

Introduction

Both successful and unsuccessful social movements strive to change society by garnering awareness of a serious problem in order to create tangible results. Traditionally, successful movements have appealed to an ideal, carrying a strong emotional tone and propounding a *charismatic* leader (using Max Weber's terminology);[1] however, online movements of late exist devoid of a leader or hierarchical structure, and are thus in a league of their own for judgment and will be treated accordingly. The conditions of unsuccessful movements often lack a network of communication, a leader to incorporate others, a program to receive support, and a powerful public image.[2] These definitions will contextualize my analysis of separate movements, as I provide historical and philosophical context and reach a conclusion regarding the choices that lead to success or failure.

The History & Weight of Violence

Violent revolts have occurred throughout history. Some early revolutions such as the Helot Revolt of 464 BC (class struggle between the Helots and Spartiates), the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 (peasant uprising in London), and the Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450 (uprising against Henry VI of England) illustrate a common pattern: a focus on high degrees of violence leads to long-term failure.[3] This type of violence lacks organization and has amorphous goals, provoking massive repression from the government.[4] The lack of resources, preparation, and organization skills are additional factors that contribute to the failure of these groups. Excessive violence begets violence, escalating the level of conflict without changing the political realities of the situation.

On the other hand, it is essential to observe past insurgencies to best define the actions that lead to victory. The Protestant Reformation in 1517, the Boston Tea Party in 1773, the Women's Suffrage Movement in the 18th century, Gandhi's Salt March in 1930, and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s successfully defined their goals and targeted institutions in power to create specific systemic change.[5] Although these protests were intended to be peaceful, they contained lower levels of violence, but these were outliers in contrast to the focus on policy support and related outcomes.

Violence can have success in some cases, however. Devorah Manekin and Tamar Mitts identified that the relation between nonviolence and movement success was nonexistent for minority groups, indicating that violence instead can increase support for a minority group's policy goals.[6] For example, researchers Gould and Klor (2010) discovered that exposure to moderate (but not high) levels of Palestinian violence increased support for concessions, particularly among right-wing Israelis.[7] In addition, Tompkins uncovered that having a violent radical flank was associated with rapid progress toward accomplishing the movement's objectives and gaining concessions from the government.[8]

If a movement can maintain majority nonviolence, this can assist in balancing the disruption caused by violence with a positive view of the protesting group, possibly leading to the creation of a reasonable alternative for which to negotiate and make compromises.[9] For example, while violent demonstrations—from fighting police to vandalism—were sighted, the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) reported that the majority of the Black Lives Matter protests—over 93%—have been peaceful.[10] Thus, exceptional violence—so long as it stays an exception—within a larger nonviolent movement allows for a positive public sentiment to persist.

From Physical to Digital

Physical protests have garnered major changes in the past. For example, Jim Crow Laws passed in the Southern States of the U.S. imposed segregation laws against black individuals following the “separate but equal” decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896).[11] Although the strength of the Jim Crow laws began eroding by 1915, the Court's decision to overturn the *Plessy* decision provided the rise of the Civil Rights Movement and the march on Washington by over 200,000 in 1963 to

dramatize the movement, leading to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968.[12] [13]

Physical protests bring with them key advantages for garnering support. Types of unrest that fit this description are marches (groups walking in tandem, often through city streets), riots (protesters turning violent against property or police forces), rallies (people gathering at locations to hear speakers or announcements), and pickets and sit-ins (displaying signage communicating a set ideal or occupying an establishment to curtail normal operations).[14] These effective protests usually require not only a large group of people to gather but also access to public spaces for the purpose of assembly (this is not a guaranteed right in all countries and should not be taken for granted). If the place or area provides walkability, it ensures human connection through small or seemingly inconsequential interactions, reminding the community that they are not alone, which is necessary for strengthening the bond between the activist's vision and the community they represent.[15] Although physical movements grow slower due to slower communication compared to social media, the lasting impact through stronger trust and understanding between individuals determines the strength and effectiveness of real-world protests. In this way, these movements are able to gain power and longevity through increased engagement with the public-at-large and through a sense of genuine commitment to the cause.

