

Forum: General Assembly 4
Issue: The question of the Israeli occupied territories, including East Jerusalem
Student Officer: Elijah Wendel
Position: Chair

Introduction

The issue at hand focuses on the Israeli occupation in neighbouring states such as Egypt and Israeli settlements in the West Bank. This research report will give an overview of the issue and a keen understanding of factors such as religion, economics, society and a past history of the conflicts and tensions in the Middle East. Furthermore, it will provide incentive ideas that will guide the development of further and better ideas.



The situation takes place in the Middle East, a predominantly Islamic region, however Israel, a Jewish nation, occupies an important territory with many religious sites important to both religions. The Middle East is one of the most ancient regions on Earth and has had thousands of years of conflict. However, in the last century tension has increased as a large Jewish migration occurred post World War 2, called Zionism¹. The 14th of May 1948, Israel was declared a sovereign state by the United Nations, shown in the Resolution of the General Assembly (A/RES/181(II)) 29 November 1947). The proposition was to create a Jewish State, Israel, and an Arab State, Palestine. However, in 1967 the countries of Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Iraq formed an alliance to attack Israel. In June 5th the Six Day War began and ended the 11th of June, as Israel pushed back on these Member States taking the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights, West Bank and Gaza Strip. With some military occupation in these regions, Israeli began settling into the Golan Heights, Sinai Peninsula, East Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza Strip. However, in 1979 the Sinai settlements were evacuated because of the Egypt-Israel peace agreement, then in 2005 after the Israeli unilateral disengagement plan from Gaza

¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1iVQdjMg_Y4

evacuated those settlements. A major concern with the settlements is that Israel has not dismantled them in East Jerusalem or in the West Bank. The international community and United Nations are opposed to this act, however more settlements are being constructed in the West Bank.

The question of occupied territories tackles the Israeli settlements in Palestine which are esteemed illegal by the international community. This report will focus on previous relevant acts, religious tensions, present issues, and future solutions.

Definition of Key Terms

“Occupied” Territories and “Disputed” Territories

In this context, the term “occupied” refers to the Israeli occupation of territories in Palestine. This term was introduced after the Six-Day War. The occupied Arab territories are the Golan Heights, West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem which Israel has presence in. The United Nations regards the State of Israel as the occupying state and has a belligerent occupation, therefore this term is used to discuss territories in Palestine. However, the Israeli government interpreted this term as an accusation and prefers the term “disputed” as they believe the territories are not Palestinian.

Israeli Settlements

The Israeli Settlements began shortly after the Six Day War as many Israeli’s began to migrate into the regions of West Bank, Gaza Strip, Area C, Sinai Peninsula, Golan Heights and East Jerusalem. Israeli settlements are gated communities with Israeli citizens which are connected by private Israeli highways. The settlements in the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula have been removed, however the other regions continue to have Israeli settlements. These have been condemned by the international community and United Nations as Israel is taking control of lands in a foreign country. The Security Council Resolution 2334 adopted in 2016 denounces the Israeli settlements and stated these actions as a “flagrant violation” against international law. The Fourth Geneva Convention states that it is illegal to migrate citizens into a foreign country to establish a settlement.²

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<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ihl/385ec082b509e76c41256739003e636d/6756482d86146898c125641e004aa3c5>

Outposts

Outposts are Israeli settlements built in the West Bank or other disputed territories which are not authorized by the Israeli government. They were built in the 1990s, and are typically less developed and located a distance away from the authorized Israeli settlements.

Green Line

The Green Line is a demarcation line set in 1948 by the Armistice Treaty, and is the name for the first border of Israel. The borders of Israel have changed since this date because of conflicts such as the Six Day War.

Zionism

The Zionist movement was led by an Austro-Hungarian Jew called Theodor Herzl, who promoted the re-migration towards the lands of the Jewish ancestors, because the Jewish community had migrated towards the rest of the world in the so called Jewish Diaspora. This movement would gain fame in the late 19th Century as multiple Aliyah's took place, leading to a large settling of Jewish communities in the Levant.³

Aliyah

The term Aliyah is used in Zionism, as the “going up” into the Holy Land. There were many Aliyah's, which means the migration of the Jewish people to Palestine.

