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## **Violence against civilians in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict**

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# Violence against civilians in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

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## Chapter 1 – Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction of the topic

Abdo-Zubi & Masalha (2018, pp. 143, 146-147) write about the following event in the year 1948.

*“ Umm Nidal remembers it vividly. The Friday’s Market at the city of al-Dawaymeh was a place where people from all surrounding cities gathered to buy and sell their goods. It was a place to socialize and build friendships. The market allowed al-Dawaymeh to develop into a lively city, and Umm Nidal believes that this was the reason why the Jews conquered it. During the Friday’s Market of 29 October 1948, Israeli forces killed 203 Palestinian civilians with gunfire and bombings. Umm Nidal was not present at the event, but saw the dead bodies in the streets. She was 9 years old when it happened. Now, 70 years later, she is still in contact with the only woman who survived the massacre, by hiding under a haystack with her two kids. ”*

Umm Nidal is a Palestinian woman whose community fell victim to an upsurge in Israeli violence. This particular upsurge in Israeli violence was the 1948 War, which was itself part of the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Jewish and Palestinian peoples claim one and the same piece of land in the Middle East (Caplan, 2009, p. 85). This thesis aims to investigate which explanations lie behind the eruptions of violence by the Israeli administration against Palestinian civilians.

### 1.2 Research question

Over time, levels of violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have varied. The story of Umm Nidal is an upsurge in Israeli violence against Palestinian civilians. Are there plausible explanations for these eruptions of violence? Looking into these plausible explanations can help us understand why the Israeli government increased violence against Palestinian civilians at certain points in history. Therefore, the research question of this thesis is:

“ What explains the eruptions of violence over time by Israel against Palestinian civilians in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? ”

There are three theories that academic scholars mostly use to explain the eruptions of Israeli violence against Palestinian civilians:

1. Eruptions of Israeli violence are caused by the *ideological* viewpoints of the Israeli government. This theory suggests that the ideas of the Israeli government with respect to *religion* and *nationalism* explain government policy towards Palestinian civilians (Jensehaugen et al., 2012; Mitchell, 2015).
2. Eruptions of Israeli violence are caused by the *electoral* considerations of the government using the violence. This theory suggests that the Israeli government uses or abstains from violence against Palestinian civilians depending on voter opinion (Yakter & Tessler, 2022; Arian, 1995; Shamir & Rahat, 2022; Shamir & Shiqāqī, 2010).
3. Eruptions of Israeli violence are caused by varying degrees of support from the government of the United States for the policies of the Israeli government. This theory suggests that increasing levels of U.S. military, financial and legal support empower the Israeli government to commit more violence against Palestinian civilians (Freedman, 2012; Druks, 2001; Alteras, 1993; Heller, 2016).

Although many academic studies explain the eruptions of violence using one of these three theories, there is no academic study that compares all three theories for their validity. So, the question of which theory best explains the eruptions of violence is never answered. This thesis aims to fill this knowledge gap by comparing the validity of all three theories for three case periods in Israel's history. This should refine academic understanding of the factors that contributed most to the eruptions of Israeli violence against Palestinian civilians over time.

### **1.3 Structure of the thesis**

This thesis analyzes the three aforementioned theories that could explain the eruptions of violence committed by Israel against Palestinian civilians. These theories are critically discussed in the Literature review in Chapter 2.

Next, Chapter 3 is devoted to various definitions used in this thesis. Chapter 4 is devoted to research methods. Chapter 5 lists the observable implications mechanisms and consequences of the three theories. Chapter 6 provides a critical explanation of the cases selected for analysis.

The analysis itself is divided over several chapters, each investigating a case of an eruption of violence in Israeli history. Each chapter is structured in five subsections: the first section considers the historical events related to Israeli violence against Palestinian civilians. The second section investigates the ideological stances and violent actions of the Israeli government against Palestinian civilians for each case. The third section focuses on the influence of public opinion on government behavior during an Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The fourth section analyzes the relationship between the level of U.S. support for the Israeli government and the eruptions of violence in each case. The final section summarizes which theory best explains the eruptions of violence in each case.

The thesis ends with a Conclusion, which provides a final answer to the research question based on the analysis. The Discussion provides recommendations for further research.

## **Chapter 2 – Literature review**

In this paragraph we critically evaluate the research literature on the three theories mentioned in the first chapter: *ideology*, *electoral considerations* and *U.S. support* regarding the eruptions of violence by the Israeli administration.

When investigating the role of *ideology* in Israeli politics, Rosenbaum (2019, pp. 119, 124) suggests that Zionism is a central theme. Zionism is an ideology which claims that Israel is the homeland of the Jewish people. Zionist ideology can have *religious* and *nationalist* grounds.

First, the Jewish claim to the holy land has *religious* underpinnings, as it says in the Torah (2004, Genesis 15:18): Yahweh gave the whole land of Canaan as an everlasting possession to Abraham and his descendants. Caplan (2009, p. 85) writes that the Jewish people see themselves as the descendants of Abraham's son Isaac

and therefore are the heirs of Canaan. The Muslims, on the other hand, consider themselves descendants of Ibrahim's (Abraham's) other son named Ishmael. Thus, both Jews and Muslims put a claim on the promised land of Canaan.

Moreover, Inbari (2007, p. 31) writes that for religious Zionists, holy Jewish sites like the Temple Mount are of vital importance. According to religious Zionists, such holy sites should not be under Muslim control, but should only be accessible for Jews. Religious Zionists argue they are entitled to conquer land from the Palestinians because it is their holy heritage.

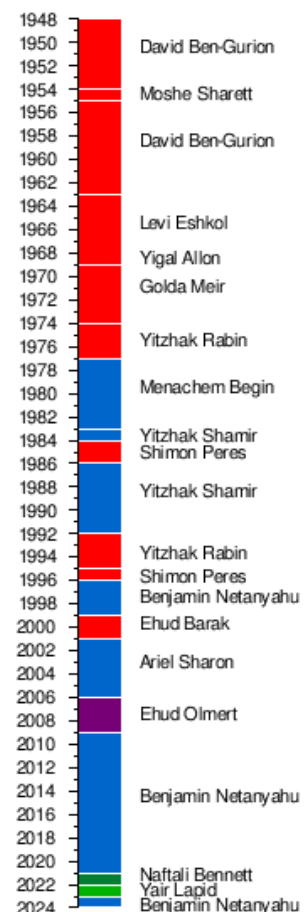
Second, Novak (2015, pp. 48-50) writes that for secular right-wing Zionists, building a strong Jewish national state is the highest priority. Secular right-wing Zionists argue that they are entitled to conquer land from the Palestinians and base their claims on Jewish *nationalist* grounds.

Rudnitzky (2022, pp. 857, 866) writes that throughout its entire history, Israel was governed by parties that identified as Zionist. Therefore, Zionism cannot be considered as a serious variable explaining the eruptions of violence against Palestinian civilians. However, there still are important ideological differences between the parties that have governed Israel. The most radical Zionists are the right-wing Zionists. They are more radical in their *religious* and *nationalist* claims to the holy land than left-wing Zionists. Therefore, they are expected to justify more violence against Palestinian civilians to reach their Zionist aspirations. In the timeline on the right, right-wing Zionist parties like Likud are in blue. Left-wing Zionist parties like the Labor Party are in red.

Following Sternhell & Maisel (2011, pp. 343-344), the 'ideology of the government' theory predicts that left-wing governments are generally more tolerant.

Left-wing governments are therefore expected to use less eruptive violence against Palestinian civilians. Ideologically, the left-wing is less radical in its Zionism, and it is socialist.

So, the 'ideological stances of the government' theory predicts that eruptions of violence against Palestinian civilians are caused by the ideology of the Israeli



government. The theory predicts that violence against Palestinian civilians increases most often under right-wing Zionist governments. This is because right-wing Zionist governments are expected to be more ideologically radical and thus more eager to use violence than left-wing Zionist governments.

Secondly, we critically overview the literature concerning the relation between the *electoral considerations* of the ruling parties and eruptions of violence against Palestinian civilians. The 'electoral considerations' theory suggests that it does not matter whether there is a left-wing Zionist or right-wing Zionist party in power, because any party in power would use violence against Palestinian civilians in accordance with the demands of the electorate, whether that's committing or refraining from violence.

Nanes (2017) argues that security is an important issue to Israeli voters, given the fact that pro-Palestinian terrorist attacks occur frequently. When the government launches an offensive operation on the Palestinians, most Israeli civilians are quite aware of it, due to extensive news coverage. Therefore, safety measures and violence against Palestinian civilians have a large impact on voting results and political parties might want to align their policies according to the will of the electorate.

It is possible that a ruling party's desire to remain in power leads to an increase in violence toward Palestinian civilians. When a government perceives that it is at risk of losing reelection, the government may try to establish a military victory to regain popular electorate support. In this scenario, the government in power willingly commits violence against Palestinian civilians in order to provoke a Palestinian reaction. This could lead to warfare, instilling a common fear in the Israeli electorate and diverging attention to an external threat. This would provide a short-term increase of support for the Israeli government in power to defeat this external threat. Then, the incumbent Israeli government can prove to the electorate that it is competent at handling crisis situations and can ensure reelection according to diversionary war theory (Nanes, 2017).

