



# PERSPECTIVES

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## Red and Green Virtue-Signaling— An American “Intifada”?

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The recent riots in the US underscore how identity politics have been hijacked by red and green alliances between socialist and Islamist ideologies. We are now seeing a conjoining of black American politics with Palestinian thinking, which is itself consumed by identity politics.**

It didn't take long after the riots began across the US to hear expressions of solidarity from Palestinians in both the Middle East and the US connecting the horrific killing of George Floyd to the Palestinian tale. Palestinian artist Waleed Ayyoub illustrated the connection by painting and posting on the US Twitter feed of the Palestine Museum [a picture of George Floyd dressed in a kaffiya in front of a banner of the Palestinian flag](#).

Palestinians claim that the killing of Floyd, as well as the subsequent violent exchanges between US military and police forces and protesters, show that Israel exports its “racism” to US police departments. The US Campaign for Palestinian Rights (USCPR) tweeted to its 51,000 followers, “The Israeli military trains US police in racist and repressive policing tactics, which systematically targets black and brown bodies.”

The red and green alliance between socialist and Islamist ideologies strengthened in parallel with the rise of the idea of intersectionality. Both ideologies are heavily laden with hatred of Israel, as became obvious during the latest rioting.

The best example of this phenomenon is the labeling of the current American reality as an intifada. The Arabic term, which literally means “uprising,” was first used during the 1987 popular revolt against Israel. It is translated by Arab-Palestinians as “awakening.” It is used in the Palestinian narrative in the sense of “waking up”

Israel and the world at large to all the wrongs supposedly done to the Palestinians as a result of the so-called Israeli “occupation.” The late founder of the PLO, Yasser Arafat, used more colorful analogies, saying an intifada is the movement a dog makes when trying to get rid of a tick.

Rami Khouri, a journalism professor at the American University in Beirut, didn’t waste any time and declared the US riots an “American intifada.” He rationalized that “in the Arab world, there’s an inability to address the structural oppression of most citizens by an elite that has become very wealthy but is totally detached from their people. You’re seeing the same thing in the US. There’s an inability to address its structural racism.”

The adaptation of the term is not new, but it is revealing of the American political and cultural landscape in that it shows where the Palestinian cause sits in the intersectional pyramid. It appears to be the gold standard of (supposed) oppression, and is thus eagerly coopted by other causes rooted in identity politics.

This has long been visible in American institutions of higher education. Back in 2004, Hatem Bazian, director of the Islamophobia Research and Documentation Project at the Center for Race and Gender at the University of California, Berkeley, said:

Well, we've been watching intifada in Palestine, we've been watching an uprising in Iraq, and the question is, what are we doing? How come we don't have an intifada in this country?

Because it seem[s] to me that we are comfortable in where we are, watching CNN, ABC, NBC, Fox ... giving us a window to the world while the world is being managed from Washington, from New York ... every one of those lying, cheating, stealing, deceiving individuals are in our country and we're sitting here and watching the world pass by, people being bombed, and it's about time that we have an intifada in this country that change[s] fundamentally the political dynamics in here.

And we know every—They’re gonna say some Palestinian being too radical—well, you haven't seen radicalism yet!

Then there is Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, a professor of the History of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations at Georgetown University, who explained simply that “Intifada is something that Muslims and Palestinians all approve of. It means ‘just get off my back.’”

Freedom of speech and religion in addition to the right to assemble and protest are all positive attributes and cornerstones of American democracy that should be embraced. But we need to be clear about the goals and objectives of intifada. Intifada

by design has a violent terrorist agenda that has been demonstrated by the level of violence used against Israelis for over three decades. It is a mechanism that justifies all violence in the name of “resistance,” and has justified continued violence. One of the mistakes Israel has made is acceding to the adoption of the term to describe its ongoing conflict with the Palestinians. By incorporating an Arabic term with clear goals into the Israeli political and cultural vernacular, Israel has, in effect, legitimated the Palestinian point of view.

The American democracy is far from perfect, but it remains the best system we have. America is not the Middle East; nor is it looking to transform itself into it. Using the Israel-Palestinian conflict as a façade or deflection, or trying to link radical ideologies on the hard left and right, has become the basis for the red and green alliance. Doing so only creates distortion.

Working to uproot all forms of racism is undoubtedly needed in the US, but antisemitism is another form of racism. Calling for intifada—in other words, calling for war—is the polar opposite of what Americans of any color should be doing.

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