

A analysis of the arab israeli conflict history essay



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Arab Israeli conflict is a century-long battle characterized by political hostilities and open warfare involving the Arabs (Palestinians) and the Jewish community (Israelis) in the Middle East. The conflict has its origins in the extensive resettlement of Jews in Palestine, particularly as a result of the founding of the Zionist movement, which deepened with the establishment of the current State of Israel in 1948 (Lesch 217). Still, others view it as a part of Arab nationalism, whose fundamental belief is that all Arabs, extending from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arabian Sea, make up a single nation united collectively by common linguistic, cultural, spiritual, and historical customs (Lesch & Dan 56). Lesch depicts the land considered by the Jews as their historical motherland is also considered by the Pan-Arab organization as traditionally and currently belonging to the Palestinian Arabs (256). The conflict, which began as a political and autonomist disagreement over opposing boundary ambitions has through the years reshaped from the wider Arab-Israeli conflict to a more local conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis, although the Arab world and Israel normally are still at odds with each other over specific territories. This paper will focus on the roots of the conflict, the efforts taken to build peace and the failures of these efforts.

Apprehensions among the Jews and Arabs began to surface after the late nineteenth century, when migration of Jews from Europe amplified with the growth of the Zionist philosophy and movements (Worth 38). Owendale (196-199) explains that the migration of the Jews raised their population in Palestine through the acquirement of land and territories from Ottoman empire and private Arab landowners, referred as effendis, and development of farming settlements in the ancient lands of Israel and Judea and Israel,

which then made up a part of the great Ottoman Empire. During those times, Palestinian Arabs depended on totally feudal system on the effendis' land. The inhabitants of Palestine in 1880 were approximated at 590, 000, with ninety-six percent being Arabs (either Muslims or Christians) and the rest 4 percent of the populace being Jews (Ovendale 290).

In the era of the British Mandate, the declaration of Balfour was ratified in 1917; it affirmed that Great Britain supported the founding of a national homeland for the Jewish in Palestine (Mahler & Mahler 9). This aggravated tensions amid the native Arabs who inhabited the Mandate Palestine and the Jews who moved there during the Ottoman era. In January 1919, the Faisal-Weizmann Agreement was ratified; it propped up the cooperation of Arabs and Jews on the establishment of a national homeland for the Jews in Palestine as well as an Arab nation (Mahler & Mahler 9-11). The population of the Jews continued to rise; by 1931, 17 percent of the inhabitants of Palestine were Jewish, a significant rise by 6 percent from 1922 (Ovendale 306). Soon after the ascension of Hitler and the Nazis to power in Germany, they started persecuting and exterminating the Jews; this led to their increased immigration to Palestine causing a doubling of the Jewish population there. The Palestinian Arabs perceived this brisk immigration of the Jews as a threat to their motherland and their unique identity as a whole (Worth 77). In addition, the Jewish policies of buying land and barring the Arabs from working in farms industries owned by Jews and farms deeply infuriated the Palestinian Arab population (Mahler and Mahler 13).

Protests broke out as early in 1920, demonstrating what the Palestinian Arabs considered were biased favoring of the Jewish migrants put in place by <https://assignbuster.com/a-analysis-of-the-arab-israeli-conflict-history-essay/>

the British mandate that ruled Palestine then (Lesch & Dan 73). This antipathy resulted in to eruption of violence; In March 1920, the earliest violent protests happened in Tel Hai, and afterward that year unrests also started in Jerusalem (Lesch 276). In 1922, the British Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill developed the white paper in a bid to assure the Arab populace, refuting that the goal of the Balfour Declaration was the establishment of a Jewish state. Betar, a Vladimir Jabotinsky's political faction held protests in 1929 which broke out into riots in Jerusalem and spread all through Palestine (Lesch 289). In the 1930s various militant organizations propagating anti- Zionist and anti-British principles such as the Black Hand, were established; they enlisted and provided military training to the Palestinian Arab peasants and by 1935 they had recruited an estimated two hundred to eight hundred men (Lesch 291). The groups were armed with guns and bombs, which they employed to slay Zionist settlers in the region, in addition to holding up in a crusade of vandalizing the settler plantations of the Jews. In 1936, mounting tensions resulted in the revolt by Arabs in Palestine of 1936-1939 (Mahler & Mahler 12).

