

Introduction  
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## **Introduction**

The unending clash between Israel and the Palestinians has caught many people who live in the region unaware. Although very easy to understand, the conflict, which has existed for decades now, is deeply complex.

Emanating from this conflict is what each side believes: the Israelis believe that the creator of the universe entitled them to a land called Israel. On the other hand, the Palestinians believe that their creator also entitled them to a land called Palestine. Regrettably, both the Palestinians and Israelis are demanding one thing, that is, land in Middle East, which it group refer differently. Each of these two groups have drawn a strong line of believe, that is, the religious Jewish Israelis and religious Muslim Palestinians associate these land as God given.

The Israelis believed that God (Jehovah) gave them this land and therefore, they should guard it jealously. Similarly, the Palestinians believe that their God (Allah) provided them with Palestine, and by giving it away, it would not only be a sin, but also, an insult to Allah. The Israel and Palestinian conflict is much more complex than this effortless rationalization. Most importantly is the fact that religious and historical disparities play an imperative role in establishing this conflict. For sixty years now, the world has witnessed the fight between Palestinians and Israelis, and every confrontation, each death, and every activity of terrorism, only expands the abhorrence and the disinclination to reach a compromised solution. The paper takes a closer look on the conflict and how manipulation of religion can cause insecurity and hamper peace (Isseroff, p.

1).

## **Antique History of Israel, Palestine and their Religious Inclinations**

Historically, the Jews comprises of two groups: ancient Jews and the modern Jews. The ancient Jews (Hebrews) referred to their land as Israel, Judea, Samaria and Canaan just the way it appears in the Bible. Thus, to them, the ancient times were the days of the Bible. Although not all modern Jews are Christians, they also believe that God gave them a land called Israel under the leadership of Abraham, Moses, David and many other leaders. Over 2000 years ago, the Roman Empire captured Israel and took over supremacy. Its main aim was to control the Jews and govern them.

In order to suppress the growing Jewish rebellions, the Romans went ahead to obliterate the Jewish temple situated in Jerusalem where hundred of Jews lost their lives. Life became difficult under the Roman Empire rule forcing some Jews to flee their ancestral land in an exodus called " The Diaspora." Nevertheless, some Jews remained behind. Those who fled never came back until the end of the Second World War and the Holocaust.

Several foreign empires invaded the ancient Jewish kingdoms and claimed supremacy over it. In fact, in 135 CE, the Roman Empire trounced the third revolt and eventually debarred all Jews occupying Jerusalem and its environs, by selling majority of them into slavery. The Roman Empire then renamed the roman province as Palestine. Following the successive subjugation of Palestine in the seventh century, the few residual denizens incorporated

themselves into the Arab culture and Muslim religion in order to preserve their identity.

Nevertheless, the Arab culture and Muslim religion did not usurp the whole population, as there were some Christian and Jewish minorities living in Palestine, particularly in Jerusalem. It is important to note that the Crusaders subjugated and took control of Palestine in two brief periods where they debarred the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Jews and Muslims into The Diaspora and some into slavery. The crusaders did not conquer Palestine fro the third time and for a long time, the Arab empires took control until 1516 when Palestine became part of the Ottoman Empire. The Israel and Palestinian conflict is mainly a misunderstanding between the Jews referring to themselves as “ Israelis” due to their background, and the Arab population of Palestine, popularly “ Palestinians” following the remaining by the Roman Empire. It is imperative to note that after the subjugation of Palestine by the Roman Empire, the killing and expulsion of the Jews, the Arab-speaking Muslims increased in numbers to form a dominant ethnic cluster (Lesch and Tschirgi, pp. 45-49).

## **The Ascend of Zionism and its Effects**

Towards the end of the 19th century, a small group of Jews formed a religious-nationalist and political movement to champion their rights. In particular, they had a mandate of restoring the land of Israel, which for a long time, they considered their home.

Thus, Zionism started as a political movement to recapture the lost land.

Immediately after the formation of Zionism, the Jews who had gone to “ The

Diaspora”, that is, Eastern Europe including Yemen, started drifting back to Palestine to champion the acquisition of their national land. Many Jews believed that Zionism was the solitary avenues that will enable them achieve national independence, and it was perhaps the only solution to anti-Semitism following the centuries of harassment and repression of the Jews who had freed to foreign territories. In a move aimed at strengthening this nationalist and political movement, the group held its first Zionist congress in 1897 in Basel under the leadership of a Theodor Herzl (a writer and journalist from Austria). In his earlier book, *The Jewish State*, Theodor Herzl tinted a vision of an independent Jewish state where the Jews would be luminosity for the rest of the nations. A good number of orthodox Jews held the view that only the Messiah could show them the way into “ promised land”.

However, the unending pogroms such as the first and second world wars and the Holocaust became an impediment hence, making many reluctant to make up their minds on whether to stay in the Diaspora or go back. Perhaps this is the reason why there exist some anti-Zionist conventional Jews for example, Naturei Karteh and Satmer even by today (Howard, pp. 2-8, 455).

## **The British Autonomy on Palestine**

The First World War saw Great Britain incarcerate some a fraction of Middle East as well as Palestine from the ruling Ottoman Empire. In order to strengthen the rising Zionism, the British pledged support to Zionists of establishing a Jewish State.

In 1917, the Balfour Declaration mandated the Jews to occupy a section of Palestine especially at Transjordan. On realizing this, the Arab inhabitants

resorted to violent insurrections to both the Jews and the British rule with an aim of protecting their land. The Great Revolt of 1936-1939 saw incidences of radicalism initiated by Mufti of Jerusalem take the lives of many Jews and other Palestinian Arabs who dared to compete with him. The Zionists had also their own defense mechanism to counter these insurgent groups. They too carried retaliatory attacks on Arabs during this period. The British rule tried diplomatic skills to quell the violence by suggesting division of Palestine. However, the Arabs rejected this proposal vehemently forcing the British to halt the Jewish immigration strategy in 1937. This angered Zionists who then started accusing British of collusion.

