

# CONFLICT RESOLUTIONS

*ASSUMPTIONS  
BEHIND THE APPROACH*

*J. KRISTEN URBAN*

**PASSIA**

*Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs*

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*This paper represents the free expression of its author, J. Kristen Urban, and does not necessarily reflect the judgement or opinions of PASSIA. The paper is based on the author's reading of the course of a Roundtable Discussion held at PASSIA on 15 August 1992 between her and Palestinians active in the political discourse of the Occupied Territories. J. Kristen Urban is a Ph.D. candidate in political science at the University of Tennessee, USA.*

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	5
<b>PART I. CONTINGENCY THEORY PARADIGM :</b>	
Basis for Change? .....	7
A. Explanations and Assumptions of the CT Approach .....	7
B. Contingency Theory: A Critique .....	9
C. CT and the Peace Process: A Response by Palestinians in the Occupied Territories .....	10
1. CT as Restricting Options for Resolution.	
2. "Nation" vs. Nation-State in CT Framework.	
<b>PART II. INHERENCY THEORY:</b>	
The Rationality of the Intifada .....	19
A. Explanations and Assumptions of the IH Approach .....	19
B. Application to the Intifada: A Response by Palestinians in the Occupied Territories .....	20
1. Goals/Strategies/Rationality of the Intifada.	
2. Defining Outcomes within IH Framework.	
Concluding comments .....	29
Endnotes .....	31

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

J. Kristen Urban, originally from St. Paul, Minnesota (U.S.A.), grew up in East Pakistan, India, and Europe before returning to Minnesota as a university student. She holds a B.S. (1969) in Biological Sciences from the University of Minnesota, an M.S. in Biology from the University of Alabama, and is presently completing her doctoral work in Political Science at the University of Tennessee. She has taught in the fields of general biology, comparative anatomy, and physiology and, more recently, world politics, American government, and comparative politics of the CIS. At present she serves on the Adjunct Faculty of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Publications include poetry and short stories. Works in progress include: "The Human Needs Approach of John W. Burton: A Critique" and "An Application of the Competitive Exclusion Model to the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict".

## INTRODUCTION

The Palestinian uprising, or intifada, is now in its fifth year. In spite of harsh measures of reprisal by the Israeli military government, it has proven to be more than a passing phenomenon: it has in fact become a genuine movement of resistance against the continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Unlike other such movements festering within deeply divided societies, the intifada has been characterized by its general discipline, Palestinians at all levels of society having been mobilized to comply with wide-ranging actions of civil disobedience.

In mobilizing an entire population to collective, sustained, non-violent resistance, the United Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU) has engaged in strategies which are not easily explained by many theories of social conflict. Such theories are generally grounded in an understanding which says that societies are organized around Lockean notions of "social contract". That is, in its most basic definition, that the relationship between citizens and their government is a contractual one: citizens give up certain rights to a government which is organized to protect them, while government, in return, respects those rights retained by the people, i.e., rights related to political and economic liberty.

Since most research on conflict resolution has been undertaken in the West, particularly in response to Western conflicts wherein social violence occurs within the bounds of established liberal democratic systems, the approaches developed have generally reflected these values. With the breakdown of colonialist empires following World War II and the sudden proliferation of independent nation-states, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, Western scholars rushed to examine the development of such states and their inevitable conflicts, with tools designed for a stable, democratic terrain.

This presentation will seek first to examine some of the assumptions of such an approach to conflict resolution, one which, I feel, has persistently framed the various attempts at Peace Negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. It will then pose questions which will seek to focus the discussion on problematical issues deriving from the general approach. The crucial point to be made, and one which cannot be understated, is that the assumptions which one adopts at the outset serve to frame the approach

itself, which in turn shapes -- and limits -- options for the outcome.

This paper reflects the course of a Roundtable Discussion held at PASSIA on 15 August, 1992 in East Jerusalem. Participants included Palestinians active in the political discourse of the Occupied Territories and an American engaged in research in the Middle East. Conditions of the Roundtable included a commitment on the part of the participants to address issues forthrightly, and in return, each was guaranteed anonymity: hence, no one is here identified by name.

Admittedly the present discussion/analysis could have moved in many directions; I have chosen, in the main, to reflect as best I can the shape of the Roundtable Discussion itself and the concerns raised therein. Included in the narrative are occasional references to personal interviews (also guaranteed anonymity) conducted over the past two months in the course of my doctoral research. It is my hope that this present undertaking will contribute to the continuing growth of a democratic Palestinian infrastructure, both in terms of the format of discussing controversial ideas freely, and in terms of the substantive issues which were raised. In addition, my own work lying in the area of conflict resolution, I would hope that such efforts as these will facilitate movement toward a peaceful - and a just -- resolution of this very bitter conflict.

My thanks go to Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi, President of PASSIA, for offering me the opportunity of testing my ideas in this forum and for providing me the use of PASSIA resources in so doing. In addition, I salute his persistence in pulling a panel together at all amidst a sudden spate of committee meetings both in Jerusalem and abroad, which drained away of number of participants at the last minute.