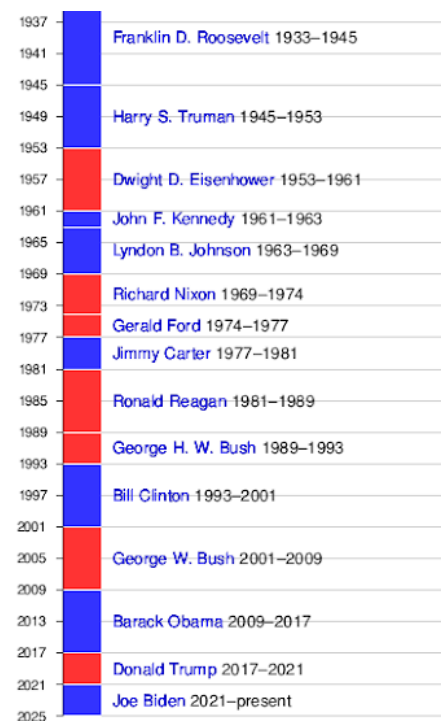
On the other hand, Yakter & Tessler (2022) write that a government's use of violence can lead to fear among the population and criticism of the incumbent government. This would substantially lower reelection chances for the incumbent government. In that case, the incumbent government may want to avoid confrontation with the Palestinians.



Following Tovy (2014, p. 16), electoral reasons also include saving a government coalition to which a political party belongs. A certain political party may have different stances regarding the use of violence against Palestinian civilians than a fellow coalition partner. To satisfy this coalition partner and save the government coalition, the political party might change its stance regarding the use of violence to make it more in line with the stance of the coalition partner. In this case, *electoral* reasons influence the amount of violence that the Israeli government uses against Palestinian civilians.

It is true that the Israeli population elects the Israeli government, but this does not necessarily mean that the Israeli government's ideology and the will of the Israeli electorate are identical at any given moment. It is possible, for example, that the Israeli population elects a right-wing government, but that during the tenure of the right-wing government, the population changes its opinion regarding violence against Palestinian civilians. In this case, the Israeli government might not reflect Israeli public opinion (Arian, 1995, pp. 275-277). Furthermore, a political party might alter its ideological stances to satisfy a coalition partner, so much so that the party does not reflect the will of the electorate either.

Thirdly, we critically discuss the literature on the relation between variations in *U.S. support* for Israel and eruptions of violence against Palestinian civilians. U.S. support for Israel can vary for several reasons. As Benson (1997, pp. x, 7-8, 91, 166, 175-176) writes, some U.S. presidents might hold a more favorable view of Israel than others, whether due to personal convictions, political and trade interests, or to counteract competing powers over influence in the region. Also, the stances of American citizens regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict might influence U.S. government behavior, as the U.S. government should want to attract voters as well. U.S. presidents can express their views in speeches, White House statements, or in dialogues with American or Israeli government officials.



Sharp (2023, p. 1) writes that no country has received more aid from the United States than Israel since the Second World War. In its entire history, Israel has received \$158 billion worth of U.S. economic and military assistance. This generous U.S. support might influence the behavior of the Israeli government, and therefore the amount of violence it commits against Palestinian civilians. For example, the Israeli government might align its policies regarding Palestinian civilians with the wishes of the U.S. government to secure financial aid.

Chomsky (1999, pp. 10-11) points out that the Israeli government can spend the money it receives from the U.S. on improving Israeli security, displacing Palestinian civilians or building Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories, for example. The United States can decide to attach strings to financial aid. In case Israel spends the money in a way that displeases the U.S., the U.S. can choose to halt the money flow. However, if the U.S. continues the money flow when Israel abuses financial aid, this can encourage the Israeli government to continue policies that harm Palestinian civilians.

Akbarzadeh (2023, p. 40) writes that the United States can use its economic leverage to pressure Israel not to commit violence against Palestinian civilians. The U.S. could accomplish this by imposing economic sanctions or threatening to impose them to deter Israel from using violence. Israel may not want to compromise its economy, because this may come at a higher cost than any benefits the use of violence against Palestinian civilians could yield. Morgan et al. (2023, p. 3) write that common examples of economic sanctions are the limitation of foreign aid and trade. The authors also list freezing assets, restricting travel and denying specified persons or groups access to financial institutions as economic sanctions.

Tal (2013, pp. 25-26) writes that especially in the early years of Israel's existence, economic sanctions had far-reaching consequences for Israel's economy, even threatening its very existence as a state. Economic sanctions were therefore a very effective deterrence strategy.

Besides financial support, Fischbach & Williams-Taylor (2023, pp. 110-111) write that the U.S. can enable Israel to use violence against Palestinian civilians by providing military support. Firstly, the U.S. can send military manpower to help the Israeli military in using violence against Palestinian civilians. Especially when American soldiers are specialized in ways that Israeli soldiers are not, this enables Israel to commit more violence against Palestinian civilians. Secondly, the U.S. can

support Israel by sending weaponry like tanks and military aircraft which the Israeli military can use to commit violence against Palestinian civilians.

Klein (2018, pp. 59) writes that as a member of the UN Security Council, the United States can veto UN resolutions. The United States can use this ability to veto resolutions that condemn Israel's violence against Palestinian civilians, enabling Israel to continue violence. Furthermore, the United States has voting power in the UN General Assembly. Jensehaugen et al. (2012, pp. 293-294) write in addition that as an influential UN member, the United States can pressure other UN members to vote in favor of Israel on UN resolutions.

The United States' approach towards peace negotiations can matter for this research's results as well. Anziska (2018, p. 171) writes that when the U.S. decides not to recognize representatives of the Palestinian civilians like the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), this can diminish representation of Palestinian interests during the peace process. This can produce an unfavorable negotiation position for the Palestinians, forcing them to make more compromises than the Israeli government. This might inhibit the culmination of peace dialogues altogether and prolong violence by Israel against Palestinian civilians. Vice versa, if the United States recognizes the PLO or other Palestinian representatives, this can promote peace negotiations and ultimately limit violence against Palestinian civilians.

### **Chapter 3 – Definitions**

Terms like 'Palestinian', 'civilian', and 'violence' are part of the research question of this thesis, but can be used in different connotations. Therefore, it is important to define their meaning for this thesis.

First, the Palestinians are a people who have lived in the area called the British Mandate of Palestine before the foundation of Israel in 1948. Currently, the Palestinians live within the borders of Israel as a minority or in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, or they have fled to neighboring countries like Lebanon and Syria (Bronner & Thompson, 2005, p. 221).

The conflict analyzed in this thesis is sometimes referred to as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and sometimes as the Israeli-Arab conflict. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict means the conflict between Jews and Palestinians over one and the same territory: Israel/Palestine. The Israeli-Arab conflict is the conflict

between Israel and the neighboring Arab countries (Harris, 2019, p. xvi). When fighting the other Arab countries, Israel may commit violence against Palestinian civilians as well. Therefore, events in the Israeli-Arab conflict can be relevant for this thesis.

This thesis defines a 'civilian' as anyone who is not part of the armed forces or an organized armed group. Civilians are not fighters and do not pose a continuous threat to the enemy. Therefore, civilians have the right to protection against military attacks according to article 51 of the First Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions (Bissonnette, 2016, pp. 130, 132, 144).

If this thesis uses the term 'Palestinians', it signifies Palestinian society as a whole, including Palestinian politicians, civilians, and fighters. Whenever the thesis refers to Palestinian fighters, it will specify to what specific armed group these fighters belong to.

Researching violence, it is important to define the concept of violence in order to detect it. Violence can present itself in various forms:

- *Military violence*. This includes the killing, wounding, imprisoning and displacing of Palestinian civilians and the devastation and conquest of Palestinian villages (Manna, 2022, pp. 32-33).
- *Occupation*. This includes the conquest of Palestinian land and the building of Israeli settlements in Palestinian territories. This is usually paired with military violence (Harms & Ferry, 2012, p. 173).
- *Limitation of civil and political rights*, where Palestinian civilians have less legal protection than Israeli civilians (Gordon, 2008, pp. 198, 201-202).
- *Suppression*. This includes suppressing local Palestinian leadership, targeting the Palestinian economy and closing down public Palestinian institutions and newspapers (Shafir, 2017, pp. 41-42).

This thesis uses a broad definition of violence as not to exclude any Israeli policies that harm Palestinian civilians, as this would produce incomplete research results.

## Chapter 4 – Methodology

The thesis uses process tracing to analyze the *ideology, electoral influence* and *U.S. support* with respect to the Israeli government's eruptions of violence against Palestinian civilians. Process tracing is used to detect how each of the three plausible theories have produced the eruptions of violence. It specifically focuses on the causal mechanisms *in between* the three plausible theories and the eruptions of violence. This process tracing method is applied during the analysis of all the cases selected: the 1948 War, the First Intifada (1987-1993) and the Second Intifada (2000-2005). In addition, the thesis uses comparative methods to select cases and investigate the validity of the three theories regarding all selected cases (Beach & Pedersen, 2019, p. 1).

