

Effect of the arab israeli conflict history essay



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The Arab-Israeli conflict refers to the political tensions and open hostilities between the Arab people of the Middle East and the Jewish community of present-day Israel that have lasted for over a century. Some trace the beginning of the conflict to large-scale Jewish immigration to Palestine, especially after the establishment of the Zionist movement, which intensified with the creation of the modern State of Israel in 1948. This territory was regarded by the Jewish people as their historical homeland, and by the Pan-Arab movement as belonging to the Palestinians, be they Muslim, Christian, Druze or other (and in the Pan-Islamic context, in territory regarded as Muslim lands).

The conflict, which started as a political and nationalist conflict over competing territorial ambitions following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, has shifted over the years from the large scale regional Arab-Israeli conflict to a more local Israeli-Palestinian conflict, though the Arab World and Israel generally remain at odds with each other over specific territory. Religious aspects of the conflict

Several studies argue that groups on both sides, including Hamas and Gush Emunim, evoke religious arguments for their uncompromising positions. The Likud is currently the most prominent Israeli political party that includes the Biblical claim to the Land of Israel in its platform.

The Land of Canaan or Eretz Yisrael was, according to the Torah, promised by God to the Children of Israel, i. e. Jews. The Jewish people conquered and ruled that land from the 11th to the 6th century BCE. Contemporary history of the Arab-Israeli conflict is very much affected by Christian and Muslim

beliefs and their interpretations of the idea of the Chosen concept in their policies with regard to the “ Promised Land” and the “ Chosen City” of Jerusalem.

In his 1896 manifesto *The Jewish State*, Theodor Herzl repeatedly refers to the Biblical Promised land concept. In the same period, Jewish migration to Palestine (Aliyah) increased in volume.

Christian Zionists support Israel because they recognize an ancestral right of Jews to this land, as suggested, for instance, by Paul in Romans 11 of the New Testament. Some also believe that the return of Jews in Israel is a prerequisite for the Second Coming of Christ[5][6].

Muslims also claim to have religious priority in accordance with the Quran.[7] Contrary to the Jewish claim that this land was promised only to the descendants of Abraham’s younger son Isaac, they argue that the Land of Canaan was promised to all descendants of Abraham, with Arabs claiming to be the descendants of his elder son Ishmael. Additionally, Muslims also revere many holy sites which were originally founded by Jews in the Biblical period, such as The Cave of the Patriarchs and the Temple Mount, and in the past 1, 400 years have constructed Islamic landmarks on these ancient Jewish sites, such as the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Muslims also believe that Muhammad passed through Jerusalem on his first journey to heaven. Hamas, which governs the Gaza Strip, claims that all of the land of Israel is an Islamic “ Waqf”, which must be governed by Muslims.

History

End of 19th century-1948

In the late 19th century, under Zionism, many European Jews purchased swamps and other desert land from the Ottoman sultan and his agents. At that time, Jerusalem did not extend beyond the walled area and had a population of only a few tens of thousands. Under the Zionists, collective farms, known as kibbutzim, were established, as was the first entirely Jewish city in modern times, Tel Aviv.

Before World War I, the Middle East, including Palestine, had been under the control of the Ottoman Empire for nearly 500 years. During the closing years of their empire the Ottomans began to espouse their Turkish ethnic identity, asserting the primacy of Turks within the empire, leading to discrimination against the Arabs. The promise of liberation from the Ottomans led many Jews and Arabs to support the allied powers during World War I, leading to the emergence of widespread Arab nationalism.

In 1917, the British government issued the Balfour Declaration, which stated that the government viewed favourably “ the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people” but “ that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine”. The Declaration was issued as a result of the belief of key members of the government, including Prime Minister Lloyd George, that Jewish support was essential to winning the war; however, the declaration caused great disquiet in the Arab world. After the war, the area came under British rule as the British Mandate of Palestine. The area

mandated to the British included what is today Israel, Jordan, the West Bank and Gaza.

