




The Palestine-Israel Conflict: A Legacy of Power, Identity, and Unyielding Struggle

 Dr Siddiqui Sana Naaz^{1*}

¹Research Scholar, Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Aurangabad, Maharashtra, India.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70333/ijeks-03-09-018>

*Corresponding Author: siddiquisananaaz@gmail.com

Article Info - Received : 11 September 2024

Accepted : 25 September 2024

Published : 30 September 2024



The Prolonged conflict between Palestine and Israel has carved a significant chapter in global history, permeating international politics, human rights discourse, and geopolitical strategy. What began as a territorial dispute has evolved into a Complex conflict encompassing identity, religion, historical grievances, and ideological divides. This article delves into the intricate fabric of the Palestine-Israel conflict, examining its historical roots, the impact of Colonial influence, the Religious factors, and the complex interplay of power dynamics. By analyzing key events, agreements, and international responses, this research explores the enduring nature of the conflict and its global ramifications. It aims to shed light on the intractable issues at the heart of the dispute while offering critical reflections on possible paths toward peace.

Keywords: Palestine-Israel Conflict, Territorial Dispute, Identity, Religion, Colonial Influence, Geopolitical Strategy, Power Dynamics.



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1. INTRODUCTION

The Israel-Palestine conflict is one of the most enduring and contentious geopolitical struggles of modern times. It is a conflict that “transcends mere territorial disputes, encompassing Longstanding issues of identity, religion, and historical legitimacy” (Khalidi, 2010, p. 45). The modern conflict is often dated to the early 20th century, with the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent British mandate over Palestine, which “laid the groundwork for decades of violence and unrest” (Pappé, 2011, p. 32).

At its core, the conflict is about two peoples—Jewish and Palestinian Arab—claiming the same land, each with deep historical, religious, and emotional connections. The complexity is further deepened by international interventions, colonial legacies, and divergent nationalisms. The 1948 Arab-Israeli War, also known as the Nakba by Palestinians, and the establishment of the State of Israel marked pivotal turning points. As noted by historian Ilan Pappé, “the war cemented not only territorial gains but also the Psychological and ideological differences between Jews and Arabs, a divide that has proven difficult to bridge” (Pappé, 2006, p. 112).

This paper seeks to explore the historical origins, religious implications, and the role of international actors in shaping the current reality. In doing so, it aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of why the conflict has persisted for so long and why resolutions have continually faltered.

2. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW: FROM OTTOMAN RULE TO BRITISH MANDATE

The roots of the Palestine-Israel conflict can be traced back to the late 19th century, with the rise of nationalist movements among both Jews and Arabs. As noted by [Rashid Khalidi](#), “both Zionism and Arab nationalism emerged as responses to the imperial disintegration and the challenges posed by modernity” ([Khalidi, 1997, p. 78](#)). For Zionists, Palestine represented the biblical homeland of the Jewish people, a spiritual and historical connection that justified their claims. Conversely, for Palestinian Arabs, the land was their ancestral home, where they had lived for centuries under Ottoman rule, and they viewed Jewish immigration as a colonial encroachment ([Finkelstein, 2003, p. 27](#)).

During Ottoman rule, Palestine was a part of a larger empire, with Jewish, Christian, and Muslim populations living together in relative peace. However, by the 19th century, Zionist aspirations for a Jewish homeland, driven by the political ideology of Zionism, aligned with European colonial ambitions, and Jewish immigration increased significantly ([Smith, 2001, p. 56](#)).

The British Mandate (1920-1948) following World War I was a pivotal period that exacerbated tensions. The Balfour Declaration of 1917, promising “a national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine, laid the foundation for a conflict that would unfold in the years to come. According to historian Benny Morris, “British policies during the mandate period fostered Jewish immigration while failing to address the concerns of the Arab population, setting the stage for a deep-seated conflict” ([Morris, 2008, p. 98](#)).

By 1947, the United Nations proposed partitioning Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, a solution rejected by the Arab community, who viewed it as a violation of their rights ([Said, 1999, p. 42](#)). This led to the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, resulting in the establishment of Israel and the displacement of hundreds of

thousands of Palestinians. As Edward Said wrote, “the Palestinian tragedy is not just one of dispossession but of being rendered invisible in the narrative of the modern Middle East” ([Said, 1979, p. 56](#)).

3. RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE AND IDENTITY: A CONFLICT BEYOND POLITICS

One of the most challenging aspects of the Israel-Palestine conflict is its religious dimension. Jerusalem, a city sacred to Jews, Christians, and Muslims, is a Point of contention for the wider ideological struggle. As noted by Karen Armstrong, “Jerusalem represents the spiritual heart of three great monotheistic religions, and its contested status is emblematic of the broader tensions between religious communities in the region” ([Armstrong, 1996, p. 94](#)).