However, digital activism has altered the way organized movements occur. Suddenly, millions of activists can connect and interact with each other online as campaign messages become viral in seconds; anyone can shape the course of an entire movement because of the simplicity to communicate directly to an entire audience.[16] Clay Shirky, the author of *Here Comes Everybody*, writes, "When we change the way we communicate, we change society." [17] The modernization of communication revolutionized access to information on a national and global scale, reinvigorating tactics: e-mail campaigns, text messaging, web postings, and online petitions have emerged, providing viral awareness of various issues.[18] Social media platforms, including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, and Tiktok, further embed these strategies by pushing them out through algorithms that create recommendations for which content their users should pay attention to based on virality or personalized content.[19] Even though the identities of individuals are often hidden, online protesting gives individuals a sense of participation even if they are thousands of miles away. There is a cost, though: while a substantial amount of information spreads globally, this information lacks the physical "thick and striking" moments—major, memorable single events—that are necessary for social movements to keep people committed to an issue.[20] Therefore, the optimum movement strategy appears to be a combination of digital and physical elements.

Remaining Challenges

There are numerous challenges for both real and online protests that can curtail the accomplishment of their goals. For example, in physical protests, some activists attending peaceful protests can resort to violence due to desperation or feelings of contempt for political adversaries that they believe should hold responsibility for their wrongdoings.[21] The APA tested these ideas in three survey studies examining student protests and indicated that (a) anger was strongly related to normative action (actions that adhere to a cultural norm), but overall are unrelated to non-normative action (behavior that violates those norms); (b) contempt positively predicted non-normative action, and (c) efficacy was negatively related to non-normative action.[22] The way protesters can experience contempt is when the government disregards their safety and purpose, convincing the crowd to see violence as more acceptable if the government's response feels unjustified. The seven-month Hong Kong protests in 2019 reflect this complication: when the police tactics of the government fired large amounts of tear gas at protesters, exacerbating what began as a peaceful protest, it became increasingly violent.[23]

Spontaneous online movements can cause the public to often trivialize a movement or collapse under its speed. For instance, Breonna Taylor, an African-American medical officer mistakenly killed by police officers in Louisville, Kentucky, in March 2020, became a meme online after her death.[24] This turned her death into a structural gimmick.[25] Charlie, founder of Turning Point USA, posted a video titled "The Truth About Breonna Taylor," (numerous influencers mimic the "Truth About" format to

spread an alternative explanation for police violence), creating false and exaggerated claims about the victim's past and the circumstances of their deaths to prove that, while her death seemed unmerited, she was far from innocent.[26] The spread of false information and exploitation over Breonna Taylor's death led to a lack of reverence for her death and the Black Lives Matter movement, drawing attention away from the police officers' actions and onto the victims instead. Furthermore, the swift expansion of online protest is vulnerable to numerous weaknesses, because, first, it is difficult to make tactical shifts when there isn't an infrastructure for making decisions; second, although operating without defined leadership protects groups from co-optation or "decapitation," the failure of the movement to signal an organizing capacity powerful enough to threaten authority undermines the power and reach of their message.[27] Tufekci explains that the future of digital movements in the wake of evolving power and countermeasures from authoritarian regimes is the strongest if they develop these three types of capacities: narrative capacity (ability to put forth and convince others of a particular worldview), electoral and institutional capacity (ability to replace politicians or change the makeup of institutions), and disruptive capacity (ability to interrupt business as usual).[28] As explained by Tom Hayden, "Adaptation and flexibility are not new challenges for social movements," so these social movements will continuously evolve with new tactics that will be introduced to future movements.[29]

One challenge for all movements is the nature of identity, which plays a crucial role in the dynamics of protest. A person's identity is made up of their experiences in relation to social structures, which can circulate to other individuals to create connections through the transparency and univocality of the experience.[30] For instance, Tarana Burke started the #MeToo movement to assist survivors of sexual violence after discovering rampant sexual assault among middle school black girls,[31] and Greta Thunberg created the Schools Strike for Climate demonstration after witnessing the unwillingness of the public to fight climate change.[32] Subjectivity builds the groundwork for intersectionality, fueling the idea that "we are in this together," which emerges as a collective identity from different audiences.[33] The forming of a combined movement with similar structural interests makes the individual feel obligated to engage in moral protest to develop the kind of self they desire as they promote their overlapping identities to gain power and transform themselves.[34] In addition, when these groups feel their identity is threatened, it makes them more aware of their group membership, which strengthens their identification as they portray ingroup favoritism and out-group derogation.[35] Although social identities can misdirect people's attention and bias their judgments, the identities we contain are fluid and within our control, determining success or failure based on how we utilize the power of identity and exert choice (e.g. is this an identity I want to support or not?).[36] Overall, social identities, while both defining and undefining us, will almost certainly play a part in addressing the most pressing concerns confronting humanity (ranging from COVID-19 and future pandemics to climate change, economic inequality, and democracy) through understanding the role of identity in social and political life in order to face these issues effectively; and taking charge of them can assist our groups and us to improve.[37]

Conclusion

To conclude, effective strategies of successful demonstrations include limited violence in a larger nonviolent framework, a combination of physical and digital elements, and recognition and incorporation of group identity. However, following these requirements does not guarantee success: social movements emerge organically and in essence are messy. But social movements are long-term processes that require persistence, growing networks of devoted and intelligent individuals, adaptation from failures, and integration of future generations going forward. As the predecessors of history have shown, these are the significant differentiators that distinguish successful movements from unsuccessful ones.