PLO

The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was founded in 1964 by Yasser Arafat to achieve the independence of Palestine. They were considered a terrorist group, until they acknowledged Israel's statehood and accepted UN resolutions 242 and 338, and also refrained from violence in 1993. Israel recognizes the group as Palestine's representative for the people. However, they continued to use violence against Israel, shown in the Second Intifada of 2005. In 1994 Israel and the PLO signed Gaza-Jericho Agreement and established the Palestine National Authority (PA) to govern over Palestine. In 2004 Mahmoud Abbas became the chairman of the PLO and in 2005 the president of the Palestine Authority. However, in 2018 the PLO Central Council rejected the recognition of Israel as a state, stopping security and economic trade with Israel.

³ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Zionism>

Intifada

The Intifada is a name given to two Palestinian uprisings that occurred in 1987 to 1993 and the second from 2000 to 2005. The word is literally translated from arabic meaning tremor or shivering.

Palestine

The term Palestine has two meanings. One is an geographical Palestine which is the historical region in the Middle East referring to a region that roughly includes modern day Israel, Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The other meaning is used for the State of Palestine, which currently encompasses the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Palestinian

A Palestinian, even though stateless, is someone who belongs to the ethnicity of people who have lived in the region for a long time. Being Palestinian does not mean the person is Arab, however just ethnically from Palestine

Israeli

An Israeli is a citizen of the State of Israel.

Background Information

Pre-19th Century

Jews lived in modern day Israel, however many left this land and settled all around the world primarily moving to Europe, referred typically as the Jewish diaspora. During the Middle Ages Jews were expelled from England in 1290 and from Spain in 1492. After the spanish expulsion, some Jews migrated to Palestine. Furthermore, in the 16th Century more Jews migrated to the Four Holy Cities, including Jerusalem, Tiberias, Hebron and Safed. In many other occasions more Jews returned to Palestine, which is also called Zion, used to describe Jerusalem and the Holy Land or the “Land of Israel”.

19th Century

Many Jews were returning to the Zion fleeing from persecution in Europe. This large migration gave way to Zionism. Theodor Herzl was an Austro-Hungarian journalist and political

activist who popularized the migration to Palestine as he founded Zionism in the late 19th Century. Increased number of Jews began to immigrate into Palestine, which was under the Ottoman Empire. This began the First Aliyah, also known as the agriculture Aliyah, as these first Jewish settlers began purchasing farmland and working the fields. Their main vision was to create a sovereign state for Jews back in the Holy Land.



Jewish migrants arriving in Israel, 18 July, 1947.

20th Century

With the large influx of Jews migrating from Europe into the Ottoman Empire, Zionism grew in popularity in the Jewish community having thousands more join the movement. This began the Second Aliyah from 1904 to 1914 primarily immigrating from Russia.

Post-WW1

After the Great War, the Ottoman Empire fell and the British began conquering the Sinai Peninsula and Palestine. Furthermore, the League of Nations granted Great Britain the mandate over Palestine in 1922. In addition, there were two more Aliyah's, from 1919 to 1923 and 1924 to 1929 bringing in 100,000 more Jews into Palestine. However, the rise of Nazism in Europe led to the Fifth Aliyah. During this period from 1936 to 1939 Palestinian Arabs led a revolt against Britain, fighting for Palestinian independence and demanding to essentially give an end to Zionism, by stopping Jewish immigration and land purchasing and taking away the possibility for a Jewish State. This created nationalism for both Jews and Palestinians. In the fight, the Jewish paramilitary group called Haganah⁴ fought against the Arab revolt. After the revolt the British implemented the White Papers in 1939, which limited immigration of Jews into Palestine.

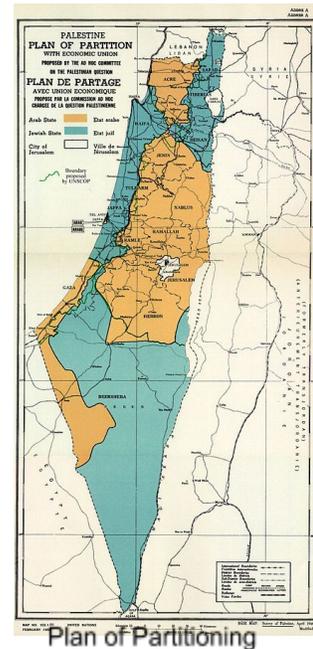
⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Haganah>

WW2

As the Second World War took place, Jews began fleeing the Holocaust, but many countries were denying Jewish refugees. Therefore another movement took place called Aliyah Bet, where illegal Jewish immigrants started entering Palestine because of Britain's White Papers did not allow large quantities of immigration into Mandatory Palestine. In 1940 there were an estimated 450,000 Jews living in Palestine.