Moreover, we acquired the results of questionnaires during the First Intifada (1987-1993) with respect to the electoral preferences of the Israeli population. The questionnaires include questions about Israeli government policy options like:

- “Are you in favor of increasing the rights of Arab civilians?”
- “Are you in favor of the creation of a Palestinian state?”
- “Are you in favor of encouraging Arab civilians to leave Israel?” (Arian, 1995, pp. 275, 277).

The questionnaires contain percentages and can therefore be considered as statistical evidence. Respondents to the questionnaires could choose between multiple policy options for each question. By doing so, they could express agreement or disagreement with certain Israeli government policy options, and under what conditions. This shows which policy option the majority of the Israeli electorate favors. Then, comparative methods are used to investigate whether government parties align their policies regarding Palestinian civilians with the wishes of the Israeli electorate as expressed in the questionnaires. By comparative we mean that the statistical results are tested with respect to consistency with Israeli government policies during the First Intifada. If consistent, electoral reasons can explain the eruptions of violence against Palestinian civilians. If not, it is more likely that the ideology of the Israeli government explains the eruptions of violence (Arian, 1995).

The questionnaires cover a period of five to ten years. This enables us to compare public opinion in consecutive years and detect shifts in opinion regarding Israeli government policy options. Subsequently, we can use comparative methods to detect similar shifts in Israeli government policy (Arian, 1995). However, not all factors reflecting the electoral preferences of the population are discussed in the questionnaires. The Israeli government can be influenced by electorate variables not available in the questionnaires.

Another research method, used in the analysis of the Second Intifada, is analyzing quantitative table figures reflecting U.S. financial support in dollars to the Israeli government. We study the temporal development of these aid figures in order to assess whether the U.S. approved or disapproved of Israeli violence policy. Then, we compare these figures with the Israeli eruptions of violence against Palestinian civilians. If they correspond, variations in U.S. military and financial aid can explain the eruptions in violence.

In all cases selected, literature study is conducted as a more general research method.

## **Chapter 5 – Observable implications**

In case the 'ideological stances of the government' theory explains the eruptions in Israeli violence against Palestinian civilians, we should see implications of this in the real world. We should see that: 1) violence against Palestinian civilians increases when right-wing Zionist governments are in power, and 2) that right-wing governments use more violence because of *nationalist* Zionist or *religious* Zionist reasons. We should also see that violence against Palestinian civilians does not increase when left-wing Zionist governments are in power, and that left-wing governments use less violence because they are less radical in their *nationalist* Zionist or *religious* Zionist beliefs. Of course, some violent events are instigated by Palestinians, but in these cases the Israeli government's response matters. Do right-wing governments respond harsher to Palestinian violence than left-wing governments?

Israeli party officials can express their ideological stances in party programs, speeches, and dialogues with other government officials and world leaders. Political parties can differ in stances such as: Is a one-state or a two-state solution more

favorable? Where should borders be? Should Israeli civilians settle in Palestinian territories? And what should the position of Palestinian civilians be in the Israeli state? The 'ideological stances of the government' theory predicts that right-wing governments are more in favor of a one-state solution, conquering Palestinian land, building Israeli settlements in Palestinian territories, and discriminating against Palestinian civilians than left-wing governments, so this is what we should see in the real world.

Observable implications ↓	Mechanisms	Consequences for the theory
<b>Increase in violence</b>	This theory predicts that the Israeli government uses violence against Palestinian civilians out of ideological stances and not out of electoral considerations or because of the influence of foreign countries. As right-wing Zionist parties are the most radical Zionists, this theory predicts that right-wing parties commit the most violence against Palestinian civilians.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If violence against Palestinian civilians increases when a right-wing Zionist party governs Israel, this <b>supports</b> the theory.</li> <li>- If violence against Palestinian civilians decreases when a right-wing Zionist party governs Israel, this <b>falsifies</b> the theory.</li> <li>- If violence against Palestinian civilians decreases when a left-wing Zionist party governs Israel, this <b>supports</b> the theory.</li> <li>- If violence against Palestinian civilians increases when a left-wing Zionist party governs Israel, this <b>falsifies</b> the theory.</li> </ul>
<b>Government ideology</b>	This theory predicts that <i>nationalist</i> Zionist and <i>religious</i> Zionist beliefs are the reason why right-wing governments use more violence than left-wing governments. Right-wing governments should be more eager to accomplish their Zionist aims and justify violence against Palestinian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If eruptions of violence by right-wing governments are inspired by <i>nationalist</i> Zionist and <i>religious</i> Zionist beliefs, this <b>supports</b> the theory.</li> <li>- If eruptions of violence by right-wing governments are inspired by other factors, this <b>supports</b> the theory.</li> <li>- If ideological reasons inspire left-wing governments to moderate violence, this <b>supports</b> the theory.</li> <li>- If ideological reasons inspire</li> </ul>

	civilians.	left-wing governments to increase violence, this <b>falsifies</b> the theory.
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In case electoral considerations explain the eruptions of Israeli violence against Palestinian civilians, we should see implications of this in the real world. Observable implications are 1) the government accommodating the Israeli population's desire to use violence against Palestinian civilians, 2) the government accommodating the Israeli population's desire to limit violence, and 3) a government party accommodating to the stances of a coalition partner regarding the use of violence against Palestinian civilians.

A clear observable indication is that if the majority of the Israeli electorate desires that the government increases violence against Palestinian civilians, the Israeli government will do so. In case the Israeli electorate opposes violence against Palestinian civilians, the Israeli government should limit violence. To investigate this observable implication, the opinions of the population should be examined at a given time, and next should be examined whether the government aligned its policies with popular opinion. Government parties will try to appease public opinion to increase reelection chances, regardless of ideological stances. Therefore, the 'electoral considerations' theory is not always consistent with the 'ideological stances of the government' theory.

Electoral reasons also include making concessions in order to preserve the government coalition to which a party belongs. For this observable implication, coalition negotiations need to be researched. If a certain party alters its stance on the use of violence against Palestinian civilians during these negotiations in an attempt to satisfy a coalition partner, this counts as an electoral consideration to use or limit violence (Tovy, 2014, p. 16).

<b>Observable implications ↓</b>	<b>Mechanisms</b>	<b>Consequences for the theory</b>
<b>The government accommodates</b>	This theory predicts that Israeli government parties will appease	- If the Israeli population desires the use of



<p><b>the Israeli population's desire to use violence against Palestinian civilians</b></p>	<p>public opinion to remain in power. Through voting, protesting, and filling in questionnaires, the Israeli population can pressure the government to use violence against Palestinian civilians. The theory predicts that governments, whether left-wing or right-wing, succumb to popular pressure, regardless of their ideological beliefs.</p>	<p>violence against Palestinian civilians and the Israeli government uses violence, this <b>supports</b> the theory.</p> <p>- If the Israeli population desires the use of violence against Palestinian civilians, but the Israeli government abstains from violence, this <b>falsifies</b> the theory.</p>
<p><b>The government accommodates the Israeli population's desire for a limitation of violence</b></p>	<p>This theory predicts that Israeli government parties will appease public opinion to remain in power. If the Israeli population desires a limitation of violence, the Israeli government will do so regardless of ideological beliefs. Through voting, protesting, and filling in questionnaires, the Israeli people can express their opinions on government policy regarding violence against Palestinian civilians. The theory predicts that even right-wing parties, which are normally more ideologically radical and more eager to use violence than left-wing parties, want to appease public opinion and limit violence.</p>	<p>- If the Israeli population desires a limitation of violence and the Israeli government decreases violence, this <b>supports</b> the theory.</p> <p>- If the Israeli population desires a limitation of violence but the Israeli government does not limit violence, this <b>falsifies</b> the theory.</p>
<p><b>A government</b></p>	<p>When two or more parties form a</p>	<p>- If one Israeli</p>

<p><b>party accommodates the stances of a coalition partner regarding the use of violence against Palestinian civilians</b></p>	<p>government, they have to agree to a common government policy despite ideological differences.</p> <p>One government party can pressure another government party to change its stance regarding the use of violence against Palestinian civilians, as a prerequisite to form or save a government coalition.</p> <p>The other government party may succumb to the pressure of its coalition partner to secure a place in the government or save the government coalition.</p>	<p>government party alters its stance on the use of violence against Palestinian civilians in order to accommodate the wishes of a coalition partner, this <b>supports</b> the theory.</p> <p>- If a government party is unwilling to change its position on the use of violence against Palestinian civilians and risks a government collapse, this <b>falsifies</b> the theory.</p>
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In case the variations in U.S. support explain the variations in Israeli violence against Palestinian civilians, we should see that when U.S. support for Israel increases, Israeli violence against Palestinian civilians increases. If U.S. support decreases, or if the U.S. becomes hostile toward Israel, Israeli violence against Palestinian civilians should decrease. Observable implications are 1) variations in U.S. financial aid, 2) variations in U.S. military aid, 3) the U.S. influencing legal decisions, 4) the U.S. pressuring for peace negotiations and acknowledging Palestinian interests, and 5) the U.S. imposing economic sanctions on Israel.

