



From Guerrilla Fighter to National Icon: Revisiting the Political Life of Yasser Arafat

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Abstract

This paper, by looking at various Arab-Israeli conflicts and the resultant loss of homeland for Palestinians in the mid of twentieth century, will analyze how Yasser Arafat grew from guerrilla fighter to the precedent of PNA. By reading through the modern history of Palestine and the articles and books on different conflicts in the second half of twentieth century, the paper will discuss how such a figure was institutionalized in the history of Palestinian national movements. It will also be evaluating the question whether Arafat created Palestinian revolution, or Palestinian revolution created Arafat. The answer to this question, in my opinion, will bring in the contribution of Arafat to the liberation of Palestine. In fact, such a discussion deserves a greater significance, as he is dismissed by some people as terrorist and hailed by others as the revolutionary leader. On the other hand, the ideological shift in his approach to the Palestinian question from “one state solution” to “two state solutions” also invites critical intervention as that of the previous one to understand his emphasis on peace negotiations with Israel. Thus, this paper, on the one side, by looking at his development from freedom fighter to the precedent of PNA, will critically analyze the iconizing of his personality as the cult figure in Palestinian national movements. On the other side, it will discuss his ideological positions in Palestinian issue and the two ideological strands of his activism by people and countries throughout the world to the effect of better deducing him as the hero of Palestinian resistance movements.

Keywords: Israel-Palestine conflicts, Arafat and the birth of Palestinian revolution, Arafat and PLO leadership, Arafat’s ideological shift, the Oslo Accord and Arafat’s misfortune, Two Intifadas.