Jewish immigration to Palestine increased. By 1931, 17 percent of the population of Palestine were Jews, an increase of six percent since 1922. Jewish immigration increased soon after the Nazis came to power in Germany, causing the Jewish population in Palestine to double. Palestinian Arabs saw this rapid influx of Jewish immigrants as a threat to their homeland and their identity as a people. Moreover, Jewish policies of purchasing land and prohibiting the employment of Arabs in Jewish-owned industries and farms greatly angered the Palestinian Arab communities. Demonstrations were held as early as 1920, protesting what the Arabs felt were unfair preferences for the Jewish immigrants set forth by the British mandate that governed Palestine at the time. This resentment led to outbreaks of violence. In March 1920, a first violent incident occurred in Tel Hai, later that year riots broke out in Jerusalem. Winston Churchill's 1922 White Paper tried to reassure the Arab population, denying that the creation of a Jewish state was the intention of the Balfour Declaration. In 1929, after a demonstration by Vladimir Jabotinsky's political group Betar at the Western Wall, riots started in Jerusalem and expanded throughout Palestine; Arabs murdered 67 Jews in the city of Hebron, in what became known as the Hebron Massacre.

A Jewish bus equipped with wire screens to protect against rock, glass, and grenade throwing, late 1930s

During the week of riots, at least 116 Arabs and 133 Jews were killed and 339 wounded. By 1936, escalating tensions led to the 1936-1939 Arab revolt in Palestine.

In response to Arab pressure, the British Mandate authorities greatly reduced the number of Jewish immigrants to Palestine (see White Paper of 1939 and the Exodus ship). These restrictions remained in place until the end of the mandate, a period which coincided with the Nazi Holocaust and the flight of Jewish refugees from Europe. As a consequence, most Jewish entrants to Palestine were illegal (see Aliyah Bet), causing further tensions in the region. Following several failed attempts to solve the problem diplomatically, the British asked the newly formed United Nations for help. On 15 May 1947 the UN appointed a committee, the UNSCOP, composed of representatives from eleven states. To make the committee more neutral, none of the Great Powers were represented. After five weeks of in-country study, the commission recommended creating a partitioned state with separate territories for the Jews and the Arabs in Palestine. This "two state solution" was accepted with resolution 181 by the UN General Assembly in November 1947 by 33 votes to 13 with 10 abstentions. The Arab states, which constituted the Arab League, voted against. On the ground, Arab and Jewish Palestinians were fighting openly to control strategic positions in the region. Several major atrocities were committed by both sides.

The main differences between the 1947 partition proposal and 1949 armistice lines are highlighted in light red and magenta

In the months prior to the end of the Mandate the Haganah launched a number of offensives in which they gained control over all the territory allocated by the UN to the Jewish State, creating a large number of refugees and capturing the towns of Tiberias, Haifa, Safad, Beisan and, in effect, Jaffa.

On May 14, 1948, one day before the end of the British Mandate of Palestine, Israel declared its independence and sovereignty on the portion partitioned by UNSCOP for the Jewish state. The next day, the Arab League reiterated officially their opposition to the “two-state solution” in a letter to the UN. That day, the armies of Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq invaded the territory partitioned for the Arab state, thus starting the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. The nascent Israeli Defense Force repulsed the Arab nations from part of the occupied territories, thus extending its borders beyond the original UNSCOP partition. By December 1948, Israel controlled most of the portion of Mandate Palestine west of the Jordan River. The remainder of the Mandate consisted of Jordan, the area that came to be called the West Bank (controlled by Jordan), and the Gaza Strip (controlled by Egypt). Prior to and during this conflict, 711, 000 Palestinians Arabs fled their original lands to become Palestinian refugees, in part, due to an alleged promise from Arab leaders that they would be able to return when the war is won. Many Palestinians fled from the areas that are now present-day Israel as a response to alleged massacres of Arab towns by militant and terrorist Jewish organizations like the Irgun and the Stern Gang (See Deir Yassin massacre). Many historians speculate that these massacres took place with the intention of causing psychological distress amongst the Arab population, giving them ample reason and fear to flee their homes and surrounding areas. The War

came to an end with the signing of the 1949 Armistice Agreements between Israel and each of its Arab neighbours. This 1949 armistice line, the so-called green line, is to this day the internationally recognized border of the state of Israel. It is often referred to as the “ pre-1967” border.

