

Calday Grange Grammar School History Department

Arab-Israeli Coursework Exercise 2005 Entry

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1.) Why are both Arabs and Jews willing to take such extreme measures as those described in the sources to further their causes?

The Arabs and the Israeli's both are resorting to this violence because of security. Security is the underlying point. If the Arabs do not feel secure or the Israeli's do not feel secure then peace will not be able to happen. The extremists, such as the Hamas group are resorting to this violence to exact revenge. The World News article called it, "A cycle of killing." When an Arab throws a stone, the Israeli's throw a bomb and then the Arab's throw two bombs and the cycle continues.

The dispute over land is another factor stimulating the violence. Since 1967, the Israeli's have occupied Gaza, the West Bank, Golan Heights and Sinai. Since 1967, the Arabs have been trying to get the mentioned territories back. As neither the Arab's or the Israeli's want to compromise, to them violence seems to be the only option. Therefore, when they use violence, to them it seems as though it is getting them somewhere.

Refugee camps also have a direct connection with violence. The problem that comes is when a terrorist group attacks a refugee camp. This then makes people in the camp angry and they want revenge. Therefore, the refugee camp becomes a breeding ground for new terrorists that want revenge. These people then cannot really be

stopped as their mind is set on getting revenge. This escalates into a potential terrorist attack. The more people that feel like that, the more terrorist attacks and therefore the longer peace will take to come. The first article makes a very poignant point. It says, "This may not mean Hamas is suffering long term damage. Israeli attacks foments rather than weakens the competition among Palestinian youths to be a martyr before their friends." Having competition to be a suicide bomber before your friends' means that there is no stopping these people and no stopping the terrorist bombings.

A final factor that impels the Arab's and the Israeli's to go to extreme measures is that they think that they are doing the right thing. If their parents have taken part in terrorist activity, then the child would think that it is a good idea. Moreover, if anybody thinks that they are doing the right thing there is no stopping them. Events such as those detailed in the sources and others such as the bombing of refugee camps recently and September 11th go to show that terrorists do not worry about what they are doing and how many people it will affect. All they worry about is trying to further their own causes.

In brief, the Arabs and the Israeli's are willing to take such measures such as aiming missiles at Hamas militants to get what they want. The peace talks always fail so to them violence seems to be the only option to get what they want.

2) Although Egypt and Israel signed a peace treaty in 1978 and there have been further agreements such as the Oslo Accord in 1993 and more recently the Road Map, they have not led to general peace in the Middle East that was hoped for.

A.) Why did it seem possible that peace might be achieved in the early 1990's?

A range of factors are aiding peace between the Arabs and the Israelis. These factors include the impact of the Gulf War, the political party in Israel, the decline of power in the USSR, international criticism and world economics. These, all in different ways, help to achieve peace.

The Gulf War greatly increased the Americans influence in the Middle East. America became so powerful that it had the power to stop Israel from attacking the Arabs.

When Iraq invaded Israel in the hope of having a large war, America persuaded Israel not to retaliate therefore stopping war breaking out. In that case, relative peace was obtained, in that a war was stopped. This influence that America had gained meant that if further conflict should break out, it could be halted, as shown in the Gulf War.

The Gulf War is linked very closely to the Role of the USA. America was the principal superpower that could stop the Israelis attacking the Arabs. The USA was the paymaster of Israel and moderate Arab State and therefore, both the Arabs and the Israelis heavily rely on America. If either side were to get on the wrong side of America, they take the risk of having funding and support taken away. In effect, therefore, America is the main vein that peace would come through. They have the power to make both the Arabs and the Israelis do whatever they want, to a degree.

Linked to that is the political party in power in Israel. The Labour Party under Yitzhak Rabin was very important push for peace. Yitzhak's position as a national hero meant that he could persuade peace to arrive. He had the support to get peace, even if not everybody liked him. He had enough support that he could risk a few concessions to

get what he wanted. Although he was assassinated, the Labour Party have followed in his footsteps. They are still pushing for peace and as they are in power, that means that they have a certain degree of power that could count for a lot in the push for peace.

Linked to the political system is international criticism. The rest of the world is criticising the violence and therefore the Labour Party needs to push for peace and a stop to the violence if they want to stay in power. To stay popular, they have to do what the majority want. If everybody wants the problem solved, everybody needs to push for the same thing and peace seems the obvious answer. Therefore, if people criticise the violence, then they will have to turn to peace. Recently, events such as the bombing of three American cars in transit and the bombing of the Hamas group shown in the sources for question one have been criticised by the public. Another factor worthy of notice took place on the 22nd of October. Indonesia and Malaysia i.e. Far East countries have a biased opinion of America. They feel that America is biased against Muslims and Palestinians. Therefore, for America to use their influence well, they need to overcome this image. This is linked to the influence of America in that they are the ones with the power but to use it, America needs to get a good image with everybody. If they are not respected in this case by the Muslims then they cannot exploit their ability.