Post-WW2

After the war more Jews immigrated to Palestine. In 1947, Great Britain decided to move out of Palestine. In the process they decided to divide the territories with the help of the newly established United Nations. The General Assembly adopted Resolution 181 (II) which implemented the partitioning of Palestine into an independent Arab State, Jewish State and an independent Jerusalem. The Jewish Agency head David Ben Gurion, accepted the partitioning of Palestine, however the Arab League and Arab Higher Commission of Palestine rejected it. The following day a civil war broke out between Arabs and Jews on the 1st of December 1947. Eventually the Jewish side won the war as the Arab Palestinian economy collapsed and Arabs fled Palestine.

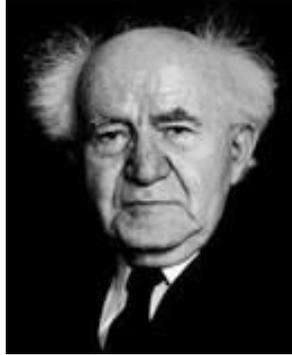


Plan of Partitioning

Declaration of Israel's sovereignty

Furthermore, as the Britain mandate over Palestine was going to end on the 15th of May 1948, but David Ben Gurion announced on the 14th of May to the British government in the Declaration of Establishment of the State of Israel: "BY VIRTUE OF OUR NATURAL AND HISTORIC RIGHT AND ON THE STRENGTH OF THE RESOLUTION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, HEREBY DECLARE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A JEWISH STATE IN ERETZ-ISRAEL, TO BE KNOWN AS THE STATE OF ISRAEL."

(Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs)⁵. This declaration stated the founding of the State of Israel.



First Prime Minister of Israel: Ben Gurion.

Arab-Israeli War

The news of this act provoked the countries of Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Iraq, starting the Arab-Israeli War in 1948. Furthermore, Yemen, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Sudan entered the war against the Jews in Britain's Mandatory Palestine. The war continued until the 10th of March of 1949 with a ceasefire.

Armistice Lines

In 1949 a ceasefire was established called the 1949 Armistice Agreement, where the Green Line was established. This created a border for the State of Israel and established the West Bank (which was annexed by Jordan) and the Gaza Strip (annexed by Egypt).

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<https://mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/declaration%20of%20establishment%20of%20state%20of%20israel.aspx>



Map of Israel (Blue) and Palestine (Green), divided by the Armistice Lines (Green Line).

State of Israel

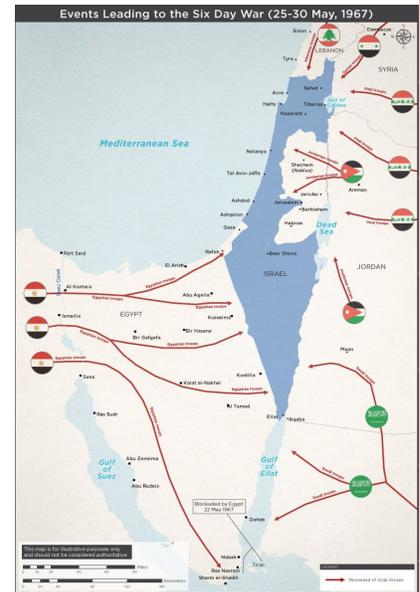
The State of Israel was established in 1948 and in 1949 was voted on the 11th of May as a Member of the United Nations. The first elections were held in Israel and the Labor Zionist movement (a far left wing political movement) won the elections with David Ben Gurion becoming the first Prime Minister. More Jews immigrated to the State of Israel being placed in temporary camps numbering in the 200,000s. As Egypt had nationalized the Suez Canal, Great Britain and France led an attack in 1956 to regain the canal for trade purposes. Israel also attacked Egypt due to a trade blockade of Suez Canal and Straits of Tiran. However, the UN pressured Israel to retract from this war, called the Suez Crisis for shipping rights in the Red Sea.