## PART I. CONTINGENCY THEORY PARADIGM : Basis for Change?

### A. Explanations and Assumptions of the CT Approach

Harry Eckstein<sup>1</sup> has characterized theories of social violence as arising from two branches of a single tree. The first branching he calls "Contingency Theory" (CT) because such explanations assume social violence to be contingent upon external triggers; most research in the area of conflict resolution has arisen from this branching. In contrast, the second branching he calls "Inherency Theory" (IH) and suggests that explanations assigned to this part of the tree assume violence to be an inherent feature of a society or a particular social setting, itself. We will consider an IH explanation later in our discussion.

The assumptions of the body of theory comprising the CT category of explanations accept that contract theory is the norm and that democratic processes to achieve political change are available and, moreover, that particular variables within society can be manipulated by means of "social engineering" techniques in order to effect change. Contracts are, after all, negotiable. Violence, in this view, is abnormal, arational, and generally affective, not coolly calculated: the "contract" has not been fulfilled, political avenues are perceived as being blocked, and violence simply erupts. Such work was the focus of Davies in 1962<sup>2</sup> when, drawing on both de Toqueville and Marx, he argued that social violence rested on "unfulfilled expectations". Gurr<sup>3</sup> and Huntington<sup>4</sup> picked up this theme and initiated a systematic exploration of political violence.

It was not unnatural for the idea of "unfulfilled expectations" to lead to attempts to delineate a hierarchy of values: **which** expectations must be met and **when** does their lack of fulfilment result in violence? The connection with Maslow<sup>5</sup>, who sought to define a hierarchy of physical and psychological requirements for human beings, is apparent, and such a connection provided a ready terrain for human needs, or needs deprivation, theorists. Davies<sup>6</sup>, in more recent work, has suggested that once basic physical needs have been met, social groups begin to form and within the social context, self-esteem or dignity needs begin to be addressed. It is



empowerment through this mechanism, technically that of the emergence of group solidarity, which allows for the enumeration of grievances and interests by disenfranchised groups, hence fostering the possibility of social violence or even, in the extreme, revolution. A slight shift in this focus is found in organizational theory where research by Gibb<sup>7</sup>, for example, observes that new sets of "prepotent needs" arise at different levels of "environmental trust". As an individual gains in skills, capacities, and awareness, such an individual perceives new "needs" to be fulfilled within the context of the group organization. Needs, in effect, begin to take on their own reality -- a reality which in the strictly political context, might ignore the (more?) cogent reality of who is holding the guns.

The question of power in CT in general and in needs theory in particular, is crucial. Social violence is a challenge to political authority. Burton<sup>8</sup> argues that traditional responses by the State have been coercive. Grounded in notions of social contract theory, governments seek first to preserve order, thereby securing their role in maintaining the contract. Burton would assert that coercive responses by Government have actually perverted the "contract". That is, to stay in power, governments have asserted their will coercively. Paradoxically, however, coercive responses do not resolve the conflict: rather they serve to provoke further outbursts of violence, which further undermines "order" and only threatens the government's position of authority even more. But states have the power to restructure their priorities, and Burton argues that if the state were to first focus on meeting the needs of its individual citizens, then its own security needs would necessarily be insured: citizens who are content do not threaten political structures. But the fulfilment of human "needs" is a competitive enterprise and resources are scarce -- this is the source of the conflict in the first place. What the theory suggests to skirt this is a redefinition of the needs hierarchy such that material needs are sublimated to more primary, psychosocial needs. Psychosocial needs such as needs of identity, security, predictability, and control do not have to reflect limited resources (so the argument goes). The orientation becomes problematical, however, because the lines between the fulfilment of psychosocial needs and the perception of fulfillment of such needs ("social control"), is thinly drawn. It could be argued that the response to the Civil Rights Movements in the 1960s in the United States, while involving genuine substantive changes in certain areas of society, reflected, in the main, an interest in addressing psychosocial needs at the perceptual level. Such an argument would point to the Los Angeles riots of May, 1992 as well as a volume of

statistics correlating health care, income level, education, and joblessness with factors of race/ethnicity within the United States as evidence of this.

Spin-offs from this approach have propelled work on conflict resolution using psychotherapeutic techniques. Kelman's work<sup>9</sup> with problem-solving workshops to address the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, focuses on altering individual perceptions -- in effect addressing identity needs -- by bringing adversaries together to problem-solve in a structured setting; and Doob<sup>10</sup> has employed similar workshops to address conflict similarly characterized by deep ethnic/religious divisions such as those between Sudanese and Ethiopians, Turkish and Greek Cypriots, and Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland.

### **B. Contingency Theory: A Critique**

The present contention is that the approaches offered by the various branchings of CT find justification in studies of social violence wherein the assumptions of liberal democratic theory hold. In particular, concerning those societies in which there is a genuine popular assumption affirming the existence of a social contract and in which constituencies are valued as part of the political process. Such assumptions affirm the possibility of dialogue via the political process and assume venue to the process through elected representatives, interest groups, governmental agencies, the legal process, and so forth.

A further assumption with this approach when it comes to developing **outcomes** within the problem-solving process is that a violated contract can simply be "re-negotiated". That is, if something is broken, it can be fixed. This involves a particular "mindset", one which seeks to control society through practices of "social engineering" and which advocates the manipulations of variables to achieve minimal, incrementalist change. Such change is designed only to bring a halt to the violence -- to restore "order" -- and not necessarily to examine the social/political structure itself, because the structure (the liberal democratic process) is recognized as being intact (a "given").