The decline of the USSR is also a push for peace. The decline of the USSR is linked with the rise of America in that previously each side had a different superpower to back them. The USSR, now Russia, did not have the power to match the USA and therefore they did not have the same influence as America. As America no longer has

a challenger, it means that it has even more influence. America is now the paymaster for both sides, not just one. This means that peace should be able to come easier without the USSR in the equation.

Israelis economy is severely damaged because they are spending so much money on defences and the military. This may not seem like a factor for peace but it means that they may realise the damage they are inflicting on the country. Therefore, they may slow down in their spending and make up for this by not fighting and therefore not needing money for the military. As Israel is in such a state it means that they are losing out on allot of money that could come in via tourism. The huge amounts of money that they spend on the military could be put to good use by improving running water supplies so that everybody can have fresh clean water.

2.B) Why have agreements such as the Road Map (April 2003) and the Oslo Accord (1993) failed to bring peace?

The Oslo Accord and the Road Map have had problems being implemented. A range of factors have made it impossible to implement these agreements such as the occupied territories, refugees, extremists on both sides and the role of political leaders. These, among others, are the main reasons for the failure to implement such agreements.

The problem of the occupied territories (The West Bank, Gaza, Golan Heights and Sinai) and refugees has been a problem for a long time. Since they were taken Israel

has been occupying them, but not without a struggle. The Arabs and Palestinians still want to take their land back. The United Nations resolution 242 ordered Israel to get out of the occupied territories. This became the basis for the Palestinians claim to the land, with the Jews claiming that it was the Promised Land, Zion City of God and it had the only remains of the Temple. These claims are definitive and no amount of compromise is going to get past them. Both of these agreements have incorporated some form of compromise. Therefore they are going to be impossible to be implemented. If neither side is going to compromise, neither of the agreements are going to work.

The problem of refugees is also a long-standing one and is linked to the occupied territories. Since 1948 refugees have been settling down in the occupied territories. In 1948 there were 190,000 refugees and by 1988 there were 500,000 in Gaza alone and in the West Bank the number of refugees increased from 280,000 to 800,000 in the same time period. The problem comes though when the refugees do not become citizens. Some refugees have been settling since 1948 but they still have not accepted the status of a citizen. If they had become citizens then they would have accepted the fact that the occupied territories are not theirs, showing the link between occupied territories, refugees and settlers. If they had accepted Israel as a state and then become part of it that would be accepting that they had lost. To avoid this they did not become citizens but stayed as refugees. As this contention is in place, neither the Palestinians nor the Israelis want to compromise by giving up the occupied territories. As the occupied territories, refugees and settlers are a major sticking point it is obvious that neither the Oslo Accord nor the Road Map will be accepted.

Extremists also pose a threat to any agreements. Not only do they oppose any form of compromise, but also they will go to all ends to stop anybody going against what they want. This is linked to the occupied territories also in that compromise is needed for either of the agreements but extremists are desperate to stop any compromise rendering both of the agreements useless. Extremist groups that fit into this category include Islamic Jihad, Hamas and Isbola. Not only do these extremists wreak havoc but also they come from the refugee camps. The refugee camps are breeding grounds for terrorists. When a refugee camp is bombed, the inhabitants want revenge and new terrorists are born. An example of extremist action is when the Likud political party built the wall between the Israelis and the Palestinians. This wall went even further away from agreement. It basically split up the land that was supposed to be given to the Palestinians. No agreement is going to take place without peace and the example of this wall does not make peace it just brews contentions. The wall stops some Palestinian farmers from getting to vital water supplies and to some people is too reminiscent of the wall that stopped the Jewish population from getting out of the Warsaw Ghetto in Poland during the second World War. This is hardly a good way to get peace. Other incidents include the targeted assassination of Palestinian militants and a suicide bombing that took place at a Jewish Passover on the 27th of March 2002. This resulted in the death of 29 Jews. Events like this make Israelis have an immense sense of insecurity. If Israel feels insecure then it is by no means going to be willing to give back the occupied territories. Only when they feel secure will they contemplate returning the occupied territories. Moreover, peace agreements such as the Road Map and the Oslo Accord will be impossible to implement if security is not present.

Political leaders also have something to answer for when it comes to peace. Instead of aiming for peace, parties such as the Likud are going in the opposite direction to peace. Ariel Sharon - the leader of the Likud Party - as not got any trust after Israeli invasion forces came which he led encouraged the slaughter of many Palestinian women and children in the refugee camps of sabra outside Beirut in Lebanon. Being given the nickname "The Butcher of Beirut" is hardly the right way to go about getting peace. People like Ariel Sharon that are going the wrong way to peace are making it very difficult to achieve peace and implement the Oslo Accord and the Road Map.

These factors clearly show that the Oslo Accord and the Road Map were impossible to implement mainly because of security. If Israel feels insecure then agreement will be impossible as shown by these factors.