Notwithstanding the pressure from United States, the British rule in Palestine declined to allow further Jewish immigration, and on a catastrophic note, the British arrested illegal immigrants (Jews) and either sent them back or detained them in Cyprus. This policy continued to attract more opposition and violent attacks until it became indefensible for the British. The British referred the matter to United Nations for further deliberation. United Nations resolved to partition Palestine a move that the Palestinians and Arabs rejected quickly although acknowledged by the Jews. The move by United Nations appeared complex of course with the internalization of Bethlehem and Jerusalem in addition to seven parts. For example, "a partition plan for Palestine", proposed the separation of Jews cohabiting in Jerusalem from other Jews through a large Arab corridor.

Through these partitions, the Jewish state was to occupy 56 percent of the Palestine territory and the Arabs to occupy the rest. Nevertheless, following

mutual antagonism between the two groups, the plan failed to work (Isseroff, p. 1).

## **Establishment of the State of Israel**

The meditation of religion continued to affect the region negatively. After the plan failed to work, conflict escalated even more. The Palestinian Arabs became so violent, attacked the Jewish convoys, and restricted them from entering Jerusalem. On realizing this, the Zionist also retaliated back and demolished numerous villages belonging to Palestinians.

Contrary to the expectations of the Arabs, Israel became an independent state in 1948; something that sparked further retaliatory attacks from neighboring Arab countries towards Israel. However, the Zionists had an established Israel Defense Force that fought these enemies and finally won the War of Independence. Nevertheless, the conflict did not end and it forced the two groups to enter into another agreement, armistice agreement, in 1949. Israeli took control of the environs of Jordan River and Mediterranean Sea; Jordan administered West Bank and East Jerusalem, and Egypt took care of Gaza Strip. On the contrary, the neighboring Arab countries refused to absorb the whole population of Arab refugees permanently. Instead, they demanded that they return to Israel, as this was their rightful home. Today, there are over a million Palestinians living in refugee camps under deplorable and despondent conditions simply because Israel cannot allow an influx of Palestinians into Israel, as this would lead to Arab majority. Notably, Israel blames the neighboring Arab countries of the Palestinian refugees citing that they should absorb them into their countries permanently.

Ironically, some Palestinian groups such as Fatah do confess that yielding to the Palestinian 'right to return' would signify the vanishing of Israel as a Jewish state. In most cases, this has been the fundamental cause of Israel and Palestinian conflict (Radley, pp. 586-614).

## **Arab Rejectionism and the Six-Day War**

The Arab-Israel conflict continued even as the neighboring Arab countries refused to recognize Israel as a state. Some of them organized terrorist attacks on Israel for example, the 1959 Yasser Arafat led attack and Egypt's 1964 PLO attack.

In 1967, Israel attacked Palestinian regions including West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem and made one million Palestinians under Israel rule. Nevertheless, division broke among Israelis on the aftermath West Bank and the novel religious-nationalistic association that threatened their interests. Since 1967, the focus of Palestinian confrontation has been on the liberation of these two regions. Nevertheless, dividing Jerusalem and its environs to Israel and Palestine remains a predicament as Israelis believe that this is a holy place that is inseparable (Oren, pp. 8-47).

## **Palestinian State and the Peace Process**

It is quite clear that meditation of a certain religion is very dangerous to the county's security. The conflict between Israel and Palestine is mainly the difference of religious fundamental ideologies between Jews (who observe Christianity) and the Arabs who are mainly Muslims. When United Nations declared Zionism as an act of racism, it lost the ground of arbitration.



The two groups are reluctant to lower their stances on the land issue and give peace a chance to prevail. The world has witnessed unprecedented violence over the legitimacy of Israel and uprising in Middle East for decades now. The Oslo peace agreement of 1994 has not yielded peace in the region and extremist attacks continue to hammer the region.

Even after the Oslo agreement, Israel continues to establish Jewish settlement schemes in West Bank and Gaza Strip contrary to the agreement. This has not only hampered the peace process but also instituted further attacks where hundreds of Jews and Palestinians die on each attack. The Palestinians have resorted to a terror network of extremism comprising of Hamas, al Qaeda and others carrying out suicide attacks in regions dominated by Israelis. Although President Clinton presented a proposal to establish a Palestinian state comprising of Gaza Strip and West Bank, the Israelis continue to hold their religious fundamentalism hence, rejecting this proposal. In the recent, Israel has dismissed Palestinian workers leading to an increase in poverty levels. Additionally, due to this ongoing religious bigotry between Palestine and Israel, there is restricted freedom of movement for fear of attacks (Great Transition Initiative, pp. 3-5).

## **Conclusion**

The Israel and Palestinian conflict lies in the fact that each of the two nationalistic movements, Palestinians and Israelis, allege to own a similar land.

Principally, the religious fundamentalism regarding this land is the main cause of this conflict. In addition, the two groups do not trust each other and

each has its own demonization and presumptions on the other. To Israelis, many Arab states are not only undemocratic, but also weak economically, culturally and socially. They also rebrand them as aggressive and terroristic. On the other hand, the Arabs believe that Israelis are vanquishers and majestic aggressors, who for eternity aspire to manage the entire Middle East. Even as Israel rejects teachings of Muslim in its schools, the Arabs also promote anti-Semitic typecasts and conspiracy theories aimed at underpinning Zionism.

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