The application of CT explanations in the case of "intractable conflicts" -- conflicts arising within deeply-divided societies, such as those occurring in Sri Lanka, Northern Ireland, Sudan, Yugoslavia, Somalia, Cyprus, Azerbaijan, and between Palestinians and Israelis -- is largely inappropriate because the assumptions of social contract government cannot be met. In these conflicts the political system has been structurally organized to disenfranchise particular groups on the basis of ethnic/cultural/religious identity. While the actual outbreak of violence may be accounted for with respect to aspects of "unfulfilled expectations" of CT, this remains a problematical approach. Thompson's research<sup>11</sup>, for example, which addressed the problem of violence in Northern Ireland in a time series study extending between 1922 and 1985, found no links between violence and economic indicators in Northern Ireland: outbreaks of violence in this setting could not be predicted on the basis of fulfilment of needs at any particular material level, and yet identity needs are fostered by religious definition/affiliation within the society. What Catholics in Northern Ireland lack is a political identity and political access to change conditions structurally.

### C. CT and the Peace Process: A Response by Palestinians in the Occupied Territories

Perhaps the most significant understanding behind Contingency Theory is that over the years, a game has evolved by which social conflicts can be addressed. That this game has not always been open to everyone is attested to by the enduring nature of conflict in a number of societies characterized by deep ethnic/cultural/religious divisions. Owing to a number of external events such as the Gulf War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Palestinians have finally been admitted to the negotiating table as players in a Peace Process formulated to address certain issues of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. While this is welcomed by many as a long-awaited opportunity, it is an opening not without certain hazards, especially considering the stakes. This was the substance of the roundtable discussion at PASSIA, which included Palestinians of both professional and activist persuasions, and which examined through the process of dialogue, the role of Palestinians in this international diplomatic setting and the tenuous

relationship between the requirements of the process itself and the requirements of Palestinians in the "streets".

In a sense, the concept of "self-determination", when subjected to the rigours of the bargaining process, gains precision in meaning. Considered somewhat abstractly within the context of the United Nations Charter, it embodies the idea of a people having the freedom to choose the course of their national direction -- to establish laws, elect a leadership, to accept accountability for making decisions as a national body in the development of a social, economic, and political agenda. In the Peace Process, such abstractions must be **applied**. Palestinians are called upon to accept a reality which is not yet, legally, in force. While this suggests enormous opportunities for Palestinians towards the actualization of their national aspirations, of the nature of the diplomatic game itself creates special categories of concerns for a "people" acting in the role of a "nation-state".

To a large extent, self-determination here means proving one's game-worthiness. A process exists and, win-or-lose, one must play according to the rules: to walk away from the table identifies the non-player who is thence excluded from the game altogether. The questions posed to the group for discussion were intended to provoke the exploration of this dilemma:

1. In what ways does this orientation -- one which assumes the existence of democratic values -- restrict options for resolving this conflict? Put another way, to what extent do the particularist, incrementalist, legalistic notions of contract bargaining themselves shape the possible outcomes?
2. In a world of nation-states, organized around the assumptions of contract theory, how does a people claiming a "national identity" restructure or refocus the agenda? Specifically, how can the Palestinians shift the agenda of the negotiations to address substantive structural inequalities when the process itself is committed to the values of contractual bargaining?

## 1. Palestinians as Game-Players

Acknowledging the process itself has largely been a pragmatic act on the part of Palestinians. The following comment was one of the first of the evening:

*"We used to speak of the American vehicle: it is not only Washington driving the bus, now, everyone is on this bus."*

Participation is the minimal requirement, however, following the "rules" means becoming aware of, and using, the "right language". Questions revolving around the issue of **sovereignty**, for instance, have had to be sacrificed for more narrowly construed (particularist) definitions of the issues. Specifics is the language of contracts and to use broad, abstract terms such as "sovereignty" marks one as being contentious rather than serious and, in effect, a non-player.

Besides a concern with the message in the present process, there is acknowledgement that, perhaps for the first time, there has been a concern for the **messenger** as well:

*"Look at Hanan Ashrawi! The moment they saw this messenger, they began to listen to the message!"*

The reality of "packaging" within the context of contract-negotiation has been separated from the decision to stand wholly on principles or demands. This, in itself, reflects a willingness to compromise, to engage in the dialogue of give-and-take, and to submit to a process which makes the promise of developing win-win outcomes.

If Palestinians are going to capitalize on the possibility of achieving win-win outcomes, however, they must learn to recognize opportunities and, in recognizing them, to be willing to take advantage of such openings. This requires a creative response to the "rules of the game", active searching for new openings, and a willingness to step into them. In the new world of communications technology, knowledge has become power, and the parties which subtly challenge the limits of the game become involved in shaping the definitions of "knowledge" within the negotiation process. It may still be an American bus, to extend the earlier metaphor,

but the route itself can be redrawn -- however slightly -- to take in new terrain. Whether or not this results in major substantive gains is perhaps even less important than the minor shifts in the appearance of power which accrue through such initiative. Initiative -- but not arrogance -- is valued in a game which expects the individual to press his/her own claims.