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]Q2: Is Peace in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip Possible?

Introduction

On October 9, 2023, the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas launched a barrage of at least 2,200 rockets into Israel from the Gaza Strip, killing 1,200 Israelis, including 35 U.S. citizens. This met an immediate response from Israel, which declared war and fired aerial bombardments with ground operations in Gaza (Zanotti). Only three weeks after the Hamas assault, over 1.4 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have been internally displaced, and, as of March 12, 2024, 31,000 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed, becoming the deadliest conflict in the region since the 1948 Arab-Israeli war (Zanotti). Despite the rising conflict of the current Israel-Hamas war, peace in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is possible. This essay will explore the decades of historical conflict between the two groups and current challenges. With the United States acting as a key outside player, this essay will focus on how the U.S. can successfully intervene through diplomatic agreements, consistent public advocacy, and incorporating lessons from past mediations of similarly deeply-rooted conflict.

History and Ongoing Challenges

The Israel-Hamas War remains a continuation of the ongoing conflict that has been apparent since the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in 1948. After the United Nations passed Resolution 181 in 1947, two states, following the Peel Commission in 1937, became established in Palestine—one Jewish and one Arabic—as the Israelis declared independence soon after on May 14, 1948 (Brown 5). The United States backed Resolution 181 despite the Department of State's endorsement of a trusteeship (with limits on Jewish immigration and separation of Palestine into Jewish and Arab provinces but not states) as U.S. President Harry S. Truman

recognized the new nation of Israel, establishing formal diplomatic relations between the United States and Israel (Office of the Historian). However, the conflict continued with the 1967 Arab-Israeli War as United States Foreign Service personnel under the Johnson administration failed to seek a ceasefire of Israel by not withdrawing from its occupied territories in return for peace settlements with Arab neighbors (Office of the Historian). Consequently, the war raged on into the 2006 Lebanon War with United States policy standing firmly behind Israel, refusing to demand a ceasefire to counter Hezbollah's influence in the region (Leigh 1). By 2023, the U.S. government continued to support Israel's right to defend itself, supplying air defense capabilities and munitions to fight against Hamas attacks (Garamone). To create peace-building efforts and follow its interests, the American Foreign Service intervened in the Middle East conflict, developing a strong diplomatic partnership with Israel.

The continuation of the conflict brings difficulty and potential expansion of the war elsewhere, requiring a strong, persistent effort from the U.S. Foreign Service. In December 2023 the United States, through USAID, provided over \$21 million in humanitarian assistance for the people of Gaza and the West Bank, leaving 2.2 million people in need of support, building on the \$100 million of U.S. assistance from Biden on October 18, 2023 (USAID). Furthermore, the U.S. Central Command forces, including Army personnel specializing in aerial supply delivery, sent over 38,000 meals along the coastline of Gaza to citizens requiring aid (Clark). Assisting the people of Gaza advances the American Foreign Service's interest in rebuilding an environment conducive to diplomatic efforts by addressing the humanitarian crises in the Middle Eastern region. However, this did not stop the conflict from expanding into Lebanon and Syria. The Lebanese militant group, Hezbollah, fired more than 100 rockets into northern Israel on March 12, 2024, which was the heaviest in months of cross-border strikes since October 7th, displacing

80,000 Israelis from areas near the border with Lebanon (Kim and Vinograd). Israel had also launched airstrikes against several targets in Syria with the Syrian state (Sella). This ties in with the Iran-Israel proxy conflict that has continued since February 16, 1985, with Hezbollah and Hamas all receiving financial and material support from Iran, provoking a wider war (Riedel). These challenges represent only a fraction of the countless obstacles confronting the Foreign Service in the Middle East.