Tensions began to rise around 1964 from the Arab nations against Israel, as they had planned to divert the Jordan River into Israel's mainland for better agriculture. Tension rose between Israel and Lebanon and Syria. In addition, Egypt's president Gamal Abdel Nasser did not recognize Israel as a state and began to increase his military presence. Relations between the Arab world and Israel deteriorated and on the 13th of May 1967 the Soviet Union falsely informed Egypt that the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) had 11 to 13 brigades ready to attack

Syria. Egypt concentrated forces to attack Israel on the border with Sinai. Then, entered the Sinai Peninsula expelling UN Peacekeepers. More troops were mobilized by Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Iraq to attack the State of Israel. In addition, Saudi Arabia had declared interest in military action on Israel. On the 22nd and 23rd of May, Egypt set a blockade on the Strait of Tiran.

Six Day War

Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Iraq had mobilized troops to the Israeli border and had a military advantage on Israel. The coalition amounted to 240,000 troops, 2404 tanks and 957 aircrafts, against 100,000 Israeli troops, 800 tanks and 300 aircrafts. On June 1st, Israel had established the National Unity government which decided to go to war on the 4th. On June 5th, Israel executed Operation Focus. The government published false reports claiming that Israeli soldiers were on vacation tricking other nations. That day the IDF sent an attack on Egypt to strike aircrafts fields destroying 14 airfields and 338 Egyptian aircrafts. Jordan, Syria and Iraq retaliated, but Israel planes destroyed 28 Jordan, 53 Syrian and 10 Iraqi planes. Israel lost a total of 19 planes in the attack and had an air dominance for the rest of the war.



The largest front of the war was with Egypt where Israel focused its troops. Israel began a full attack of the front with air support pushing the Egyptian back and during the period of the war took the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip. Egyptian president Nasser persuaded Syria and Jordan to attack Israel. Israel initiated the attack in Jerusalem and the West bank driving out the Jordanian army. Furthermore, Syria had troops on the strategic Golan Heights which Israel fought to gain, due to the shell bombardment of the Syrians on Israel. The war

ended on the 0th of June as a ceasefire was placed by the UN on the 11th. Israel took the whole Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank and Golan Heights which included almost 1 million Arabs.

Following the Six Day War Israel had control over this region, but the UN passed Resolution 242 in order to set borders for each nation and achieve peace. Israel withdrew from the territories it had taken in the war. After the war, many Jews started settlements in the Sinai Peninsula, Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza Strip. According to international law these settlements are illegal because of the Fourth Geneva Convention (see “Israeli settlements” in “Key Terms” for more), however, the Israeli government states that the settlement are legal because Palestine is not a state.

Tensions between Palestine rose because of terrorist attacks from the PLO on Israeli citizens, such as the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich attacks and a hijacked plane headed to France from Israel.

Yom Kippur War

On the 6th of October, 1973 during Yom Kippur (The holiest Jewish religious day) Egypt led by Anwar El Sadat and Jordan attacked Israel in a war called the Yom Kippur War which ended on the 25th of October. After the war a public outburst forced Prime Minister Golda Meir to resign.

Camp David Accords

In 1977 Israel’s political leadership shifted to the right wing for the first time in the existence of the state. In the following year, Egyptian president Anwar El Sadat would recognize the State of Israel and Israel’s newly appointed Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Sadat would sign the Camp David Accords. These accords were intermediated by US president Jimmy Carter as they aimed for peace between the state’s of Israel and Egypt. The accords stated that Israel would return the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt and Egypt would grant Israel use of the Suez Canal.

Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty

After the Accords, the two leaders joined again to discuss and make peace between the nations. This led the two leaders to win the Nobel Peace Prize of 1978, however, Egypt was consequently expelled from the Arab League in 1979 and in 1981 Sadat was assassinated by an extremist terrorist group Egyptian Islamic Jihad.

Begin's government created incentives for Israelis to create settlements in the West Bank by lowering taxes and subsidizing land. Furthermore, Begin set Jerusalem as Israel's capital and annexed Golan Heights, even though these actions were not approved internationally. These actions increased tensions between Israel and Palestine.

In 1981 Israel also destroyed Iraq's nuclear reactor in prevention of developing nuclear weapons.