## 2. Palestinians as Diplomats

A second level of concerns about participation in the Peace Process reflects the understanding that with the Gulf War and the demise of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, Palestinians must stand on their own and represent themselves as though they were national delegates. In this, they must give genuine meaning to the concept of "self-determination" in the absence of legal affirmation of the term for them. Given the lack of such affirmation and the inexperience of Palestinians in the area of statesmanship historically, numerous criticisms of the Palestinian delegates to the Peace Process have surfaced:

*"They are nominated: not elected, but selected. Further, they lack experience in diplomacy and they lack the skills necessary, for instance to pull together packages to present for consideration by the other delegations."*

*"They are not trusted -- they do not understand how to use information."*

*"There is no feedback or communication with the masses."*

*"Some see their role as the representative of specific regional interests: a village or a tribal spokesperson."*

*"You must remember that for some in this delegation, this represents a process of recognition for their years of suffering under the occupation and, in a sense, for the years of suffering of their people. This is the first real experience of freedom."*

The fact is, however, as was quickly raised in the discussion, that Palestinian delegates do not have a state, as do the other delegates. The consequences of this are several. First, their roles are largely undefined.

As representatives of a **national movement** rather than of an official national structure, they are each having to define for themselves their relationship to other delegates, to the rules of the process, to the international order itself. Without the trappings of government and genuine linkages -- diplomatic ties, trade agreements, treaty commitments, allies -- as "statesmen" they are essentially rudderless. Secondly, this lack of role definition only breeds confusion as to their job descriptions. What are their duties? Are they to act as spokespeople (for what constitutional authority, what set of national values?)? Are they to act as leaders (of which constituencies?)? Are they colleagues of the leaders (of factions, of regions?)? Are they representatives (are they, then, autonomous, divided in their purpose?)? For other delegates, who themselves are part of existing diplomatic structures, these are not continual concerns. For Palestinian delegates, this lack of institutionalization extracts talent, energy, and valuable time from each, and serves to distract them from cogent tasks within the Peace Process itself. Thirdly, in the absence of either a history or a structure in the realm of diplomacy, Palestinian delegates are without essential support. There is no "foreign office" or "state department" with backlogs of files, no ongoing research. They perhaps lack skills in discourse, in "knowing the ropes", in developing proposal packages and, importantly, they have no elected government in whose voice they speak -- and who is therefore accountable for policy formulation. Hence, they are individually targeted when there is disagreement, misunderstanding, or simply lack of communication.

### 3. Palestinians as a People

A third level of concern with reference to Palestinians and the democratic process of resolving conflicts, and one to which the discussion returned several times was: Can we get our own house together? Consider the following observations:

*"The Israelis use the term 'autonomy' because it provokes the street. We must counter the argument and accept this painful process of understanding.."*

*"The leaders cannot afford to ignore the street."*

*"Violence occurs because there is no process here."*

*"The 'Interim Agreement' will focus on questions for 1/3 of the Palestinian people, those within the Occupied Territories, while the other 2/3 are still left on the edge of their seats. . . There is danger that this could lead to two agendas for the Palestinian leadership: one for outside and the other for inside. We must try to bring these together."*

*"Look at how Arafat is compelled to answer both sides of the equation. 'Yes, Yes, Yes' to the delegates -- even though none of the conditions has been met; and 'No, No, No' to the street -- 'We will not negotiate unless our terms are met.' This is a sign of our weakness."*

*"There is division within our own house."*

*"Israel is trying to implement the tactics which are being implemented in South Africa to discredit the Palestinians and to demonstrate to the world that they are not capable of managing their own affairs."*

*"This should be our first concern! Let the delegates run the Peace Process and get what they can for us. We, here, must really work against Israeli divisive tactics to shore up our own house."*

John Locke's first step in the formation of the theoretical "social contract" revolved around the decision of a group of individual human beings to come together and to organize themselves as a society. If we pause here a moment before the second step -- the step in which those individuals agree to forego certain of their "natural rights" to formulate a contract with government, we find that we are standing approximately where the Palestinians stand today. The concerns expressed within the Roundtable Discussion genuinely reflect the transition of a people engaged in the process of defining what democracy will mean in the context of their national identity. The process of conflict resolution, as exemplified by the CT paradigm, is grounded in liberal democratic theory. Cynicism might suggest that, until there is a social contract -- i.e., until there is a Palestinian state governed in accordance with Palestinian laws, and under the jurisdiction of elected Palestinian officials -- the various loci of power



are justified in jockeying for position. This is not the process outlined in Locke's rational argument, however. This first step suggests that a people has come together in a mutual understanding that they wish to set aside certain differences. These are individuals, after all, having various interests, goals, and approaches to managing their lives, and different sets of values by which they prioritize their choices. The people come together and agree to combine their life-efforts to build something better than they could achieve alone or factionalized as groups.

For Palestinians, Occupation has severely disrupted lives of individuals and families, and by extension, the entire social fabric.