Variations in U.S. support for the Israeli government can be observed through variations in financial aid that the U.S. sends to the Israeli government in billions of U.S. dollars. When U.S. financial aid increases, Israeli violence against Palestinian civilians should increase according to this theory. When financial aid decreases, Israeli violence should also decrease. Furthermore, it is also important to investigate whether the United States attaches any strings to financial aid, and whether these are enacted in case Israel commits violence against Palestinian civilians. If not, this

can further encourage the Israeli government to use violence (Chomsky, 1999, pp, 10-11).

Another observable implication is the variation in U.S. military support that Israel receives, and whether there are strings attached to it. The provision by the United States of military personnel and military equipment can give Israel the means to use violence against Palestinian civilians (Fischbach & Williams-Taylor, 2023, pp. 110-111). By limiting military support, the U.S. can limit the means available to the Israeli government to carry out violence against Palestinian civilians.

Besides funding, the U.S. government can support Israel by influencing legal decisions of international organizations in Israel's favor. As a member of the UN Security Council, the United States can veto UN resolutions. The U.S. can also vote in the UN General Assembly. It is helpful to look at whether the U.S. vote on UN resolutions enables or discourages Israel to use violence against Palestinian civilians (Klein, 2018, pp. 59).

U.S. involvement with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can also lead to a limitation of violence. In this case, we should see that the U.S. government steers toward peace negotiations, encourages Israel and Palestine to make concessions to the other, and acknowledges representatives of the Palestinians, such as the PLO (Anziska, 2018, p. 171). If neglect of Palestinian interests by the U.S. inhibits the culmination of peace dialogues, this indicates that the U.S. enables Israel to prolong violence against Palestinian civilians.

Another observable implication lies in the economic dimension. The U.S. can discourage Israel from using violence against Palestinian civilians by imposing economic sanctions, or threatening to impose them. If the Israeli government abstains from violence after American (threats of) economic sanctions, a decrease in U.S. support for Israeli government policy can explain a decrease in violence against Palestinian civilians (Akbarzadeh, 2023, p. 40).

<b>Observable implications ↓</b>	<b>Mechanisms</b>	<b>Consequences for the theory</b>

<p><b>Variations in U.S. financial aid</b></p>	<p>When U.S. financial support for Israel increases, the Israeli government should use more violence against Palestinian civilians. The Israeli government can use U.S. financial aid for projects that harm Palestinian civilians, such as the building of Jewish settlements in Palestinian territories. When the U.S. decreases financial aid or attaches and enacts strings to financial aid, this should discourage Israel to use violence against Palestinian civilians.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If the U.S. increases financial aid for Israel and Israel increases violence against Palestinian civilians, this <b>supports</b> the theory.</li> <li>- If the U.S. increases financial aid for Israel and Israel decreases violence against Palestinian civilians, this <b>falsifies</b> the theory.</li> <li>- If the U.S. decreases financial aid for Israel and Israel decreases violence against Palestinian civilians, this <b>supports</b> the theory.</li> <li>- If the U.S. decreases financial aid for Israel and Israel increases violence against Palestinian civilians, this <b>falsifies</b> the theory.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Variations in U.S. military aid</b></p>	<p>When U.S. military support for Israel increases, this theory predicts that the Israeli government uses more violence against Palestinian civilians. The Israeli government can use the U.S. military equipment directly to commit violence against Palestinian civilians. When the U.S. decreases military aid or attaches and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If the U.S. increases military aid for Israel and Israel increases violence against Palestinian civilians, this <b>supports</b> the theory.</li> <li>- If the U.S. increases military aid for Israel and Israel decreases violence against Palestinian civilians, this <b>falsifies</b> the theory.</li> <li>- If the U.S. decreases military aid for Israel and Israel</li> </ul>

	enacts strings to military aid, this should discourage Israel to use violence against Palestinian civilians.	decreases violence against Palestinian civilians, this <b>supports</b> the theory. - If the U.S. decreases military aid for Israel and Israel increases violence against Palestinian civilians, this <b>falsifies</b> the theory.
<b>The U.S. influences legal decisions</b>	The U.S. can vote in the UN General Assembly and veto decisions in the Security Council. The U.S. can use this voting power to support resolutions that enable Israeli violence against Palestinian civilians, or oppose resolutions that condemn Israeli violence. The U.S. can also pressure other UN members to vote in favor of Israel on UN resolutions.	- If the U.S. uses its voting powers to enable Israel to use violence against Palestinian civilians, this <b>supports</b> the theory. - If the U.S. uses its voting powers to condemn Israeli violence but Israeli violence does not decrease, this <b>falsifies</b> the theory.
<b>The U.S. pressures for peace negotiations</b>	The U.S. can encourage the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships to engage in peace negotiations and can acknowledge Palestinian interests. This would mean that the U.S. does not support Israeli violence against Palestinian civilians. This decrease in U.S. support for Israeli	- If the U.S. pressures for peace negotiations and Israel decreases violence against Palestinian civilians, this <b>supports</b> the theory. - If the U.S. pressures for peace negotiations but Israel does not decrease violence against Palestinian civilians, this <b>falsifies</b> the theory.

	government policy should lead to a decrease of violence, as the U.S. pressures for peace.	
<b>The U.S. imposing economic sanctions on Israel</b>	The U.S. can discourage Israel from using violence against Palestinian civilians by imposing economic sanctions, or threatening to impose them. This would mean a decrease in U.S. support for Israel. American (threats of) economic sanctions would mean a decrease in U.S. support for Israel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If the U.S. imposes or threatens to impose economic sanctions and Israel decreases violence against Palestinian civilians, this <b>supports</b> the theory.</li> <li>- If the U.S. imposes or threatens to impose economic sanctions but Israel does not decrease violence against Palestinian civilians, this <b>falsifies</b> the theory.</li> </ul>

## Chapter 6 – Case selection

The first selected case is the 1948 War, which was an eruption of violence. The war started after the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution recommending the partition of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state. This resolution was met with Arab protests, to which the Israeli army reacted violently. The war received much international attention (Karsh, 2009, introduction).

The second selected case is the First Intifada, which was also an eruption of violence. The Intifada was a Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation and started in 1987. Israel responded with military violence, beating up Palestinian demonstrators. Furthermore, the Intifada reawakened American interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Peters & Newman, 2013, pp. 56, 58, 62).

The third selected case is the Second Intifada, which was also an eruption of violence. The Second Intifada was a Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation

and started in 2000, after disillusionment with the 1993 Oslo peace process. Israel responded with military violence and reoccupied Palestinian territories. Furthermore, the United States was involved in (the resolving of) the conflict (Peters & Newman, 2013, pp. 56, 63-64, 66-67).

The three selected cases were all eruptions of violence. All three started with Palestinian protests, to which Israel responded with violence against Palestinian civilians. These similarities enable us to compare the three cases and research the motives behind Israeli violence. Furthermore, there was U.S. involvement in all three cases, enabling us to investigate whether U.S. involvement led to more or less violence against Palestinian civilians.

## Chapter 7 – The 1948 War

### 7.1 Violence against Palestinian civilians in the 1948 War

The history of the 1948 War starts on 18 February 1947, when Great Britain announced to abandon the Mandate for Palestine. Great Britain's rule over Palestine had started in 1923 and would officially end on 15 May 1948. The British government was indecisive about the future of Palestine, so it passed the issue to the United Nations (Jensehaugen et al., 2012, pp. 280, 295).

The UN established a Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) to decide over Palestine's fate. The Committee was composed of representatives from eleven countries and chaired by Swedish judge Emil Sandström. The Committee consulted both Jewish and Arab representatives, who could present their arguments. However, the Arab League spoke on behalf of the Palestinians, so the interests of the Palestinian population were muffled (Strawson, 2010, pp. 78, 80, 107).

This resulted in the UN Partition Plan for Palestine, also known as Resolution 181(II), as shown on the right. In 1947, Jews formed around 33% of the population and owned only 5.6% of the land. Yet, the Partition Plan assigned 57% of the entire territory to the Jewish state. To make matters worse, this 57% included the most economically developed regions, depriving the Palestinians of most of their fertile ground. The capital of Jerusalem was to be divided into a Jewish and a Palestinian half, and would be administered by the United Nations Trusteeship Council.

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The Jewish leadership accepted Resolution 181(II), but the Palestinian leadership rejected it (Imseis, 2021, pp. 13-14).

Immediately after the UN General Assembly had adopted the Resolution on 29 November 1947, violent incidents between Israeli and Palestinian civilians broke out. The incidents developed into a military conflict when Arab forces cut off Jewish settlements. Israeli pre-state militias then launched Plan Dalet, an offensive operation aimed at freeing the besieged settlements. However, the plan also included conquering and destroying Palestinian villages near the borders of the proposed Jewish state, and expelling resistant Palestinian civilians. This urged many Palestinian civilians to flee (Fischbach & Williams-Taylor, 2023, pp. 106, 108).

Manna (2022, pp. 32-33, 40-41) writes that the Israeli militias did this with the aim to clear the land of the Palestinian population, so that Jewish settlers could acquire more land. This tactic proved successful, as soon enough, the Israeli forces had conquered Jaffa, Tel Aviv and other important coastal cities. On 14 May 1948, one day before the British Mandate would end, Jewish leader David Ben-Gurion founded the Jewish state of Israel. This new Jewish state was assured of Western support, whereas Palestinian society became increasingly fragmented and defenseless. Therefore, it was reliant for its protection on other Arab states, which entered the conflict from May 1948 onwards.