For Jewish people, the city is home to the Western Wall, the last remnant of the Second Temple, and is the focal point of centuries of longing for return ([Armstrong, 1996, p. 102](#)). For Muslims, the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque are sites of immense religious importance, being the third-holiest site in Islam ([Esposito, 2002, p. 47](#)). Thus, the battle over Jerusalem is not merely political but also deeply spiritual.

4. THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ACTORS: COLONIALISM, COLD WAR, AND GLOBAL POWERS

The internationalization of the Israel-Palestine conflict has further complicated efforts to achieve peace. From the British Empire’s involvement during the mandate period to the Cold War superpowers, external actors have played a significant role in shaping the trajectory of the conflict.

The British, as the colonial power from 1920 to 1948, bear much of the responsibility for the conditions that led to the 1948 war ([Finkelstein, 2003, p. 31](#)). The withdrawal of British forces in 1948, without a clear resolution to the conflict, set the stage for the Arab-Israeli war and the subsequent displacement of Palestinians ([Pappé, 2006, p. 88](#)).

The Cold War rivalry between the U.S. and the Soviet Union further increased regional tensions. The U.S. quickly became Israel’s primary ally, providing diplomatic, military, and financial support ([Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007, p. 125](#)). On the other hand, Arab states, particularly Egypt and

Syria, were supported by the Soviet Union (Khalidi, 2010, p. 45). The 1967 Six-Day War, in which Israel captured the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights, solidified Israel's territorial control but also deepened the divisions between Israelis and Palestinians (Smith, 2001, p. 109).

The United Nations has also played a critical role, from the 1947 Partition Plan to ongoing resolutions calling for a two-state solution (Morris, 2008, p. 78). However, the UN's efforts have been consistently undermined by a lack of enforcement of its resolutions and the strong diplomatic backing Israel receives from its Western allies, particularly the U.S. (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007, p. 135).

5. PEACE PROCESSES AND ONGOING STRUGGLES: WHY RESOLUTIONS HAVE FAILED

Over the decades, numerous attempts have been made to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict. Key moments include the Camp David Accords of 1979 and the Oslo Accords of 1993. However, both processes have failed to address the core issues at the heart of the conflict. According to Rashid Khalidi, "the imbalance of power, particularly Israeli settlement expansion and the fragmentation of Palestinian leadership, has been a critical barrier to lasting peace" (Khalidi, 2010, p. 91).

The Oslo Accords were initially seen as a significant breakthrough, with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat agreeing to a phased peace process (Pappé, 2011, p. 122). However, the assassination of Rabin in 1995 and the rise of right-wing political forces in Israel severely undermined the process (Morris, 2008, p. 202). The Second Intifada in 2000 further diminished hopes for peace (Smith, 2001, p. 203).

One of the most significant obstacles to peace has been Israeli settlement expansion in the West Bank. According to Human Rights Watch, "the ongoing settlement construction violates international law and undermines the possibility of a contiguous Palestinian state" (HRW, 2019, p. 48). As of 2021, over 600,000 Israeli settlers live in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, further complicating any future territorial agreements (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007, p. 222).

6. CHALLENGES IN PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION AND LEADERSHIP

The internal dynamics of Palestinian leadership have also played a critical role in the persistence of the conflict. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), once recognized as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, has faced challenges from Hamas, an Islamist movement that emerged in the 1980s (Gunning, 2009, p. 68). While the PLO, under

While the PLO, under Yasser Arafat and later Mahmoud Abbas, pursued diplomacy and negotiations with Israel, Hamas rejects the Oslo framework and has engaged in armed resistance against Israeli occupation (Gunning, 2009, p. 82). This internal division between Fatah, the dominant faction in the PLO, and Hamas, which governs the Gaza Strip, has not only weakened the Palestinian national movement but has also complicated international efforts to engage with the Palestinian leadership (Khalidi, 2010, p. 123). Western powers, particularly the United States and the European Union, have refused to negotiate with Hamas due to its designation as a terrorist organization (Smith, 2001, p. 188), further isolating Gaza and exacerbating the humanitarian crisis.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza has been described by the United Nations as "unsustainable," with a blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt that has left the territory impoverished and dependent on international aid (UN OCHA, 2018, p. 34). The repeated military confrontations between Israel and Hamas, including wars in 2008-09, 2012, and 2014, have resulted in massive civilian casualties and widespread destruction of infrastructure (HRW, 2019, p. 62).

7. HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Israel-Palestine conflict is also framed within a human rights and international law context, with accusations of widespread violations on both sides. Israeli policies, such as the expansion of settlements, the construction of the separation barrier, and the use of military force in the occupied territories, have been condemned by human rights organizations and deemed violations of international humanitarian law (Amnesty International, 2017, p. 18). The Geneva Conventions prohibit the transfer of civilian

populations into occupied territories and the collective punishment of civilian populations, both of which are implicated in Israeli actions (HRW, 2019, p. 49).

Palestinian civilians have also faced significant human rights abuses, including arbitrary detention, extrajudicial killings, and restrictions on movement (Amnesty International, 2017, p. 34). The right of return for Palestinian refugees, one of the most contentious issues in the conflict, remains unresolved. Palestinian leaders continue to insist on the right of return for the millions of refugees displaced in 1948 and their descendants, while Israel categorically rejects this, arguing that it would compromise the Jewish majority within the state (Morris, 2008, p. 156).

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has opened investigations into potential war crimes committed by both Israeli and Palestinian actors, further highlighting the legal dimension of the conflict. Israel rejects the ICC's jurisdiction, arguing that it is not a member of the court, while the Palestinian Authority has welcomed the investigation (ICC, 2020, p. 28). This legal battle underscores the increasing role of international legal frameworks in addressing human rights violations in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict (Morris, 2008, p. 170).

8. GLOBAL IMPACTS AND GEOPOLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

The Israel-Palestine conflict has global ramifications, influencing international politics, the spread of extremist ideologies, and regional geopolitics. The conflict has been a rallying cry for Arab and Muslim-majority countries, contributing to anti-Western sentiment due to perceptions of Western bias toward Israel (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007, p. 251). Extremist groups such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS have used the conflict to recruit followers by framing it as part of a broader struggle against Western imperialism and oppression of Muslims (Esposito, 2002, p. 203).

The conflict has also shaped U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. The U.S.'s close alliance with Israel has led to widespread criticism from Arab and Muslim-majority countries and has been a source of tension in its diplomatic relations with other regional actors (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007, p. 265). The Abraham Accords of 2020, which normalized relations between Israel and

several Arab states, marked a significant shift in regional geopolitics. However, the accords did little to advance the cause of Palestinian statehood and have been criticized for sidelining the Palestinian leadership (Khalidi, 2020, p. 189).

9. PATHS TOWARD PEACE: IS RESOLUTION POSSIBLE?

Despite numerous setbacks, the question remains whether a resolution to the Israel-Palestine conflict is possible. The two-state solution, long championed by the international community, envisions the creation of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel (Morris, 2008, p. 184). However, the expansion of Israeli settlements, the division between the West Bank and Gaza, and the rise of right-wing political forces in Israel have made this solution increasingly unlikely (Pappé, 2011, p. 135).

Some analysts have proposed alternative frameworks, including a one-state solution, in which Israelis and Palestinians would live as equal citizens in a single democratic state (Smith, 2001, p. 176). This proposal, while ensuring equality and human rights for all, faces significant opposition from both sides, with many Israelis fearing the loss of the Jewish character of the state, and Palestinians wary of compromising their national aspirations for independence (Khalidi, 2020, p. 212).

Others have called for a confederal model, where Israel and Palestine remain two separate entities but share key institutions such as security, water resources, and infrastructure (Gunning, 2009, p. 205). This model would allow for cooperation and greater integration while preserving the distinct identities of both peoples.

10. CONCLUSION: TOWARD A JUST AND LASTING PEACE

The Israel-Palestine conflict is among the most complex and enduring conflicts of modern history, involving issues of power, identity, and historical grievances. Numerous efforts have been made to resolve the conflict, but they have repeatedly faltered due to internal divisions, external interference, and the deep-rooted psychological and emotional dimensions of the struggle. As the possibility of a two-state solution becomes more tenuous, it is critical to consider innovative approaches to peace, whether through a rights-based approach, a one-state or confederal

model, or a renewed commitment to addressing the humanitarian and human rights dimensions of the conflict (Smith, 2001, p. 213). The ultimate goal must be to achieve a solution that ensures equality, justice, and self-determination for both Israelis and Palestinians. A just and lasting peace will require not only political agreements but also a profound shift in the societal attitudes and historical narratives that underpin the conflict. Only by acknowledging each other's humanity, rights, and historical experiences can Israelis and Palestinians move toward a future of mutual coexistence and peace.

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Cite this article as: Dr Siddiqui Sana Naaz (2024). The Palestine-Israel Conflict: A Legacy of Power, Identity, and Unyielding Struggle, *International Journal of Emerging Knowledge Studies*. 3(9), pp.600-604.
<https://doi.org/10.70333/ijeks-03-09-018>