*"We are [now] a nation without values: everything has been fragmented in the intifada and there is nothing new to set in place of what we have lost."*

What is reality in this setting? Whose definition of reality will be accepted? This greatly impacts the definition of values to be employed in the process of decision-making at all levels, and adds greater burden to the process of negotiations presently underway. Additionally, one could ask what meaning does the notion of "society" carry given the enormity of this loss?

*"Will we be left only with illusions of what our reality is?"*

Answers will not surface overnight, but the necessity of speaking with one voice is recognized as being critical. Palestinians do not want to be kidnapped either by Israel's rhetoric or by its actions in the Occupied Territories. Further, with reference to the weight of the problems faced by the delegates themselves, whatever gains are possible at the conference table will be compromised if each of these individuals, lacking "authority" in the traditional, diplomatic sense, has to face personal accountability because of divisiveness on the home front.

#### **4. Palestinians as Global Actors**

The CT paradigm assumes that there are openings in the political process. While this may not be true for Palestinians vis-a-vis Israel and the

Civil Administration of the Occupied Territories, it has become true within the context of the international dialogue on the question of Palestine and Palestinian national rights.

*"In my opinion, Sadaam Hussein did the Palestinians one and only one favour: he greatly widened the debate in the United States."*

*"The Delegation has been a very effective player in the political minuet now. . . . [Everyone is asking] Hanan Ashrawi! Who is this woman? I want to meet this lady! She looks like a Jewish mother!"*

*"I have seen the parameters of political discourse widen enormously, especially within the American intellectual community, where wars are literally breaking out within intellectual circles in the United States."*

*"Are these new ideas going to be institutionalized?"*

*"These are policy intellectuals. . . . Whatever the results of the election, ideas have consequences and this new debate will have policy impact."*

*"Palestinian intellectuals are the silent minority -- they are not institutionalized, nor do they have real power. We know what we want, but we have neither the tools nor the access to bring them into action. We do not know how to project ourselves to the world."*

*"But Hanan Ashrawi is doing this for us!"*

While the Gulf War and the dissolution of the Soviet bloc has widened the acceptable limits of this debate, the fact remains that Palestinians must capitalize upon the openings. A primary point raised in this portion of the discussion suggested that Palestinians must use this inertia to "unlink" from Israel. By this it was meant that Palestinians must seek to define themselves for the rest of the world and especially, perhaps, the West, apart from the "Palestinian-Israeli conflict": that they deliberately seek to develop an international identity separate from the fact of their status as victims of Israel. To this end, the West must be made aware of Palestinian

culture in its broadest dimensions, of Palestinian goals, Palestinian ideas, the Palestinian world view; how Palestinians envision their future, their understandings of "constitutionalism", their concept of the nation-state.

*"Not only for the past five years, but for the past 40 years, Palestinians have been working independently for their own future."*

*"True, but you must have public policy proposals penetrate into the Western/American discourse. I'm talking about projection, not necessarily about research: you are doing the research very well!"*

*"Perhaps we should distinguish between principles and values: we must address U.S. values head-on [and not let the myths stand in the way]!"*

*"One thing we must do: we should go to the churches and bring the right image of Islam before Western, Christian people. They must see us as believers, too."*

## PART II.

# INHERENCY THEORY: The Rationality of the Intifada

### A. Explanations and Assumptions of the IH Approach

Eckstein's second branch of theory, which he calls Inherency Theory (IH) or the collective action approach, presents us with an alternative which offers promise with regard to analyzing the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, particularly in its more recent phase, the intifada. Charles Tilly's work<sup>12</sup> on mobilization and revolution represents the most well-articulated theory in this area, one which is grounded in utilitarian notions of rational determination of self-interest. In defining social violence, he distinguishes between the collective actions themselves and the outcomes which arise from them since, frequently, such actions may in fact be non-violent, but their outcomes may indeed produce "direct damage to persons and objects," which is his operational definition of "violence".

In an environment characterized by coercion or oppression, one in which a group or, in the case of the Palestinians, a people, is wholly excluded from the polity, violence could be said to be an inherent feature of the environment. In such a climate, tensions between government and the people could result in what he calls a "revolutionary situation", or the case in which a situation of multiple sovereignty has come to exist. The definitions for this include:

1. The appearance of a core group which advances alternative claims for the larger group;
2. The acceptance of such claims by the larger group, particularly when needs increasingly are unmet by the regime;
3. The inability of the authorities, for whatever reasons (solidarity of the group, for instance), to block the actions of the group (even) by extreme repression.

The actualization of social violence in this revolutionary situation, rather than being spontaneous and wholly affective, is characterized by **rationality** -- by the careful calculations of costs and benefits related to the actions -- by **discipline**, and by **persistence**.

## B. Application to the Intifada: A Response by Palestinians in the Occupied Territories

Within this context, the following questions were raised in an attempt to focus the Roundtable Discussion upon the relevance of the IH explanation, and the degree to which an acceptance of such an explanation would play a role in altering the process of the negotiations, particularly in terms of outcomes.