On 15 May 1948, Egyptian, Syrian, Transjordanian and Lebanese armies launched a joint invasion of Israel. They argued warfare was justified to counteract Jewish imperialism. The invasion was initially successful, as the Arab forces managed to conquer the West Bank and East Jerusalem. However, the Egyptian, Syrian, and Jordanian governments all had expansionist dreams and hoped to put Palestine under their control. The fact that the Arab forces were in competition with one another inhibited successful cooperation. Furthermore, the Arab armies lacked the necessary training, equipment and combat experience (Strawson, 2010, pp. 127-128).

Even though the combined Arab forces outnumbered the Israeli militias, the Israeli forces were more successful as the war progressed. When the war ended in 1949, the Israeli army had expelled the inhabitants of 400 Palestinian villages. 700,000 Palestinian civilians fled to neighboring Arab countries, which was half of the Palestinian population. Israel now occupied 75% of the land. However, Transjordan had managed to annex the West Bank (Norman, 2010, p. 21).



Furthermore, half of the population of Jerusalem, both Jewish and Arab, had fled the city. This was the result of a lack of access to schooling and work places, a heavy decrease in economic activity, and artillery fire. Due to the Israeli victory, 20,000 Jewish refugees could return and take over former Palestinian homes in West Jerusalem (Golan, 2015, pp. 815-816).

In January 1949, Israel started negotiating separate armistice agreements with Egypt, Lebanon, Transjordan and Syria. The American Ralph Bunche acted as a UN mediator. Conditions of the different armistice agreements included Israeli withdrawal from Lebanese territory, and Syrian withdrawal from Israeli territory (Shlaim, 1998, pp. 273, 275-276, 316).

After the 1948 War, many Palestinian refugees came to live in refugee camps in neighboring Arab countries, where they became second-class citizens. From these places, many Palestinian civilians wrote letters to their relatives who had stayed behind in Israel. The Israeli intelligence services used these letters to track down the exact coordinates of the refugees and prevent them from returning to Israel. As a result, most Palestinian refugees remained separated from their relatives (Hazkani, 2021, p. 185).

## **7.2 The role of the ideology of the ruling parties in the 1948 War**

The first leader of Israel was David Ben-Gurion of the left-wing Zionist Mapai Party. Ben-Gurion declared Israel's independence on 14 May 1948



and is therefore considered the founder of Israel. However, this decision also sparked the 1948 War. Ben-Gurion responded by merging Haganah and other Israeli militias into the Israel Defense Force (IDF), Israel's new official army. On the basis of his *nationalist* Zionist beliefs, Ben-Gurion ordered the IDF to expel the Palestinian population and called the success of the expulsion a 'miracle'. Near the end of the war, Ben-Gurion desired to conquer the West Bank from Transjordan as well, but he anticipated British and American opposition to these plans. Therefore, Ben-Gurion withdrew IDF troops in 1949. Ben-Gurion claimed that Israeli territorial needs were satisfied now that Israel had reconquered the majority of the promised land. In order to consolidate the relationship with the U.S. and the Arab world, he didn't push his

Zionist aspirations any further (Shapira & Berris, 2014, pp. 75, 161-162, 165, 171, 173).

However, Menachem Begin of the right-wing Zionist party Herut was firmly opposed to ending the 1948 War. He wanted to continue fighting and reconquer the West Bank from Transjordan. Begin repeatedly pressured Ben-Gurion to do so, but could never convince him (Mitchell, 2015, pp. 48, 50-51).

From the analysis above we can conclude that Ben-Gurion of the left-wing Zionist Mapai Party was inspired by *nationalist* Zionist ideology to commit violence against Palestinian civilians. This somewhat contradicts our theory that left-wing Zionist parties are less radical in their ideology. However, Ben-Gurion of the left-wing Mapai Party ultimately ended violence, whereas the right-wing Herut Party wanted to continue violence to fulfill its even more radical *nationalist* desires. This supports the 'ideological stances of the government' theory.

Tovy (2014, pp. 13-16) reports that after the 1948 War, Ben-Gurion's main concern was preventing the return of Palestinian refugees, because he feared that they would launch a new war against Israel upon their return. This stance was broadly supported by the Israeli cabinet, especially among right-wing Zionist parties.

### **7.3 The role of electoral considerations in the 1948 War**

Ben-Gurion's pivotal role in founding Israel and winning the 1948 War earned him much appreciation among the Jewish population. As a result, Ben-Gurion's Mapai Party was assured of popular support (Aronson, 2010, p. 208).

Tovy (2014, p. 16) writes that the majority of the Israeli population opposed the return of Palestinian refugees, which was in accordance with the views of the ruling Mapai Party. However, at a cabinet meeting on 16 June 1948, Mapai leader Ben-Gurion did not vote in favor of a total ban on repatriation. He might have abstained from rejecting complete repatriation out of electoral considerations. Ben-Gurion's Mapai Party was in a coalition with another left-wing Zionist party, called Mapam. However, Mapam was not in favor of banning total repatriation and might even have left the coalition if Mapai voted in favor. So, Ben-Gurion's Mapai voted against a total ban on repatriation to prevent a coalition crisis. Still, most Palestinian refugees were not allowed to return.

In the elections of 1949, held during a relatively peaceful period in the conflict, Mapam took on a very different position. In its electoral campaign, Mapam called for continuing the fight and conquering the entire Palestinian territory. Ben-Gurion's Mapai, on the other hand, campaigned for reaching a peace agreement based on existing borders. Ben-Gurion's Mapai won the election with 46 seats, whereas Mapam only won 19 and was left out of the government (Halamish, 2014, pp. 154-155, 159).

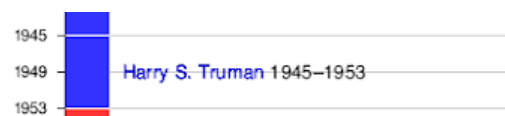
In the next Knesset election held in 1951, right-wing opposition party Herut campaigned for continuing the fight against Transjordan over the West Bank. This stance would cause Herut to lose six of its fourteen seats (Mitchell, 2015, p. 51).

From the analysis above we can conclude that the Israeli government used violence in accordance with the wishes of the Israeli electorate, which supports the 'electoral considerations' theory. Political parties with different opinions regarding violence against Palestinian civilians than Ben-Gurion's Mapai received less votes. Also, Ben-Gurion's Mapai tried to satisfy coalition partners Mapam regarding the return of Palestinian refugees. Therefore, electoral considerations are part of the reason for the Israeli government's use of violence against Palestinian civilians.

#### **7.4 The role of U.S. support in the 1948 War**

Before the foundation of Israel in 1948, the Jewish leaders did not enjoy any international recognition. Ben-Gurion wished to solve this

problem by applying for United Nations membership. If Israel was accepted, this would mean that Palestine had to be divided into a Jewish and an Arab state. To be accepted, Israel needed support of two-thirds of the member states in the UN General Assembly. Support of the United States was of vital importance, because this would likely secure the Latin American votes as well. Therefore, the Jewish leadership asked U.S. president Harry Truman to pressure other countries to vote for the Zionist cause. U.S. government officials then successfully pressured representatives of the Philippines to vote for Israel's cause, and threatened to stop the import of Liberian rubber if Liberia voted against Israel's cause. On 29 November 1947, 33 countries including the U.S. voted in favor of partition, and 13 voted against. The American vote and American pressure thus contributed to the



establishment of the Jewish state, and this set the pretext for the 1948 War (Jensehaugen et al., 2012, pp. 280, 283, 293-295).

Benson (1997, pp. x, 8, 91, 166, 175) notes that Harry Truman's support was vital for the creation of Israel in 1948. Truman was very persistent in recognizing Israel, even acting in opposition to the advice of his Secretary of State George Marshall. Recognizing Israel corresponded with Truman's personal beliefs in the prophecies in the Old Testament, which claimed God had promised Israel to the Jewish people. Furthermore, he opined that the Jews should be helped after they had suffered so tremendously during World War Two. If those personal considerations weren't enough, the American Zionist lobby also put enormous pressure on Truman. Finally, by recognizing Israel, Truman may have tried to secure Jewish American votes in the 1948 U.S. presidential election, whereas the Arab American vote was negligible in electoral terms.

Indeed, there was widespread support among the American population for the recognition of Israel. Reportedly, two-thirds of the American population supported the partition of Palestine (Jensehaugen et al., 2012, pp. 291). The influence of 'Christian Zionists' among the U.S. voter public, Christians whose faith leads them to support Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people, should not be understated here. Christian evangelicals view Israel as a stronghold of Western values, whereas they view the Arab countries as backwards Islamic dictatorships. Therefore, they opine that the U.S. should support Israel (Spector, 2009, pp. 1-3, 5-7).

During the 1948 War, American volunteers aided the Israeli army. In fact, the majority of pilots in the Israeli Air Force was composed of Americans, Canadians, British and other foreign nationalities. Thanks to Zionist fundraising in the United States, the Israeli Defense Forces could acquire heavy weapons, tanks and aircraft from the United States. So, U.S. support enabled Israel to use violence against Palestinian civilians, but the support was not overt government policy (Fischbach & Williams-Taylor, 2023, pp. 110-111).