David Ben Gurion, Israel’s first Prime Minister, accepted the two state solution that the UN established in 1947, but Ben Gurion expressed in a letter to his wife:

1949-1967

Before the adoption by the United Nations of Resolution 181 in November 1947 and the declaration of the State of Israel in May 1948, several Arab countries adopted discriminatory measures against their local Jewish populations. There were riots in Yemen and Syria. In Libya, Jews were deprived of citizenship, and in Iraq, their property was seized. As a result, a large number of Jews were forced to emigrate from Arab lands, although many also emigrated for ideological reasons. Over 700, 000 Jews emigrated to Israel between 1948 and 1952, with approximately 285, 000 of them from Arab countries. Overall, about 850, 000 Jews had left the Arab World by the early 1970s (according to official Arab documentation), with many of them leaving their property behind. Today, these displaced Jews and their descendants represent 41% of the total population of Israel.

As a result of Israel’s victory in its 1948 war of independence, any Arabs caught on the wrong side of the cease-fire line were unable to return to their homes in what became Israel. Likewise, any Jews on the West Bank or in Gaza were exiled from their property and homes to Israel. The main

difference between the two is that Arabs were allowed to stay in Israel and gain citizenship post-1948, while Jews were completely removed from Arab-held areas after 1948. Today's Palestinian refugees are the descendants of those who left, the responsibility for their exodus being a matter of dispute between the Israeli and the Palestinian side

In 1956, Egypt closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, and blockaded the Gulf of Aqaba, in contravention of the Constantinople Convention of 1888. Many argued that this was also a violation of the 1949 Armistice Agreements.[33][34] On July 26, 1956, Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal Company, and closed the canal to Israeli shipping.

Israel responded on October 29, 1956, by invading the Sinai Peninsula with British and French support. During the Suez Canal Crisis, Israel captured the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula. The United States and the United Nations soon pressured it into a ceasefire. Israel agreed to withdraw from Egyptian territory. Egypt agreed to freedom of navigation in the region and the demilitarization of the Sinai. The United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) was created and deployed to oversee the demilitarization.[37] The UNEF was only deployed on the Egyptian side of the border, as Israel refused to allow them on its territory.

On May 19, 1967, Egypt expelled UNEF observers, and deployed 100, 000 soldiers in the Sinai Peninsula. It again closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, returning the region to the way it was in 1956 when Israel was blockaded.

On May 30, 1967, Jordan signed a mutual defense pact with Egypt. Egypt mobilized Sinai units, crossing UN lines (after having expelled the UN border monitors) and mobilized and massed on Israel's southern border. On June 5, Israel launched an attack on Egypt. The Israeli Air Force (IAF) destroyed most of the Egyptian Air Force in a surprise attack, then turned east to destroy the Jordanian, Syrian and Iraqi air forces. This strike was the crucial element in Israel's victory in the Six-Day War. At the war's end, Israel had gained control of the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, eastern Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. The results of the war affect the geopolitics of the region to this day.

1967-1973

In the summer of 1967, Arab leaders met in Khartoum in response to the war, to discuss the Arab position toward Israel. They reached consensus that there should be no recognition, no peace, and no negotiations with the State of Israel, the so-called "three no's".

In 1969, Egypt initiated the War of Attrition, with the goal of exhausting Israel into surrendering the Sinai Peninsula. The war ended following Nasser's death in 1970.

On October 6, 1973, Syria and Egypt staged a surprise attack on Israel on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish calendar. The Israeli military were caught off guard and unprepared, and took about three days to fully mobilise. The Yom Kippur War accommodated indirect confrontation between the US and the Soviet Union. When Israel had turned the tide of

war, the USSR threatened military intervention. The United States, wary of nuclear war, secured a ceasefire on October 25.

1974-2000

Egypt

Begin, Carter and Sadat at Camp David

Following the Camp David Accords of the late 1970s, Israel and Egypt signed a peace treaty in March, 1979. Under its terms, the Sinai Peninsula returned to Egyptian hands, and the Gaza Strip remained under Israeli control, to be included in a future Palestinian state. The agreement also provided for the free passage of Israeli ships through the Suez Canal and recognition of the Strait of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba as international waterways.