1. To what extent can the intifada be characterized as a "rational" process of resistance/rebellion? That is,
  - a) In what ways have the economies of cost/benefit been part of the calculations in determining policies of action? and
  - b) In what ways has the process of leadership itself (e.g., decision-making, mobilization) evidenced "rationality"?
2. If in fact, this argument could be made -- i.e., that the intifada has/had a clear set of goals, an agenda, a process to its development -- in what ways should this change the orientation of the process of resolution, itself? Alternatively stated, if the intifada represents not merely a situation to be "managed" or "fixed" but something arising from a process rooted in goals and an agenda, does this, in fact, suggest alternative outcomes: new options, which should be considered in the negotiations?

While the present discussion included diverse viewpoints as to the extent of "rationality" visible within the opening days of the intifada, and the degree to which this was organized as a process to effect change, all would agree that, in an environment devoid of political process, the intifada represented a rational commitment to bring about change.

*"The main cause of the intifada is because the old people did not deliver the goods."*

*"If you read the intifada not as a war against Israel, but as a mutiny of the old values, you will be closer to the truth."*

When asked, recently in personal interviews, whether they felt there had been gains from the Intifada, Palestinians in the Occupied Territories frequently identified both the Peace Process and the development of a Palestinian infrastructure as positive outcomes of their national struggle,

even though the larger overall goal, the evolution of an independent Palestinian state, still remained elusive. Admittedly, the Peace Process was not only an outcome of the intifada, but came also in the wake of the Gulf War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The development of a Palestinian infrastructure, however -- as an outcome of the intifada -- does reflect the rationality of the resistance movement in its goal of disabling the Occupation. But the attempts at developing such an infrastructure were not unique to the intifada; rather, they built on a history of resistance, which had grown with the Palestinian national movement, itself.

## **1. Development of an Infrastructure**

The appearance of a "core group", to use Eckstein's terms, which represented alternative leadership (the PLO) in the mid-1960s predated the intifada by more than two decades. Such leadership, while external to the territories occupied in 1967, did support -- or at least did not radically oppose -- the development of a certain level of infrastructure as early as the 1970s, particularly in the areas of trades unions and charitable organizations, in order to ease life under Occupation and to effect a certain level of resistance.

*"I would like to go back to the late 1970s when . . . the idea began waning of the possibility of an armed struggle, and a shift in the minds of the people [occurred] about how to face the Israelis, about the necessity of involving the grassroots, themselves."*

It was during this time that steps towards democratization began, in an effort to address the problems of women and youth as well as workers, in the daily struggle to face life under threat of arrest, imprisonment, house demolition, land confiscation, curfews, and so forth. This involved the development of new institutions under political leadership. Indeed, "All factions agreed that they had to deal with the situation that way."

Such attempts were perceived as threats by the Israeli government, which feared mass public movements perhaps more than overt commitment of Palestinians to "armed resistance", which at least lent credibility to Israeli policies of force. In 1985, the Rabin government sought to shut down such movements, and very effectively:

*"All these attempts to establish a cornerstone were crushed by the Iron Fist policy of the Israeli government: there was nothing here when the intifada began -- that is why it has taken us five years!"*

A renewed attempt at grassroots mobilization -- a successful attempt -- was made during the year of 1985-March, 1986, when Abu Jihad was headquartered in Amman. With the support of the PLO, ample resources, and a highly centralized office of his own, Abu Jihad was responsible for establishing committees in the Occupied Territories which "related to every aspect of Palestinian life -- economic, political, and social." Having been driven from Lebanon, the PLO began at this time to look seriously at organizing Palestinians within the Territories, themselves. This effort from Amman was cut short when Jordan, threatened by the developing Palestinian infrastructure in Jordan, closed 25 PLO offices in their capital city in March, 1986.

*"Are you saying that Abu Jihad was the Father of the intifada?!?"*

*"I'm saying that he had jurisdiction over the factions (the Western Front), and that he had the resources available for these projects . . . Through this means [high centralization], he effectively established the grassroots linkages and, thereby, mobilized them. All kinds of unions were established; there were budgets, plans . . ."*

*"To say that Abu Jihad prepared the groundwork for the intifada is to give him too much merit. . . . One year in Jordan doesn't build such leadership."*

Regardless of the extent of infrastructure on the ground on the day of 8 December, 1987, the history of such infrastructure was already well-established at the time and, in fact, was being documented by Hiltermann<sup>13</sup>. The very fact of such networks provided the rational context by which the initial momentum of the intifada could be harnessed. Organizations had lists of members with phone numbers ready and at their disposal. There are some who have argued, in private interviews, that the intifada was only waiting for a date: that various organizations had been documenting the actions of the "streets" for some time and were preparing themselves for coordinated leadership when "it" happened at the right time.

Nor was the rationality of such organization lost on the "outside" leadership. Mobilization of the grassroots "inside" and the development of this extensive infrastructure -- particularly during 1985-1986 -- was understood as representing a new calculation of power:

*"Just look at the new formulation of power, once the intifada was underway! It came with a different proportionality: before, 51% went to Fatah and the rest was split amongst the factions. The UNLU was a recognition of power-sharing: one vote for each faction. The organized leadership of the Occupied Territories had to be recognized."*

Perhaps the singular point, in terms of the Inherency Theory approach here, is to raise the question as to whether Tilly's "core group" underwent a shift with the outset of the intifada:

*"If you read the intifada not as a war against Israel, but as a mutiny against the old values, you will be closer to the truth."*

Did the intifada actually catch the "leadership" by surprise? This is the claim of more than one Palestinian voice in personal interviews. The streets organized the intifada and the UNLU, representing factional interests inside the Territories -- and for the first one and one-half years of the intifada, effectively the new "core group" -- sought to shape and co-ordinate such actions.

