish self-defense groups in Czarist Russia, formed vigilante gangs: Bar-Giora in 1907 and Hashomer in 1909. Under the pretext of self-defense, these armed gangs provided Jewish guards for the Zionist settlements. Most important, however, "the main object of the [gangs'] activity was the dynamic of conquest," according to Shochat, as cited in Gershon Shafir, Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 138. These vigilante bands also gave the other factions greater leverage within Poale Zion. Hashomer was finally absorbed into the Haganah (the defense force) after 1920, becoming an instrument of land appropriation up to the present day. See Neville Mandel, The Arabs and Zionism before World War I (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); Rashid Khalidi, "Palestinian Peasant Resistance to Zionism before World War I," in Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens, eds., Blaming the Victims (London: Verso, 1988), chap. 10.


11. The Zionists' proposal to the 1919 Paris Peace Conference clearly recognized that all the territory of an Eretz Yisrael was "essential for the necessary economic foundation of the country"
of Israel, and "in the interests of economical administration ... the geopolitical area ... should be as large as possible so that it may eventually contain a large and thriving population which could easily bear the burdens of modern civilized government." See Walter Rothschild et al., "Statement of the Zionist Organization Regarding Palestine" (London, February 13, 1919), now available in Ben Halpern, The Idea of the Jewish State (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 303-4. In these terms, Zionism can be characterized as reactionary: "It presents the nationality with a goal of collective action that cannot articulate with the full potential of the nationality itself." See Gordon Welty, "Progressive versus Reactive Nationalism," in Hani Faris, ed., Arab Nationalism and the Future of the Arab World (Belmont, Mass.: Association of Arab-American University Graduates, 1987), p. 121. For background on Zionist aspirations, see Georges Corm, "Thoughts on the Roots of the Arab-Israeli Conflict," Journal of Palestine Studies 21, no. 3 (Spring 1992): 71-79.


13. The British still sought to retain control of the Suez Canal, Kuwait, Cyprus, etc. See Ritchie Ovendale, Britain, the United States, and the End of the Palestine Mandate (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1989), esp. chap. 7. See also Matthew Coulter, "The Joint Anglo-American Statement on Palestine, 1943," Historian 54, no. 3 (Spring 1992): 465-76.


15. Morris, Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, p. 141.


34. Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre, *Palestinian Education: A Threat to Israel's Security?* (Belmont, Mass.: Association of Arab-American University Graduates, 1989), pp. 7-8. Some of the consequences of these policies during the Intifada are recounted in Herbert Watzman, "Long Shuttered by Israel, Palestinian Universities Face Financial Crisis and


39. *New York Times*, August 19, 1988, p. 3. All this could be taken as a foreshadowing of Rabin's deportation of more than four hundred Palestinians to southern Lebanon in mid-December 1992. That episode was condemned by UN Security Council Resolution 799. As Avi Raz pointed out in late January 1993, the Israeli government not only had made no charges against the Palestinians but could not even provide a list of those actually deported. See Avi Raz, "Who was Actually Deported?" *Maariv*, January 29, 1993, p. 7. Alexander Cockburn commented, "if not for the arrogance of his disdain for international law and for elementary human rights, there would be something comic about Israeli Premier Yitzhak Rabin's antics in the Hamas affair." See his "With Less at Stake, We Could Laugh at Rabin," *Los Angeles Times*, February 7, 1993, p. M-5.


42. See Don Peretz, "The Palestinians since the Gulf War," *Current History* 92 (January 1993): 32-36. [35//]