Osamah (5-7) explains that in reaction to pressure from the Arabs, the authorities of the British Mandate authorities significantly lowered the number of Jewish migrants to Palestine. These limitations were upheld till the conclusion of the British mandate, a period which corresponded with the persecution and extermination of Jews in the historical Holocaust by the Nazi and the escape of Jewish refugees from Europe. As a result, majority of the Jewish immigrants to Palestine were illegitimate, further intensifying the tensions in the area. After numerous unsuccessful efforts to resolve the crisis

through diplomatic means, the Great Britain requested the newly created United Nations for assistance.

On 15th May 1947, the United Nations selected a team, the United Nation Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), comprising of members from 11 nations (Osamah 29). To ensure the neutrality and impartiality of the team, not any of the Great Powers were enlisted in the team. After studying and analyzing the region for five weeks, the team proposed establishment of a divided state in Palestine with partitioned regions for the Jewish and the Arabs. The resolution was adopted by General Assembly of the United States in November 1947 by thirty-three votes against thirteen with ten abstaining (Mahler & Mahler 12-13). The Arab states, which made up the Arab League, voted against the resolution. Meanwhile, at the ground level, the Jewish and Palestinians Arabs were combating openly to have power over key positions in the area; both sides committed various massive atrocities.

During the months preceding to the conclusion of the British Mandate the Haganah instigated several attacks which aided them to acquire control of all the area divided by the United Nations to the Jews, consequently resulting in a high number of refugees and gaining control of several towns including Safad, Haifa, Beisan, Tiberias and Jaffa (Karsh 27). In the beginning of 1948, the Great Britain expressed its strong plans to give up its mandate in Palestine on the 15th of May. As a result, President Truman of US proposed to the United Nations to take over the territories under trusteeship instead of the partition since it was clear that the division would not be achievable by peaceful means and heavy fighting was inevitable. On the eve of the ending of the British Mandate in Palestine, Jews declared the sovereignty and

autonomy of the state of Israel on the part divided to them by UNSCOP (Karsh 28). The following day, the league of Arab nations, in a letter to the general Assembly of the United Nations, restated authoritatively their antagonism to the partition of Palestine into two. Later in the same day, the armed forces of several Arab countries including Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt attacked the territories allocated to the Palestinian Arabs, therefore, initiating war historical war between Israeli and the Arabs of 1948 (Karsh 32). The burgeoning Defense Forces of Israel repelled the armed forces of Arab nations from the portion of the occupied area, consequently expanding their borders further than the initial partition by UNSCOP (Karsh 67).

By the end of 1948, Israel had taken over most part of Mandate Palestine in the West of Jordan River. The rest of the Mandate comprised of Jordan, the portion that, later, was named West Bank under the control of Jordan and the Gaza Strip which was under the control of Egypt (Ovendale 325). Before and during this war, an estimated 713, 000 Palestinian Arabs escaped their former territories and became Palestinian refugees, to some extent, because of a supposed assurance and guarantee from leaders of Arab countries that they would go back to their lands when the conflict had been won (Karsh 78). Many Palestinian Arabs escaped from the territories that are at present state of Israel as a reaction to supposed attacks of Arab towns by various militant organizations of the Jews such as Irgun and the Stern Gang (Karsh 79). The conflict came to a halt with the ratification of the Armistice Agreements by Israel and every of its Arab neighbors in 1949 (Karsh 80).

Due to the increased anti-Zionist activities and discrimination of the Jews in Arab countries especially after the 1948, there was mass influx and immigration of Jewish from several Arab countries to Israel. After the 1948 war till the early 1970s, approximately one million Jewish populations, fled, or were forced out from their homes in Arab countries. Others though, emigrated to due to ideological reasons (Osamah 27). Since the creation of the State of Israel up to date, there have been unending armed and often bloody Arab-Israeli conflicts and political tensions in the region.