## **7.5 Conclusion**

From the analysis above follows that the Israeli left-wing government committed violence against Palestinian civilians because of ideological reasons. The left-wing

Mapai government was perhaps more radical in its *nationalist* Zionism than the 'ideological stances of the government' theory would predict. Both the left-wing and right-wing Zionist parties were strongly in favor of using violence against Palestinian civilians, but the right-wing parties were more radical. This shows at least some support for the 'ideological stances of the government' theory.

Besides ideological reasons, the ruling Mapai Party also had electoral motivations to commit violence against Palestinian civilians. Mapai's policies satisfied both the majority of the Israeli electorate and coalition partner Mapam. This supports the 'electoral considerations' theory.

U.S. support enabled Israel to use violence. The American vote for partition in the UN General Assembly, as well as the pressure the U.S. put on other UN members to vote for partition strengthened Israel's position. Furthermore, American volunteers fought alongside the IDF in the 1948 War to commit violence against Palestinian civilians. This supports the 'U.S. support' theory.

## **Chapter 8 – The First Intifada**

### **8.1 Violence against Palestinian civilians in the First Intifada**

By 1987, living under Israeli occupation had taken its toll on Palestinian civilians. Most Palestinian civilians were impoverished. Additionally, they deplored the fact that the Arab states had abandoned their cause, as they were more concerned with Iranian threats at the time. For these reasons, Palestinian civilians took the initiative to start an uprising, called 'Intifada', or 'shaking off' in Arabic. The Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU), consisting of local Palestinian leaders, was going to lead it (Peters & Newman, 2013, pp. 56-58).

The event that triggered the First Intifada came on 9 December 1987, when a Palestinian teenager threw a Molotov cocktail at an Israeli army patrol. An Israeli soldier then killed the Palestinian teenager. This led to Palestinian protests in the Gaza Strip, which soon spread to the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Palestinian protesters threw Molotov cocktails, handgrenades, rocks, and blocked roads (Katz, 2016, p. 101).

However, 92% of all actions during the first year of the Intifada were non-violent. Those non-violent actions included the boycotting of Israeli products,

mass demonstrations, the illegal display of Palestinian flags, and strikes. The UNLU also urged civilians not to pay their taxes, under the slogan “No taxation without representation”. The entire city of Beit Sahour heeded the call and went on a tax strike. The response of the Israeli forces was fierce: the IDF placed the town under curfew, imprisoned civilians, blocked food supplies and cut telephone lines (Katz, 2016, pp. 101-103).

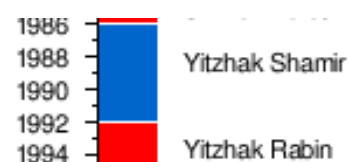
The IDF tried to deter Palestinian civilians from protesting by demolishing and sealing their houses. Besides deterrence, the IDF also used retaliation. One such event was on 20 September 1990, when Palestinian residents lynched an Israeli soldier as he entered the Al-Bureij refugee camp. The IDF responded by demolishing thirty Palestinian housing units in the camp. The IDF’s military commander stated that this was done for ‘safety reasons’ and that the Palestinian civilians who had lost their homes were compensated (Silber, 2011, p. 95).

On the international stage, there were some significant developments as well. In July 1988, Jordan disengaged from the West Bank, transferring the territory over to Palestine. This improved the negotiation position of the Palestinian leaders at the expense of Israel. The Palestinian leadership now demanded that Israel recognize East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state. This demand was internationally supported. Israel’s image on the international stage was waning (Kochavi, 2013, p. 463).

On 15 November 1988, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) officially declared the State of Palestine, which laid claim to all Palestinian territory as defined by the British Mandate. PLO leader Yasser Arafat became the first president of Palestine. In December 1988, Arafat promised to recognize Israel and put an end to terrorism if Israel withdrew its troops from the Palestinian territories. Arafat’s peaceful approach would induce peace negotiations with Israel in 1991, and would culminate in the Oslo Accords (Tucker, 2019, pp. 137-138, 954).

## **8.2 The role of the ideology of the ruling parties in the First Intifada**

The First Intifada was largely a response to the Likud Party’s ideologically motivated efforts to increase control over the lives of Palestinian



civilians. The Likud government under Yitzhak Shamir had accelerated land appropriation and settlement building in the Palestinian territories. These policies had also disrupted Palestinian financial markets. The Likud Party is a right-wing Zionist party and a successor of Herut (Katz, 2016, p. 101).

The Likud Party's reaction to the Intifada was fierce. However, it took some time before the Israeli government realized the extent of the protests. The government initially reacted by ordering Israeli troops to shoot at unarmed protesters. This zero-tolerance policy adopted by the Likud Party led to shocking scenes where Israeli soldiers used excessive violence against Palestinian children, which tarnished Israel's reputation internationally. Consequently, mass arrests and detentions were still carried out, but less openly than before. In the process, Israel managed to arrest the leaders of the UNLU, which had led Palestinian resistance during the Intifada (Ciment, 2013, pp. 1064-1065).

During the First Intifada, Likud leader Shamir showed no willingness to negotiate with the Palestinian leaders. This changed briefly when left-wing coalition partner Labor (a successor of the Mapai Party) presented a peace plan that allowed Palestinian elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The winners of these elections would represent Palestine in peace negotiations with Israel. Likud leader Shamir adopted the plan, but fellow Likud members rejected it. They were opposed to negotiations with the PLO, the foundation of a Palestinian state and Palestinian elections. The Labor Party was so dissatisfied with the stance of the Likud Party that all Labor ministers withdrew from the government. As a result, the government fell. Likud was thus prepared to let the government collapse over this matter, choosing ideological dogmatism over electoral considerations. However, Shamir was reelected and a new, even more radical right-wing government was formed in 1988. Labor was left out. The new government opposed peace negotiations and expanded Jewish settlements in the Palestinian territories (Mitchell, 2015, pp. 111-113).

### **8.3 The role of electoral considerations in the First Intifada**

During the years of the First Intifada, public opinion was extensively measured. Shamir & Shiqāqī (2010, pp. 98, 121-122) show that at the start of the Intifada in 1987, most Israeli voters were in favor of using military force to suppress the protests. Furthermore, only 20% of Israeli Jews were willing to accept Palestinian

statehood in 1988. These views caused the reelection of right-wing Likud leader Shamir in 1988, who increased violence against Palestinian civilians.

In 1987, 66% of Israeli voters opposed peace negotiations with the PLO. However, the Israeli electorate gradually became more in favor of peace negotiations as the Intifada progressed. The only exception was 1991, when willingness was at a low with only 29%. By 1994, however, 60% of respondents were in favor of peace negotiations with the PLO. Respondents also became increasingly in favor of allowing a Palestinian state as part of a peace agreement. In 1987, this was only 23%, but by 1994, this had increased to 38%. Furthermore, When respondents were asked how they thought about encouraging Palestinian civilians to leave Israel, 69% were (strongly) in favor of this policy option in 1987. This number had decreased to 59% by 1994 (Arian, 1995, pp. 275-277).

The First Intifada also marked the first time that a significant number of Jewish civilians protested for the rights of Palestinian civilians. Israeli activists protested against the imprisonment of Palestinian protesters and against military service in the Palestinian territories. By 1989, thousands of Israeli soldiers had evaded military service in the Palestinian territories, risking imprisonment and social stigma (Katz, 2016, pp. 103-104).

All these data suggest that the Israeli electorate was in favor of using violence against Palestinian civilians at the start of the Intifada, but gradually favored a limitation of violence later on. Did the Shamir government give in to these electoral demands, despite its ideological dogmatism?

Shamir & Shiqāqī (2010, pp. 120, 122) write that indeed, the electoral desire for peace became so strong that even Likud accepted the Oslo peace process in 1996. Also, Likud voiced a willingness to abandon the occupied Palestinian territories for the first time. The left-wing Labor Party adjusted even faster to public opinion. In 1992, Labor already voiced a willingness to negotiate with the PLO and acknowledged the right to Palestinian statehood. Sasley (2012, p. 694) writes that these stances earned Yitzhak Rabin of the left-wing Labor Party an electoral victory in 1992. The Rabin administration went on to promote the Oslo peace process.

In short, it can be concluded that both parties adopted more peaceful narratives under popular pressure, which led to a limitation of violence. This supports the 'electoral considerations' theory.



## **8.4 The role of U.S. support in the First Intifada**

In the years preceding the First Intifada, the Reagan administration had kept its distance from the Israeli-Arab conflict. This was partly



due to a reluctance to get involved in another conflict, after a failed intervention in Lebanon from 1982 to 1984. However, the start of the Intifada made the Israeli-Palestinian conflict a priority again. U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz proposed the Shultz Peace Plan in 1988. However, the Israeli ruling parties were divided on the plan, with Labor being in favor of it and Likud rejecting it. Thus, the Shultz Plan ultimately did not come into fruition (Freedman, 1991, pp. 111-112, 114-116).

