

What are the historic  
and current factors  
contributing to the  
israel-palestinian ...



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The Israeli-Palestinian dispute has been ' at the heart of Middle Eastern politics in the twentieth century. ' To examine this topic sufficiently we must first take a look at this history of the Israeli's and the Palestinian's and look at the events of last century to give context to their contending interpretations of history, then we can get into the issues, and points of controversy still dominate today.

Many people often assume some would say wrongly that this is a religious conflict, simply because these two groups have different religions. It is not that simple, Palestinians include Christians and Druze not just Muslims. Religious differences are not the sole cause of the conflict. Fundamentally the conflict arises over the struggle over land. A piece of land that both have strong, plausible ties and claims too. Until 1948, the area that both groups claimed was known internationally as Palestine.

But following the war of 1948-49, this land was divided into three parts: the state of Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Jewish claims to this land are based predominantly on the biblical promise to Abraham and his descendants, as well as the fact that this was the historical site of the Jewish kingdom of Israel (destroyed by the Roman Empire), and on Jews' need for a ' safe' haven from European anti-Semitism that was particularly rife in the early part of the twentieth century. Palestinian Arabs' claims to the land are based on continuous residence in the country for hundreds of years and the fact that they represented the demographic majority in the area. Arabs do not believe that they should be made to forfeit their land to compensate the Jews for Europe's crimes against them that they played no part in. In the 19th century, following a trend that started in Europe earlier on, people

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around the world began to categorize themselves as nations and began to demand national rights, principally the right to self-determination and national sovereignty in a state of their own. Jews and Palestinians both began to develop a national consciousness, and mobilized in the hope of realizing and achieving their national goals.

Because Jews were spread across the world (in Diaspora), their national movement, Zionism, entailed the identification of a place where Jews could come together through the process of immigration and settlement. Palestine seemed the logical and most favorable place, since this was the site of Jewish origin. ' The first migration to Palestine (or Aliyah) began in 1882' . Until the beginning of the 20th century, the majority of Jews settled in Palestine were in four major cities Jerusalem, Hebron, Safad and Tiberias.

Most of them observed traditional, orthodox religious practices. Their attachment to the land was religious rather than national, and they were not involved in or supportive of the Zionist movement, which began in Europe and was brought to Palestine by immigrants. In contrast most of the Jews who emigrated from Europe lived a more secular lifestyle and were extremely committed to the task of creating a Jewish nation and building a modern, independent Jewish state. By the early years of the 20th century, Palestine was becoming an area of increased political interest and a place of competing territorial claims. The Ottoman Empire had been significantly weakened, and European powers were asserting their grip on areas in the eastern Mediterranean, including that of Palestine.

Then in 1917, Lord Balfour, the British Foreign Minister issued the Balfour Declaration announcing his government's support for the establishment of ' a Jewish national home in Palestine' . Britain obtained a mandate over the areas, which now comprise Israel, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Jordan. In 1921, the British divided this region into two parts: east of the Jordan River became the Emirate of Transjordan and west of the Jordan River became the Palestine Mandate. This was the first time in modern history that Palestine became a unified political body.

Throughout the region, Arabs were frustrated by Britain's failure to make good on its promise to create an independent Arab state. In Palestine, the situation was more complicated because of the British promise to support the creation of a Jewish national home. The rising numbers of European Jewish immigration, as well as land purchases and settlements in Palestine generated increasing resistance by Palestinian political figures. They feared that this would eventually lead to the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. Palestinian's opposed the British Mandate because it disillusioned their aspirations for self-determination, and opposed massive Jewish immigration because it threatened the sovereignty of the country. After examining the situation Following World War II at the British request the United Nations insisted that in order to establish peace and to satisfy both sides they would have to divide Palestine up.

Jews had acquired by purchase approximately eight percent of the total land area of Palestine, which equated to approximately 20 percent of the arable land. The UN partition plan divided the country in a way that each state would have the majority of its own population. Although this did mean that <https://assignbuster.com/what-are-the-historic-and-current-factors-contributing-to-the-israel-palestinian-conflict-essay/>

some Jewish settlements would fall within the proposed Palestinian state and vice versa. The Zionist leadership accepted the UN partition plan, although they did so hoping to expand the borders given to the Jewish state, and the Palestinian Arabs and the surrounding Arab states rejected the UN plan. Fighting erupted between the poorly organized Arab military, and the well trained, organized, and armed Jewish army days after the adoption of the UN partition plan. On May 15, 1948 the state of Israel came into existence' .