*"The main cause of the intifada is because the old people did not deliver the goods."*

Some would argue that this was conscious on the part of the "old" leadership, the leadership "outside", and that indeed, the concerns of this leadership were focused on nationalist goals, while the needs of people living directly under the occupation were largely ignored. It was for this reason that efforts at organization beginning in the 1970s were successful: people needed to support each other in order to survive -- and to challenge - the occupation itself.

A view not wholly incompatible with this suggested that discontent with the status quo within the Occupied Territories had even deeper origins:



*"Due to the 1948 War, this entire segment [ages 25-55] . . . left the country altogether. Who replaced them [as leaders]? The older generation. But they were ill-equipped and ill-trained to run a nation. These people wanted prestige for their roles as leaders, rather than to work at one role and accomplish something. "*

For twenty years of Occupation a new generation has grown up which is familiar with the history of occupation -- the Ottomans, the British Mandate, Jordanian rule -- and they are not afraid of the Israelis. Indeed one-third of them have spent time inside Israeli prisons:

*"They have had access to western ideas -- and to Israeli society as well. They have also understood that, even though well-educated, appointments and jobs are still based on who you know, rather than on merit. They are fed up with this, and they are tired of being told that things will be better. Indeed, it is because the older generation was so easily manipulated that the intifada is now losing its effectiveness!"*

This frustration, coupled with a sense of isolation, of having been abandoned not only by the "old" leadership, but by the other Arab states and by the world in general, constellated an incredibly well-organized movement of resistance for the first one and a half years of its inception.

Where is this rationality today? It is precisely the question of leadership which plagues the Palestinian movement in the realization of a national state. Jarbawi<sup>14</sup> identifies three major groups of political elites within the Occupied Territories: the national forces (themselves further divided into the categories of organizational leaders, public figures and independents), the pro-Jordanian personalities, and the Islamic forces. In addition, there are factional splits and, with the intifada, have been added divisions between "inside" and "outside". Indeed, many see the failure of the intifada after the first year and a half as resulting not from the severity of Israeli policies of reprisal (which did serve to disable inter-organizational communications, to decapitate the grassroots leadership and to make the organization of public demonstrations exceedingly difficult) but, rather, from the moves by the leadership "outside" to usurp the authority of the leadership "inside" and by requirements that all "calls to action" be "cleared" before being implemented. In an environment where rationally conceived and ordered "calls" had been initiated with a certain spontaneity

by those sustaining the risks of front line action, plays for power have been demoralizing. In addition, the intifada itself changed the lives of Palestinians structurally:

*"We are [now] a nation without values: everything has been fragmented in the intifada and there is nothing new: we did not replace old values with new ones! As evidence, we see a continual tearing down, not a building up -- a mutiny against the negotiating team, for example, but with nothing to offer in its place."*

## 2. Emergence of the Peace Process

The use of the IH paradigm is somewhat dangerous. One participant observed that Rabin could easily employ such a framework within the context of Orientalist assertions, to argue that violence is an inherent feature of the Palestinian (or Arab?) response to frustration -- hence, one could never trust them (Palestinians) with anything so sophisticated as self-government. The point is well-taken. The appeal to cultural arguments as support of the validity of this approach was not the intent of the initial inquiry here. Rather, it was to examine the social setting of the Palestinians: the Occupation regime has created a social/political environment in the Occupied Territories which rests on sustaining violence as an inherent feature of the social environment. Indeed, Tilly's tripartite definition of a "revolutionary situation" would seem to apply precisely to definitions of the intifada.

Has the "rationality" of the intifada, then, moved the discourse into the arena of Contingency Theory -- "Are these two theories fungible?" as was asked at the outset of this Roundtable Discussion. That is, have the gains of the intifada, along with the demise of the Soviet Union and the Gulf War, led to openings which can now be capitalized upon within the framework of the "democratic process"?

*"The Peace Process -- but what has changed? It has taken us 25 years to come back to the beginning!"*

*"Now, 25 years later we have the same Labour Party. But the world has changed!"*

*"Have our choices changed? The "Interim Agreement" will focus on questions for one-third of the Palestinian people -- those within the OT. But the other two-thirds are still left on the edge of their seats in uncertainty. The danger is that this could lead to two agendas for the Palestinians leadership: one for outside and the other for inside. We must try to bring these two together. There are five fingers to this hand of "peace" and then when you take into account the "ins" and "outs", and the momentum, and the expectations -- this leads to enormous confusion of goals!"*

This confusion does not lie only with the Palestinians. The Middle East itself, because of its geographic centring at the crossroads between East and West, and certainly in the past half century because of its oil reserves, has frequently been defined in terms of Western interests. With the emergence of the New World Order, America is now seeking to define -- or re-define -- its role vis-a-vis the larger world. American intellectuals are scrambling to assess whether the new American foreign policy will be an American economic/military imperialism or whether it will focus on defining ideas and values. This has repercussions for the rest of the global order and for the Middle East in particular, and not all possibilities are viewed positively:

*"Here in the Middle East, we talk about the "Post Cold War Era", not the New World Order, which is presently organized against us."*

Such an orientation, that of defining the present in terms of the Post Cold War Era, assumes that America will be focused on its own domestic agenda: economics, health care, AIDS, racism, the environment, and so forth, and will therein give the Middle East some breathing space. Middle Eastern states will thus have an opportunity to pursue relationships with members of the European Community, on their own, with China, with India, and to take advantage of the fact that each individual state will have its own agenda.