In public speeches, Reagan upheld his depiction of Israel as a heroic democracy in the Middle East, while downplaying the violence that Israel committed against Palestinian civilians. Reagan never stopped military or financial support, which might have prolonged Israeli violence against Palestinian civilians (Fowler, 2020, pp. 477-478).

On the other hand, the Reagan administration did pressure the Palestinian leadership to recognize Israel, which PLO leader Arafat did in December 1988. This decision by the PLO would later contribute to the initiation of peace talks. The U.S. now accepted the PLO as a spokesperson, but this deteriorated relations between the U.S. and Israel. In the eyes of Israel, the U.S. had legitimized Palestinian aspirations for statehood with this action (Freedman, 1991, pp. 116-117).

The subsequent government of George H.W. Bush was much more critical of Shamir's on-going settlement building in the Palestinian territories. Bush's Secretary of State James Baker firmly pressured Israel to stop violence and grant Palestinian civilians political rights. Furthermore, the Bush government withheld loan guarantees, preventing Shamir from using American capital to build illegal settlements. Bush also limited military aid in order to force Israel to the negotiation table. The Bush administration was even willing to risk the Jewish American votes for its criticism of the Israeli government (Druks, 2001, pp. 243-247).

## **8.5 Conclusion**

From the analysis above follows that ideological motives have inspired the Shamir government to use excessive violence against Palestinian civilians to suppress the protests. Also, *nationalist* Zionist ideology has inspired the right-wing Shamir government to accelerate settlement building in the Palestinian territories and to oppose peace negotiations for a long time. The left-wing Zionist Labor Party urged Shamir to start peace negotiations, but could not convince him. In the first stage of the Intifada, ideological dogmatism inspired the eruption of violence against Palestinian civilians.

At the end of the First Intifada, electoral considerations were more important than ideological considerations for the Israeli government to limit violence. Jewish voters became increasingly in favor of peace negotiations, urging the Israeli government to limit violence against Palestinian civilians.

The Reagan administration continued military, financial and vocal support for Israel during the First Intifada, which enabled Israeli violence against Palestinian civilians. When U.S. financial support decreased under George H.W. Bush, Israel was forced to limit settlement building in the Palestinian territories. Thus, a decrease in U.S. support led to a limitation of violence against Palestinian civilians.

## **Chapter 9 – The Second Intifada**

### **9.1 Violence against Palestinian civilians in the Second Intifada**

By 2000, Palestinian civilians had become disillusioned with the Oslo peace process, as it had not led to Palestinian statehood. Also, Israel did not comply with the agreements in the Oslo Accords as it continued illegal settlement building.

Palestinian civilians felt as though the U.S. allowed Israel to conquer territory that Israel and Palestine were supposed to be negotiating. This is why the Second Intifada started in 2000 (Norman, 2010, p. 30).

On 28 September 2000, opposition leader Ariel Sharon of Likud visited the Temple Mount. The visit was so controversial that one day later, Palestinian riots started in Jerusalem and spread across Israel. Palestinian protesters threw rocks and Molotov cocktails and Palestinian gunmen targeted Jewish soldiers and civilians (Manekin, 2021, pp. 46-47). Whereas the First Intifada had been mostly non-violent, Palestinian protesters adopted a more violent approach this time. Arafat tried to

militarize the conflict in order to provoke a fierce Israeli reaction (Frisch, 2015, pp. 179-180).

In the first month of the Second Intifada, the Israeli military used 1.3 million bullets and killed hundreds of Palestinians, including children. The IDF's top generals granted immunity to soldiers who opened fire on Palestinian protesters. This encouraged Israeli soldiers to shoot Palestinian civilians without pretext, because there were no legal consequences (Gordon, 2008, pp. 198, 201-202). The Israeli Defense Forces used this massive firepower in an attempt to establish a swift military victory. However, instead of ending it, this eruption of violence has likely prolonged and worsened the conflict (Ben-Ari, 2010, p. 39).

Because of the high number of Palestinian casualties, Palestinian civilians shied away from the Intifada, and Palestinian terrorist groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad took over. These groups committed suicide bomb attacks and rocket attacks on Israeli civilian targets. The Israeli Defense Forces were just as violent, carrying out air strikes, raids and assassinations. The IDF also demolished Palestinian homes, and the Israeli government imposed curfews and checkpoints. The Second Intifada had turned into a full-scale armed conflict where two sides tried to outdo each other in violence (Norman, 2010, pp. 30-31).

In 2004, Sharon took a step towards peace as he ordered the withdrawal of all 5,000 Jewish settlers from the (Palestinian) West Bank. Even after the withdrawal, however, fighting between Israel and Palestine continued (Ciment, 2013, pp. 1071-1072). Because there was no clear end to the violence, it is hard to determine an end date to the Second Intifada. However, most consider the death of PLO leader Arafat in November 2004 as the end of the Intifada (Schachter, 2010, pp. 63-64).

## **9.2 The role of the ideology of the ruling parties in the Second Intifada**

The Second Intifada started after Likud leader Ariel Sharon paid a controversial visit to the Temple Mount. Sharon had *religious* Zionist

motives for his visit. He wanted to demonstrate that the Temple Mount was a Jewish holy site and thus belonged to Israel (Gartman, 2015, p. 305).



In the first months of the Second Intifada, Israeli Prime Minister and Labor leader Ehud Barak tried to negotiate a peace agreement, but the Palestinian leadership rejected it. When Likud leader Sharon took over in 2001, he prioritized protecting Israeli civilians and killing Hamas leaders. To prevent Palestinian suicide attackers from entering Israel, Sharon blocked roads and established checkpoints. However, this also limited the freedom of movement of Palestinian civilians and crippled Palestinian economy (Gartman, 2015, pp. 305-307, 309, 312-313).

Furthermore, the Sharon government built a wall between Israel and the West Bank to keep out Palestinian suicide attackers. However, some argue that Sharon built the wall because of *nationalist* Zionist motives, to create de facto borders and absorb more Palestinian land. The wall separated Palestinian civilians from each other (Berry & Philo, 2006, pp. 122).

Some of the Sharon government's policies already existed during the left-wing Barak government. These included air strikes, targeting terrorist leaders, and destroying Palestinian agricultural areas. However, Sharon gradually intensified their scope and scale. Sharon initially continued peace talks with the Palestinian leadership as Barak had done, but abandoned them later. This indicates that the right-wing Sharon government was less interested in peace and more interested in the use of excessive violence against Palestinian terrorists and civilians than Barak (Byman, 2011, p. 130).

Under the Sharon administration, the IDF re-entered Palestinian territories that it had abandoned after the Oslo resolutions. The IDF re-occupied several big cities in the West Bank and destroyed the Palestinian Jenin refugee camps. 878 housing units of Palestinian refugees were demolished and an additional 2,800 were damaged, which left 17,000 Palestinian civilians homeless (Harms & Ferry, 2012, p. 173).

In a surprise move in February 2004, Sharon announced the Gaza Disengagement Plan. This called for the removal of Israeli settlers in the Gaza Strip. Sharon reportedly implemented the plan because of ideological considerations. He wanted Israel to be a state where only Jews lived. Therefore, he disposed of the Gaza Strip so Israel would lose the unwanted 1.3 million Palestinian civilians who lived there. This is a rare instance where the right-wing ideology of the Israeli government inspired a limitation of violence against Palestinian civilians. However,

members of Sharon's own right-wing Likud Party opposed the plan (Cook, 2006, pp. 101, 104).

### **9.3 The role of electoral considerations in the Second Intifada**

In the 2001 elections, Labor leader Barak would originally run against Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu. Election polls suggested that Netanyahu would beat Barak by a 19-point margin. So, in an attempt to secure reelection, Barak called for a special election in which only Knesset members could participate. As a result Netanyahu, who was not in the Knesset at the time, was sidelined and Sharon emerged as the new Likud candidate. Barak believed that the radical Sharon was less popular than Netanyahu. However, Sharon went on to win the elections with 62.5% of the votes over Barak, precisely because of his radical reputation (Byman, 2011, pp. 129-130).

Sharon's electoral victory was the result of the start of the Intifada. The Israeli population felt threatened by the Palestinian attacks, and Sharon promised to make the security of Israeli civilians top priority. Once in power, Sharon's government tried to capture Hamas leaders, which was also broadly supported by the Israeli population (Gartman, 2015, pp. 305-307, 309, 312).

Byman (2011, p. 130) writes that Sharon initially held back on violence, but as Palestinian attacks grew more frequent, the Israeli population wanted revenge. These calls for retaliation from the public inspired Sharon to adopt a more violent course. Manekin (2021, pp. 46-47) similarly notes that the Israeli population was in favor of escalation, especially after an angry Palestinian mob lynched two IDF reserve soldiers. The IDF responded very harshly to end the protests, but the opposite happened, and the protests evolved into a full-blown armed insurgency carried out by multiple Palestinian armed groups.

### **9.4 The role of U.S. support in the Second Intifada**

In December 2000, at the start of the Second Intifada, U.S. president Bill Clinton presented the Clinton Parameters. This peace plan called



for the formation of a Palestinian state, to which Palestinian refugees were allowed

to return. The plan ultimately did not come into fruition (Harms & Ferry, 2012, pp. 170-171, 180).