Efforts Thus Far and Further Solutions

American diplomats have been working on discussions to end the current Gaza war through three different tracks: (1) reaching a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas; (2) reshaping the Palestinian Authority; (3) pushing Israel to agree to the creation of a Palestinian state (Wong). First, the United States with Qatar and Egypt pushed for a truce between Israel and Hamas with a proposal for an initial six-week cease-fire, during which Hamas would release around 40 out of 100 remaining hostages captured in the Gaza attacks (Barnes). President Biden believed negotiators were nearing an agreement stating, “My hope is by next Monday, we’ll have a cease-fire,” hoping to halt Israel’s military operations within a week after February 26, 2024, but Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, still talked about further military action (Levenson). Second, ideas such as transferring the power within the Palestinian Authority from the current president, Mahmoud Abbas, to a new prime minister (with Abbas maintaining a ceremonial role) to reduce the corruption and dysfunction within parts of the West Bank have shown progress with numerous ideas being considered, but such plans still have a long road ahead from some ideals opposed by some parties (The Times of Israel). Lastly, the Biden

administration revived a three-way deal under discussion with Saudi Arabia to have Saudis agree to formal diplomatic relations with Israel, contingent on Israel agreeing on the conditions for the creation of a Palestinian state (Wong). Through this, the U.S. Foreign Service is helping to create further relations not only between the two opposing groups—Israel and Palestine—but also among neighboring nations in the Middle East. Overall, this translates to the safety and goodwill of the United States alongside the growth of peace throughout the region.

There is much still to be done: the United States Foreign Service must vigilantly uphold its reputation globally, countering opposing ideologies by advocating for peace through various diplomatic tracks and further agreements. In this case, America must follow through on every threat and defeat opposing obstacles in foreign policy to maintain credibility. If America cannot stand against challengers or opposers in one place, the hatred will disseminate, making the United States world power crumble. For example, the United States must continue reaching a ceasefire and offering humanitarian assistance to reduce the blockade in Gaza, as about 75% of the people in that region face food insecurity (Adami). It also must fully revamp the Palestinian Authority (PA)—which has been losing its popularity due to lack of protection of Palestinian communities from Israeli attacks—because nearly half of the Palestinian population have an unfavorable view of the United States, largely unchanged since 2021, meaning the legitimacy problem of the PA must be solved to regain the trust of the Palestinian people (Adami). Furthermore, polls gathering United States opinion have shown that 52% of Americans support a two-state solution to the conflict (Pew Research Center). Still, growing skepticism from Palestinians and Israelis requires that the United States quickly reach negotiations toward a separate state before the window for the solution fully shuts. Former U.S. Ambassador to Israel Ed Djerejian has stated, “There is no military solution to this conflict, only a political one”

(Harvard Kennedy School). This means that the path towards peace and stability must be built around a two-state solution to end the cycle of perpetual conflict. The two-state solution is better than other solutions, including a one-state solution, because most Western countries, including the US and EU, support this resolution with both sides too “opposed to be able to reach an agreement autonomously” (Abrams).

The resolution of the Troubles conflict in Northern Ireland also draws valuable lessons. Stemming from centuries of English control, settler colonization, and tensions between Irish nationalists seeking independence, discrimination against the Catholic minority by the Protestant majority led to civil rights protests in the 1960s, which met with violent state repression (McAllister). Protestant unionists desired Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom, while Catholic nationalists wanted a united Ireland, causing decades of violence. However, by 1998, the Troubles came to an end after both sides signed the Good Friday Agreement, keeping Northern Ireland a part of the United Kingdom, but giving residents there the chance to have either British or Irish citizenship. Through U.S. intervention there was room for diplomacy with leaders on both sides, which no one before 1998 would have imagined possible (Toft). Similarly, the United States through the Foreign Service must assist Israelis and Palestinians to come to agreements, fighting for diplomacy and international cooperation to make significant progress towards reconciliation and the end of violent disputes. This political reconciliation may currently feel impossible, but so too did resolution for the Troubles feel out of reach with numerous ceasefires similarly agreed upon and broken along the way, including the Provisional IRA’s 1975 ceasefire (Craig).

Conclusion

With the conflict persisting in the Middle East region, the U.S. Foreign Service faces daunting challenges, from navigating geopolitical tensions to countering deeply entrenched ideological divides. U.S. Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, at a press availability in Israel declared: “To have a region that’s more integrated in which everyone can feel secure, including Israel... Hard choices need to be made in order to get there” (U.S. Department of State). While the road ahead has numerous obstacles—including the continuous mistrust apparent between Palestinians and Israelis after the conflict—the steadfast diplomacy, humanitarian aid, and strategic alliances in continuation of the three tracks of solutions allow the Foreign Service to promote reconciliation between the two groups. As history has shown, even the most intractable conflicts can be resolved through tireless dedication, diplomacy, and the unwavering belief in the power of communication, bridging divides toward peace out of vicious discord.

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