The neighboring Arab states of Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq then invaded Israel claiming that they sought to save Palestine from the Zionists. The war ended in 1949. The country once known as Palestine was now divided into three parts, each under separate political control. There were a large number of Palestinian refugees as a result of this conflict. Palestinians that remained in the area that became Israel were granted Israeli citizenship, but there is an argument that they were and some say to an extent still are looked at as merely second-class citizens.

The six-day war of 1967 came next, The Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian armies were resolutely defeated, and Israel captured the West Bank from Jordan, the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, and the Golan Heights from Syria. After this war Israel was left as the largest military power in the area. In reaction to this ' The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was founded as the representative organization of Palestinian political and military movements dedicated to the recovery of Palestine from the Israelis' . So Israel established a military government to occupy the West Bank and Gaza to control Palestinians.

Under this regime many Palestinians were denied the most basic of rights and all manners of society was regulated. The UN partition plan advocated that Jerusalem become an international zone, independent of both the proposed Jewish and Palestinian Arab states. In the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Israel took control of the western part of Jerusalem, while Jordan took the eastern part. In June 1967, Israel captured East Jerusalem from Jordan and almost immediately annexed it. The Arab League established the PLO in 1964 as an effort to control Palestinian nationalism. However, ' the Israeli government refuses to negotiate or deliberate with the PLO at all, ostensibly on the grounds that it is a terrorist organization, arguing that it was nothing but a terrorist organization' .

It rejected the establishment of a Palestinian state, insisting that Palestinians should be incorporated into the existing Arab states. After the 1967 war, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 242 calls for Israeli withdrawal from lands seized in the war and the right of all states in the area to peaceful existence within secure and recognized boundaries. For many years the Palestinians rejected Resolution 242, because it does not acknowledge their right to national self-determination or to return to their homeland. It purely calls for a settlement of the refugee problem. After coming to power in Egypt in late 1970, President Anwar Sadat indicated that he was willing to sign a peace agreement with Israel in exchange for the return of Egyptian territory.

It was ignored by Israel and the US, so Egypt and Syria decided to act and break the political stalemate. They attacked Israeli forces in the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights in October 1973, on the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur. The surprise attack caught Israel off guard. In September 1978, <https://assignbuster.com/what-are-the-historic-and-current-factors-contributing-to-the-israel-palestinian-conflict-essay/>

two agreements were worked out: a framework for peace between Egypt and Israel, and a general framework for resolution of the Middle East crisis, this was called the Palestinian question by President Jimmy Carter, Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin at Camp David.

The Egyptian-Israeli part of the agreement was the only thing implemented. This is because ' Israel sabotaged negotiations by continuing to confiscate Palestinian lands and build new settlements' in breach of the agreements Begin made with Carter. On the 8th December 1987, an Israeli army tanker collide with a line of cars full f Palestinians, this left 4 dead and 7 seriously injured. News spread that this was believed to be no accident and was retaliation for the killing of an Israeli salesperson in Gaza a few days earlier.

The funerals turned into a mass demonstration and soon the uprising had spread from the Gaza strip to the West Bank. The intifada did not bring an end to the occupation. Palestinian activists in the occupied territories demanded that the PLO adopt a legitimate political program in order to secure independence. In response, the Palestine National Council proclaimed an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and renounced terrorism.

There are a number of other conflicts in the nineties that could be mentioned but there is not enough time. As we can see from this brief history of events and historical factors resulting in constant Israeli-Palestinian conflict; ' The dynamics of conflict, the range of solutions, the role of outside actors, and the political positions of both Palestinians and Jews have dramatically changed throughout the course of the conflict. At the same time the central

issues underlying the conflict have not been dramatically transformed. ' Now I will go on to discuss and examine those central issues that have been underlying the conflict, the greatest issue is of course as mentioned earlier the fact that two national movements are competing for the same piece of land. The main conflict here arises because when discussing the idealized futures of each nation state, the Israelis talk of a homeland, where they can escape the persecution they have endured for decades.