In June 2002, the subsequent Bush administration proposed another peace plan, called the Road Map. The American Road Map was less beneficial to Palestine, however. It would only allow Palestinian statehood if all Palestinian violence was terminated. This was a near impossible task, because the weakened Palestinian Authority did not have control over terrorist groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad (Frisch, 2015, p. 182).

Because Arafat could not stop Palestinian terrorism, Bush started regarding Arafat as a terrorist leader. Now, Bush rejected Arafat as a negotiation partner and demanded his removal from office. Only then, Bush stated, the U.S. would allow Palestinian statehood (Abrams, 2013, p. 43).

Generally, George W. Bush had a clear pro-Israel and anti-Palestine position. He did not condemn the killings of Hamas leaders by the Sharon government, as he argued that Israel had the right to defend itself. Furthermore, the Bush government legitimized Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories. By rejecting the demands of the Palestinian leadership, Bush further impeded peace negotiations (Berry & Philo, 2006, pp. 125-126).

In addition, Bush opposed the return of Palestinian refugees, because he believed they would threaten the Jewish state. Throughout the Second Intifada, Bush supported nearly all of Sharon's policy decisions, including Sharon's plan to disengage from the West Bank. The Bush administration kept sending financial and military support throughout the Second Intifada (Abrams, 2013, pp. 107-108).

The financial and military support of the U.S. government is depicted in the table on the right. The table shows an increase in U.S. support for Israel in the years of the Intifada. Military aid nearly doubled in the year 2000 compared to 1999, increasing from 1,860 millions of US dollars to 3,120 million. After 2000, military support decreased somewhat, but it always remained higher than before the Second Intifada. U.S. economic support

shows an entirely different development: during the Second Intifada, economic support gradually decreased with each year, from 949.1 million in 2000 to

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Year	Total	Military Grant	Economic Grant	Immig. Grant	ASHA	All other
1949-1996	68,030.9	29,014.9	23,122.4	868.9	121.4	14,903.3
1997	3,132.1	1,800.0	1,200.0	80.0	2.1	50.0
1998	3,080.0	1,800.0	1,200.0	80.0	—	—
1999	3,010.0	1,860.0	1,080.0	70.0	—	—
2000	4,131.85	3,120.0	949.1	60.0	2.75	—
2001	2,876.05	1,975.6	838.2	60.0	2.25	—
2002	2,850.65	2,040.0	720.0	60.0	2.65	28.0
2003	3,745.15	3,086.4	596.1	59.6	3.05	—
2004	2,687.25	2,147.3	477.2	49.7	3.15	9.9
2005	2,612.15	2,202.2	357.0	50.0	2.95	—
2006	2,534.5	2,257.0	237.0	40.0	—	0.5
2007	2,503.15	2,340.0	120.0	40.0	2.95	0.2
2008	2,423.9	2,380.0	0	40.0	3.90	0
2009	2,583.9	2,550.0	0	30.0	3.90	0
2010	2,803.8	2,775.0	0	25.0	3.80	0
2011	2,803.8	2,775.0	0	25.0	3.80	0

477.2 million in 2004. The U.S. thus mostly supported Israel militarily. With this support, the U.S. granted Israel the military means to commit violence against Palestinian civilians (Sharp, 2023, p. 26).

## **9.5 Conclusion**

During the Second Intifada, the policies of Barak's left-wing Labor government and Sharon's right-wing Likud government can be compared. What follows is that Sharon's right-wing Likud government is ideologically more radical than Barak's left-wing Labor government, and more eager to use violence against Palestinian civilians. This supports the 'ideological stances of the government' theory. There was one exception near the end of the Second Intifada, however, when Sharon's right-wing ideology inspired the Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank.

The right-wing Sharon government held back on the use of mass violence initially. It was the call for escalation and retaliation from the Israeli voter public that spurred Sharon to adopt harsher measures against Palestinian civilians and terrorists. Thus, electoral considerations have contributed greatly to the increase in violence by Israel against Palestinian civilians and an escalation of the conflict.

Besides, the Bush government was very supportive of Sharon, even of his violent policies. Bush continued military and vocal support, enabling the Israeli government to use violence against Palestinian civilians. Though the U.S. government called for peace, Bush imposed too many requirements on the Palestinian leadership, which stood in the way of the initiation of peace talks. This supports the 'U.S. support' theory.

## **Conclusion and discussion**

### **Conclusion**

During the 1948 War, there was a clear increase in violence. The left-wing government of Ben-Gurion was very much in favor of the use of violence against Palestinian civilians for ideological reasons. However, this does not fully support the 'ideological stances of the government' theory which predicted that left-wing governments are ideologically moderate, and less interested in violence than right-wing governments. Ben-Gurion's policies during the 1948 War coincided with

public opinion, which supports the 'ideological considerations' theory. The Israeli government enjoyed considerable support from the U.S. government at the time, but this had a less direct effect on the increase in violence.

The years of the First Intifada saw an increase in violence as well. The ideological stances of the right-wing Likud Party were the biggest reason for an increase in violence against Palestinian civilians. The left-wing Labor Party was more in favor of peace negotiations, which supports the 'ideological stances of the government' theory. 'Electoral considerations' played a role in the eruption of violence at the start of the Intifada as well, but the Shamir government continued violence for a considerable amount of time even after public opinion had changed in favor of limiting violence. Only at the end of the Intifada, electoral considerations played a role in explaining a limitation in violence at the end of the Intifada. When U.S. support increased during the Reagan administration, it enabled the use of violence against Palestinian civilians. On the other hand, a decrease in U.S. support during the George H.W. Bush administration also decreased the amount of violence against Palestinian civilians somewhat.

The Second Intifada marked another increase in violence against Palestinian civilians. This was most of all the result of electoral reasons, as the voter public was highly in favor of the use of violence against Palestinian civilians and terrorists to suppress the Intifada, and the Shamir government gave in to this demand. Though, the influence of ideology of the right-wing government has certainly contributed to the use of violence as well, as Barak's left-wing Labor government was less radical in its ideology and use of violence. U.S. support during the George W. Bush government for Israel contributed to the increase in violence as well. U.S. support might even have prolonged the Intifada, as the Bush government hindered the initiation of peace talks.

From the analysis we can conclude that U.S. support has the least direct influence in the eruptions of violence by Israel against Palestinian civilians. U.S. support often enabled violence, but it was never the main reason for an eruption of violence to occur. Therefore, the 'U.S. support' theory is the weakest out of the three examined theories.

Ideology has played a major role in the eruptions of violence by the Israeli government against Palestinian civilians. However, the 'ideological stances of the government' theory predicts that right-wing governments are more eager to use



violence for ideological reasons than left-wing governments. This was the case during the First and Second Intifada, but not so much during the 1948 War, when the left-wing government of Ben-Gurion used excessive violence against Palestinian civilians as well. It seems that the 'ideological stances of the government' theory is more true in the later years of Israel's history, and not so much in the early years. Still, the difference in willingness to use violence against Palestinian civilians between right-wing and left-wing parties has become so great over the years that the 'ideological stances' theory offers the most convincing explanation for the eruptions of violence by Israel against Palestinian civilians.

A close second is the 'electoral considerations' theory, because Israeli government policy was often in accordance with Israeli popular opinion. The 'electoral considerations' theory was often proven correct during this research, as Israeli governments often heeded the call of the Israeli electorate to increase violence against Palestinian civilians, regardless of ideological stances.

## **Discussion**

This thesis focused on the different factors that contributed to eruptions of Israeli violence against Palestinian civilians. The three theories investigated the influence of government ideology, electoral considerations and variations in U.S. support on eruptions of violence against Palestinian civilians. The role that the U.S. government can play in the limitation of violence by Israel against Palestinian civilians can be a topic of further research. Such a research could produce recommendations for U.S. foreign policy that could bring a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict closer.

Besides the United States, other foreign countries have supported or pressured the Israeli government, and have possibly influenced the Israeli government's decision to use or abstain from violence against Palestinian civilians. Therefore, support for or pressure on the Israeli government from countries like France, the United Kingdom or the Soviet Union could be good topics for further research as well (Crosbie, 2015, pp. 3, 7).

Another topic of further research could be individual soldier behavior in the Israeli Defense Forces (Grassiani, 2013, p. 73). The behavior of individual soldiers may explain variations in violence during specific military operations regardless of the three theories discussed in this thesis.

In the two-sided Israeli-Palestinian conflict, part of the violence is instigated by Palestine. Therefore, another theory that could explain variations in violence by Israel against Palestinian civilians, is variations in Palestinian violence against Israeli civilians, which subsequently might provoke a reaction from the Israeli government (Walther, 2009, p. 5). This is a theory that this thesis did not investigate, but it could be an interesting theory for further research.

Furthermore, Palestinian violence against Israeli civilians can function as a research topic in itself. Palestinian violence is different in nature from Israeli violence. The terrorist attacks by Palestinian terrorist groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, prominent during the Second Intifada, are an example of this (Norman, 2010, pp. 30-31). Because Palestinian violence is different in nature, it could have very different explanations as well. Theories that could be tested in such a research are the role of Palestinian public opinion or the stances of other Arab states, to name a few.

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