In October 1994, Israel and Jordan signed a peace agreement, which stipulated mutual cooperation, an end of hostilities, and a resolution of other issues. The conflict between them had cost roughly 18.3 billion dollars. Its signing is also closely linked with the efforts to create peace between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) representing the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). It was signed at the southern border crossing of Arabah on October 26, 1994 and made Jordan only the second Arab country (after Egypt) to normalize relations with Israel.

In June 1981, Israel attacked and destroyed newly built Iraqi nuclear facilities in Operation Opera.

During the Gulf War, Iraq fired 39 Scud missiles into Israel, in the hopes of uniting the Arab world against the coalition which sought to liberate Kuwait.

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At the behest of the United States, Israel did not respond to this attack in order to prevent a greater outbreak of war.

In 1970, following an extended civil war, King Hussein expelled the Palestine Liberation Organization from Jordan. September 1970 is known as the Black September in Arab history and sometimes is referred to as the “ era of regrettable events”. It was a month when Hashemite King Hussein of Jordan moved to quash the autonomy of Palestinian organisations and restore his monarchy’s rule over the country. The violence resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of people, the vast majority Palestinians. Armed conflict lasted until July 1971 with the expulsion of the PLO and thousands of Palestinian fighters to Lebanon. The PLO resettled in Lebanon, from which it staged raids into Israel. In 1981, Syria, allied with the PLO, positioned missiles in Lebanon. In June 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon. Within two months the PLO agreed to withdraw thence.

In March 1983, Israel and Lebanon signed a ceasefire agreement. However, Syria pressured President Amin Gemayel into nullifying the truce in March 1984. By 1985, Israeli forces withdrew to a 15 km wide southern strip of Lebanon, until its complete withdrawal in May 2000, seen by Arab Muslims as the result of painful blows suffered at the hands of Hezbollah. They claim that they had won the war and had forced Israel out.

Palestinians

In December 1987, the First Intifada began. The First Intifada was a mass Palestinian uprising against Israeli rule in the Palestinian Territories. The rebellion began in the Jabalia refugee camp and quickly spread throughout

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Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Palestinian actions ranged from civil disobedience to violence. In addition to general strikes, boycotts on Israeli products, graffiti and barricades, Palestinian demonstrations that included stone-throwing by youths against the Israel Defense Forces brought the Intifada international attention. The PLO was excluded from peace negotiations until it recognized Israel and renounced terrorism the following year. In mid-1993, Israeli and Palestinian representatives engaged in peace talks in Oslo, Norway. As a result, in September 1993, Israel and the PLO signed the Oslo Accords, known as the Declaration of Principles or Oslo I; in side letters, Israel recognized the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people while the PLO recognized the right of the state of Israel to exist and renounced terrorism, violence and its desire for the destruction of Israel. The Oslo II agreement was signed in 1995 and detailed the division of the West Bank into Areas A, B, and C. Area A was land under full Palestinian civilian control. In Area A, Palestinians were also responsible for internal security. The Oslo agreements remain important documents in Israeli-Palestinian relations.

2000-present

Aftermath of the Sbarro pizza restaurant suicide bombing. 15 Israeli civilians were killed and more than 130 wounded in the attack.

The Second Intifada forced Israel to rethink its relationship and policies towards the Palestinians. Following a series of suicide bombings and attacks, the Israeli army launched Operation Defensive Shield. It was the largest military operation conducted by Israel since the Six Day War.

As violence between the Israeli army and Palestinian militants intensified, Israel expanded its security apparatus around the West Bank by re-taking many parts of land in Area A. Israel established a complicated system of roadblocks and checkpoints around major Palestinian areas to deter violence and protect Israeli settlements. However, since 2008, the IDF has slowly transferred authority to Palestinian security forces.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon began a policy of unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2003. This policy was fully implemented in August 2005. Sharon's announcement to disengage from Gaza came as a tremendous shock to his critics both on the left and on the right. A year previously, he had commented that the fate of the most far-flung settlements in Gaza, Netzararem and Kfar Darom, was regarded in the same light as that of Tel Aviv. The formal announcements to evacuate seventeen Gaza settlements and another four in the West Bank in February 2004 represented the first reversal for the settler movement since 1968. It divided his party. It was strongly supported by Trade and Industry Minister Ehud Olmert and Tzipi Livni, the Minister for Immigration and Absorption, but Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom and Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu strongly condemned it. It was also uncertain whether this was simply the beginning of further evacuation.