This they believe is to be Israel where they can ensure the survival of their religion and race. There is also the same consensus around the principles that the Palestinians believe they have the right to. Therefore the Jews have realized their dream and established Israel as their Jewish state, and this has come at the expense of the Palestinians, ' whose desire to fuse national self-determinism with territorial sovereignty remains unfulfilled. This in many ways therefore has been the main point of contention between these nations in recent years.

We must also note that the notions of self-determination and territorial sovereignty underlie the earlier conflicts between the Zionists and the native Palestinians. The dynamics and concentration of Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the significant impact that the military has had on this, has also acted as a catalyst for the escalation of the dispute and the more polarized views of the two sides. For example it has become more of a case of us vs. them. This was further fuelled by the creation of the state of Israel, and led to the exposure of many of harsh differences between Israeli and Palestinian nationalism.



The emerging state of Israel put immediate emphasis on the protection of its nation and safeguarding their way of life. This caused the Palestinians to focus much more on their collective identity and as such national liberation became their primary objective. This was exemplified following the Israeli occupation of the Gaza strip and the West Bank in 1967, as the PLO emerged as the vehicle to fight for Palestinian national aspirations. For Palestinians the centrality of this conflict has ultimately led to the projection of national liberation to the forefront of the conflict, and this has in many ways shaped their ways of thinking about identity and community. For Israeli's it has led to the overt and covert militarization of people's lives.

One area where there can be said the nationals have similar views is that of national security and national liberation. In this I mean that both nations put these issues above and beyond in terms of importance than they do any other issues, such as economic policies for example. Therefore until the main issue of the Israeli Palestinian conflict has been resolved there will continue to be problems of other issues within both countries. Having said this however the differences of nationalism of the two sides are often overlooked, and these are far greater than the similarities. They involve fundamental differences in history, culture, and the social context of the two movements; the most evident are the disparities between power and privilege in the two countries.

All of the points mentioned above, including the conflicts mentioned in the first part of the essays are together what form the historical and current factors that have left the Israeli-Palestinian conflict unresolved and continuing. Hence in order for politicians to find peace in this long lasting <https://assignbuster.com/what-are-the-historic-and-current-factors-contributing-to-the-israel-palestinian-conflict-essay/>

conflict we need to look in more detail at the central issues for each party and pay attention to how these perceptions of these issue has changed for each party over the years. ' Following is a preliminary list of some of the issues that analysts view as central to a just and lasting resolution of the conflict:

- Fixed, agreed upon borders between Israel and its neighbors
- The assurance of mutual security for all states and peoples in the region
- The status of Jerusalem Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip
- Compensation for Palestinians who were forced to leave their homes and property as a direct result of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict
- The political, civil, and national status of Palestinians who live in Israel and citizenship
- The economic viability of Israel, Palestine and the other states in the region and economic relations among them
- The allocation of resources such as water among the states of the region
- The role of the international community in peacekeeping, peacemaking and peace building.

Many of these issues have at least been partially addressed at the Oslo Accords, however arguably the four most important have not been, and it is said that, settlements, final borders, Palestinian refugees and Jerusalem would all be addressed in final stages of negotiations.

The official position of the parties in terms of peace talks however are contrasting. For Palestinians these are the main issues that underlie the conflict and as such they would want to discuss these first. While in contrast the official Israeli position is that they would rather leave these issues till last, because a resolution on any of them would not be possible without an Israeli concession, and they think that peace talks would break down before these would be discussed anyway. To conclude there are a number of

historical and current factors, which have contributed to Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a number of these factors are more present today than they have ever been, and as a result the numerous peace talk attempts have been unsuccessful. In order for true peace to come out of such a laborious conflict one commentator has said that it would take ' a careful analysis of past and present conflict resolution attempts, their successes (or failures), and the ways in which they were perceived in both communities may inspire new thinking and creative ideas for the resolution of the conflict.

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