Peace Making Efforts

There have been numerous attempts and efforts aimed at creating a peaceful co- existent of Israelis and Palestinian Arabs. In 1974, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was given an observer status in the UN General Assembly as the representative of the Palestinian Arabs (Worth 56). Many institutions affiliated to the UN were set up after 1949 to support the Palestinians, particularly the refugees. The UN passed a short-lived declaration that Zionism was a form of racism, consequently eroding the credibility of the UN among the Israeli as an impartial mediator. There have been numerous sanctions slammed against Israel but also have not yielded any tangible results.

In 1979, following arbitration efforts of the United States, Israel and Egypt ratified a peace agreement which made Israel to return the desert of Sinai to Egypt (Lesch and Dan 309). However, successive consultations concerning the independence for the Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank and the strip of Gaza Strip and the West Bank were unsuccessful because Palestinian Arabs

refused to agree to Israel's partial autonomy plans for these territories, and Israel rejected the PLO as a mediation partner. The Israelis shifted this view in 1990s following the PLO's renunciation of violence, acknowledgement of the legality of Israel, and declaration to only struggle for a Palestinian state based on the 1967 occupied territories (Sela 26). Besides, numerous uprisings of the Palestinian Arabs in the occupied areas from 1987 have made it certain to the authorities of Israel that they possibly cannot keep on their rule over the Arab population.

The most notable effort to the realization of peace was the Oslo led peace negotiation of 1994. Sela explains that it led to the establishment of Palestinian National Authority (PNA) led by Yasser Arafat and the PLO, to which Jewish would eventually transfer the territories (30). Further, elections for the leadership of the PNA and Legislative Assembly of the Palestinians were done excluding violent or racist parties. The plan was that following a five year transition phase the most intricate issues including the drawing of specific borders, the standing of Jerusalem, the resettlement of Palestinian refugees, and the issue of the Jewish settlements would be negotiated and resolved. However, the issue of Jewish settlements and growth of terrorism networks after the withdrawal of Israel from Palestinian territories undermined the Oslo peace process which later collapsed.

Other significant efforts include President Bill Clinton's bridging proposals; though unsuccessful, both sides have conceded that they were the closest step to peace ever reached. After the collapse Israel re-occupied the Palestinian territories again. In 2003, the roadmap to peace was initiated by the United States, United Nations, European Union and Russia. Nevertheless,

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no serious peace consultations have occurred in recent days between Israel and the Palestinians (Sela 72). The direct consultations initiated by President Obama are the most recent efforts but they are being weighed down by difficulties. Still, the Arab-Israeli conflict persists and the search for the elusive peace continues.

Obstacles to Peace

Religion and the conflict over holy places create a major impediment to the realization of peace. Both Palestinians and Israeli have their own holy sites and none of them is willing to compromise (Weinberger). The Palestinians, for instance, have vowed to fight to the last man while the Israelis are ready to defend their people and heritage by all means possible. The enduring violence and terrorism by Palestinian militants and extremists against Israel add up to the impediment of peace efforts. Another obstacle to peace is the spreading of negative misconceptions and demonization of each other by both parties. The Jews perceive the Arabs cultural and aggressive religion as an incitement to terrorism and violence; on the hand, Palestinians depict Israelis in most disparaging and hateful ways. Some Arab organizations and parents train Palestinian Arab children on paramilitary aspects and as suicide bombers (Weinberger) against Israel and the Jews. Such environment makes achievement of any tangible peace efforts unfeasible.

Conclusion

The realization of the peace and aversion of the Arab Israeli conflict is a daunting task that requires delicate impartial negotiations and genuine addressing of the issues at hand as well as determination and commitment

from the leaders and citizens of both sides. Regardless of several peace efforts, none of side is engrossed in making peace because neither Israel nor the Palestinians are ready to fold due to the aforementioned willingness to compromise and one gets all or nothing approach. This is further complicated by the reality that neither side wants to admit the existence of the other.