*"Our focus should be on developing these -- but we are too much involved in our daily struggle."*

This is the dilemma not only for the negotiating team, but for the leadership compelled to walk a fine line between the demands of the West -- of the "process" -- and the demands of the street, the paradox being that

there is no process "at home" by which to contain and shape such demands. Palestinians are, nevertheless forced to act as though there were such a process when they face the negotiating table.

*"How much time can we give the Peace Process to work -- when must something tangible appear 'on the ground'?"*

*"If we look at the track record, what we have achieved is really important -- but they also have made achievements."*

The "vehicle" may belong to the United States, and Palestinians may be able to exploit the process to some gain, but too often "processes" are meant to distract, to delay, to disempower. Palestinians are well aware of their weak position, and of the fact that lacking genuine political recourse, violence may ultimately be seen on the streets as the only "rational" response to a global system which is structured to exclude them, substantively, from the Discourse. In such a calculation of costs and benefits, the costs may not weigh heavily in the balance.

*"I think the intifada is trying to change its skin."*

The youth have grown up without fear, under Occupation and, besides this, they have observed the disparity between the life available for Palestinians and that available for Israelis. This is a recipe for truly explosive violence. As one discussant observed:

*"Our youth have seen the Israeli society and have watched it develop, and they know that the Israelis have clay feet, too."*

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The real dilemma for Palestinians may not lie with the actions of the West at all, but within the structure of the Palestinian socio-political environment itself. One of the assumptions of the Lockean conception of liberal democracy is that avenues exist not only for political recourse, but to foster the expression of self-interest. There is, presently, little room for legitimate self-interest in Palestinian society, all individual concerns and interests having been sacrificed to the national struggle. While the concepts "self-determination" and "autonomy" have taken on specific political meanings in the Palestinian-Israeli context, meanings which are centred in the notion of a "Palestinian people", these words also carry particular meanings at the level of the individual.

"Autonomy", or the capacity to govern oneself, at the level of the individual connotes a number of specific understandings, each of which Feinberg<sup>15</sup> discusses at some length. Among these are self-identity or individuality; authenticity, or the degree to which an individual is able to subject his/her choices to an internal process of ongoing critical decision-making (i.e., are my choices really my choices?); and self-determination or the ability/opportunity of the individual to continually develop, to engage in a process of "self-creating" as he/she subjects new experiences and ideas to processes of critical (and rational) choice in constantly re-defining the "Self". These are in turn linked with other concepts such as self-legislation, moral independence, self control, and responsibility for Self, all of which, along with other nuances to our understanding of "autonomy", serve to define the human being as a self in harmony with both its inner and outer natures.

Obviously, under Occupation and rule by the Israeli Civil Administration, there are limits to definitions of autonomy and self-determination which one can bring to the level of the individual Palestinian. It is axiomatic that autonomy demands freedom. It is also true, however, that within the context of the Palestinian political scene, such freedom is also abridged in the more noble enterprise of the "national struggle". The Roundtable Discussion returned repeatedly to the concerns of "our house", to the necessity of "speaking with one voice", to the fears of allowing Israel to play on -- and profit by -- the divisions within Palestinian society.

A book called Steps, by Jerzy Kosinski details with chilling effectiveness a society in Eastern Europe in which self-interest has been utterly sublimated to political interests of the state. With no legitimate outlet for the development of "autonomy" or "self-determination" at the level of the individual, the shape of the characters he details in this short novel is one of grotesque distortion of what we would call "humanity". Kosinski's society is littered with individuals who seek only the survival of the self, such survival being facilitated by the manipulation, control, and destruction of others.

I would advance the argument here -- at least for the sake of discourse - - that the divisiveness within the Palestinian political setting is in some measure a reflection of the lack of openings for legitimate self-interest within Palestinian society. Individuals, lacking the possibility of individual autonomy -- of pursuing self-interest and self-discovery -- seek to define themselves through groups, through factions, through ideologies. The competition is a bitter and a destructive one because it is, at its heart a fight for self-identity, for self-expression, for the survival of the Self. Granted, there are external factors which also limit this: these cannot be denied. However, democracy -- and the concern to adopt democratic processes and institutions is very much in evidence within the Palestinian community -- requires much more than blueprints laid out in constitutional form. Democracy is an approach, a "mindset", the assumptions of which will determine the outcome.

The national struggle and the necessity of Palestinian solidarity must not exclude the needs/interests of individual Palestinians. It cannot naively be assumed that these will be addressed when Palestine comes into being. If Palestinians are to adopt the political tools of the West, they must also be willing to adopt the intellectual understandings -- and the assumptions -- behind those tools. Without such understandings, the framework itself, will ultimately collapse.

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