

History Coursework

Why Israeli opinion is so deeply divided about the current peace negotiations and what should be done about the occupied territories?

Both Arabs and Israelis have differing opinions on the occupied territories (west bank, Gaza strip, Golan Heights) and how the problems should be solved. The Israelis have three different divisions, with each division having a different opinion about the conflict, the left wing, right wing and centre groups do not agree on one solution. Some of the groups wanting peace have joined together to try and get peace but their views on other things are different. The groups do this because if an individual group does not get above 50% of the over all votes than that group cannot come to power. The different groups join together so that their chances of coming to power are significantly higher. The groups that have joined together may agree on some issues but disagree on others which could cause major problems, this is known as coalition government.

Labour is a left-wing party which believes in getting peace as soon as possible whether the violence stops or not. This party run by Mitzna got 19 seats in the latest election, this shows that there is a large percentage of Israelis wanting peace, and are prepared to vote for extreme left wing parties. The centre party Shinui run by Yosef Tommy Lapid only achieved 6 seats in the latest election; many Palestinians want a quick solution to the Palestinian problems so they vote for more extreme parties who will get a solution peacefully or with force. The right wing party Likud run by Sharon, believes in bringing down Palestinian militants and the terrorist infrastructure. This party had been losing votes in pervious Knesset but lately its seats have increased from 19 to 37. I believe that the latest Terrorist acts and the war on Iraq have a lot to do with the increase in Israelis voting for extreme political parties.

Parties like Labour are prepared to listen to both sides of the argument and come up with a solution where both sides can live together peacefully; most Israelis want peace and wouldn't mind sharing Israel with the Arabs. However reports like "*An Israeli security guard is killed in a suicide bomb attack at a railway station*" would change people opinions and views towards peace. These terrorist attacks make Israeli opinion move more right wing because their lives are at risk, their family and friend's lives are at risk and some one close to them could have been killed or injured as a result of Palestinian terrorism.

Sheikh Ahmed Yassin the leader of Hamas says the "fight will never stop", the majority of the Israeli voters will take Terrorist threats like this into account when they are voting so they may want to choose a party who will get rid of the threats effectively i.e. extremists parties. In the news recently a peace activist from Britain was shoot and killed on the Gaza strip by Israeli fire when he was helping young Palestinians, when things like this happen people want peace more and more.

Many Jews in Israel feel that the land is scared to them because the have been there for two millenniums and have no need to share it with the Arabs, it's even written in the Old Testament. They also feel that they cannot be blamed for their exile by the Romans, which saw them robbed of their homeland, but they regained it, and are faithful to their

holy land. There have been many events in history of anti-Semitism, for example Nazi Germany the Holocaust and the Romans in biblical times.

Many Israelis have realized that the Palestinian terrorists are not going to stop until they get what they want, so the voters that want to stop living their lives in fear would choose a party who would promise a solution for both sides. Although the Israelis have won the last four wars against the Arabs some feel that they would not win a fifth, the Arabs are making a lot of money from oil which may be used to buy weapons of mass destruction and used against Israelis. Some Israelis do not understand fully what is going on so they could easily believe propaganda from extremist groups such as Likud.

In 1984 the cost of defence put inflation up to a level which could not be controlled. There was a 900% increase in the protection against Palestinian armies and terrorists, many Israelis want an end to this so they either vote for revenge with Likud or peace with Labor. Every Israeli citizen lives in fear not knowing whether they will see the next day, this must be depressing and may change their votes for a party who will not do the best for Israel but get revenge for them.

The problem with the terrorists in Israel is so bad that the government has forced conscription, now people are joining the army at sixteen and staying in it or the reserves until sixty. The elderly who have lived through the conscription would want to end it for future generations. Although many people do not join the army they face imprisonment or some form of punishment for not risking their lives for their country and land, this must anger them and persuade them to get peace as soon as possible.

Many Jews are prepared to listen to the Palestinians and accept that they have a good claim to the land, they are even prepared to give half of the land to them. Israeli soldiers have been caught beating up, shooting with plastic bullets and killing Palestinians. Many feel ashamed for these actions and concentration camps such as Ansar 2. Some may even feel that they are no better than the Nazis. The extremist groups who kill and torture Palestinians help change world opinion against the Israeli regime for example the foreign secretary Robin Cook was sympathetic for the Palestinians.

It is my opinion that a peaceful solution is needed to help the Palestinians and Israelis, I feel the best way for this to be done is in front of the UN with a aim to satisfy both sides land needs. However there are a lot of points to take into account, like terrorist threats, costs and how to split the land. Many people from both sides want to share the land side by side, but are constantly changing their opinions due to terrorism, money, economy and politics i.e. family that has been killed, propaganda or business.