In June 2006, Hamas militants infiltrated an army post near the Israeli side of the Gaza Strip and abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. Two IDF soldiers were killed in the attack, while Shalit was wounded after his tank was hit with an RPG. 3 days later Israel launched Operation Summer Rains to secure the release Shalit. [58] To date, he's been held hostage by Hamas, who

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barred the International Red Cross from seeing him, and demands the release of 450 Palestinian prisoners.

In July 2006, Hezbollah fighters crossed the border from Lebanon into Israel, attacked and killed eight Israeli soldiers, and abducted two others as hostages, setting off the 2006 Lebanon War which caused much destruction in Lebanon. A UN-sponsored ceasefire went into effect on August 14, 2006, officially ending the conflict. The conflict killed over a thousand people, mostly Lebanese civilians, severely damaged Lebanese civil infrastructure, and displaced approximately one million Lebanese and 300,000-500,000 Israelis, although most were able to return to their homes. After the ceasefire, some parts of Southern Lebanon remained uninhabitable due to Israeli unexploded cluster bomblets.

In the aftermath of the Battle of Gaza, where Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip in a violent civil war with rival Fatah, Israel placed restrictions on its border with Gaza borders and ended economic cooperation with the Palestinian leadership based there. Israel and Egypt have imposed a blockade on the Gaza Strip since 2007. Israel maintains the blockade is necessary to limit Palestinian rocket attacks from Gaza and to prevent Hamas from smuggling advanced rockets and weapons capable of hitting its cities.

On September 6, 2007, in Operation Orchard, Israel bombed an eastern Syrian complex which was allegedly a nuclear reactor being built with assistance from North Korea. Israel had also bombed Syria in 2003.

In April 2008, Syrian President Bashar Al Assad told a Qatari newspaper that Syria and Israel had been discussing a peace treaty for a year, with Turkey as a go-between. This was confirmed in May 2008 by a spokesman for Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. As well as a peace treaty, the future of the Golan Heights is being discussed. President Assad said “ there would be no direct negotiations with Israel until a new US president takes office.

Speaking in Jerusalem on August 26, 2008, then United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice criticized Israel’s increased settlement construction in the West Bank as detrimental to the peace process. Rice’s comments came amid reports that Israeli construction in the disputed territory had increased by a factor of 1.8 over 2007 levels.

A fragile six-month truce between Hamas and Israel expired on December 19, 2008; attempts at extending the truce failed amid accusations of breaches from both sides. Following the expiration, Israel launched a raid on a tunnel suspected of being used to kidnap Israeli soldiers which killed several Hamas fighters.

In 2009 Israel placed a 10-month settlement freeze on the West Bank. Hillary Clinton praised the freeze as an “ unprecedented” gesture that could “ help revive Middle East talks. A raid was carried out by Israeli naval forces on six ships of the Gaza Freedom Flotilla in May 2010. after the ships refused to dock at Port Ashdod. The flotilla, organized by the Free Gaza Movement and The Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH), a Turkish NGO, attempted to break the blockade of Gaza and deliver

aid to the Gaza strip. The six ships rendezvoused near Cyprus and departed on 30 May 2010 carrying 663 people from 37 countries.

Cost of conflict

A report by Strategic Foresight Group has estimated the opportunity cost of conflict for the Middle East from 1991-2010 at \$12 trillion. The report's opportunity cost calculates the peace GDP of countries in the Middle East by comparing the current GDP to the potential GDP in times of peace. Israel's share is almost \$1 trillion, with Iraq and Saudi Arabia having approximately \$2. 2 and \$4. 5 trillion, respectively. In other words, had there been peace and cooperation between Israel and Arab nations since 1991, the average Israeli citizen would be earning over \$44, 000 instead of \$23, 000 in 2010.

In terms of the human cost, estimates range from 51, 000 fatalities (35, 000 Arabs and 16, 000 Jews) from 1950 to 2007, to 92, 000 fatalities (74, 000 military and 18, 000 civilian from 1945 to 1995).