Lebanon War

The Lebanon War began on June 6th 1982 also called Operation Peace for Galilee. Israel Defense Forces attacked southern Lebanon due to a claim that the PLO attempted the assassination of Israel's ambassador Shlomo Argov to Britain, even though the act was called by Iraq's president Saddam Hussein to Abu Nidal (founder of Fatah). The war concluded with the expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon in September.

First Intifada

In 1987 there was a Palestinian uprising called the First Intifada. This conflict was sparked after an IDF truck crashed into a Palestinian truck killing four Palestinian passengers. This led to an uprising which lasted until the 1991 Madrid conference. During the conflict there was an Israeli boycotting by Palestinians in the West Bank, violence and strikes. The tension between Israel and Palestine had increased leading to this conflict.

Oslo Accords

Because of the Intifada, US president Bill Clinton set up the Oslo Accords in order to establish peace between Israel and Palestine. Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Negotiator Mahmoud Abbas signed the Oslo Accords, which the PLO recognized

Israel as a state and renounced using violence as a means. Furthermore, a Palestinian Authority would be placed over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to serve five years in order to establish peace. However, this did not ensure a Palestinian independent state. President Clinton's Administration did not pursue or prioritize peace for Israel and Palestine after the accords were signed.

Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty

In 1994, this treaty was signed creating peace between the two Member States ending the participation of Jordan in the conflict against the State of Israel.

Oslo II Accords

The second Oslo Accords were signed in 1995 which was an agreement on Gaza Strip and West Bank. The accords divided the West Bank into Area A, Area B and Area C, which the Palestine Authority would only have powers in Areas A and B.

21st Century

Second Intifada

In 2000 another Intifada broke out as Ariel Sharon had a controversial visit to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, where an Islam mosque stands. The conflict ended after the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit in 2005 making peace between Israel and the Palestine Authority. Ariel Sharon had become Prime Minister in 2001 and in 2005 had ordered to build the Israeli West Bank Barrier, a wall along the Green Line.

Second Lebanon War

After two Israeli soldiers were abducted by Hezbollah, a Lebanese Islamic terrorist group, in 2006 another Lebanon War broke out. The war was between Israel and Hezbollah and lasted a month, beginning on July 12 and ending August 14. Israel and Lebanon agreed to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701 which stated that Hezbollah should be disarmed and the IDF return to Israel. However, Hezbollah was never disarmed following this agreement.

Gaza War

The Gaza War ranged from December 27, 2008 to January 18, 2009. Israel claimed that the war was to stop weapon smuggling and Palestinian rocket firing into Israel. The war ended as Hamas announced its own ceasefire. Furthermore in 2014 after more rockets from Gaza, Israel forces launched another attack on Gaza.



Hamas soldiers in

In 2007 Israel signed a free trade agreement with Mercosur and 2010 joined the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), opening its trade to more countries.

Religious background:

Judaism

Judaism is the oldest Abrahamic religion originating with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses in the Levant (a large region in the Middle East) and is the official religion of the Jewish people. It is monotheistic meaning they only believe in one god, named Yahweh. Their religious texts consist in a collection of books called the Tanakh, which encompasses the Torah, Nevi'im and Ketuvim. Each book contains even more holy scriptures. In other words, for Christianity the Tanakh is the collection of books used to produce the Old Testament, with only a couple of differences. Judaism refers to the relationship and covenant between God and the Jewish people, beginning with Abraham who was promised to be the father of many generations with Sarah. He bore two sons, Ishmael with Hagar, and Isaac with Sarah which are the Jewish people. The main law they obey are the 10 commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai and the 613 commandments called Mitzvah.



Typical artifacts related to Jewish culture and Judaism

The only state in the world with Judaism as their official religion is Israel, which due to its location in the promised lands in the Levant gives rise to tension with its surrounding neighbours, which are all Islamic states.

Islam

Islam is also an Abrahamic religion, however with many distinctions to Judaism. The muslim people trace their lineage back to Abraham through his son Ishmael. Islam is also a monotheistic religion, however call their God, Allah. The chosen prophet of Allah is called Muhammed, who was also the writer of the Quran, as he was revealed by the Archangel Gabriel from God to write the scriptures. The origin of this religion begins with Muhammed in 7th Century AD through God's revelation, near the city of Mecca, current Saudi Arabia and Islam holy city. Soon after it spread throughout the Middle East and northern Africa gaining popularity and become the primary religion for empires like the Ottoman Empire, Mongol Empire and many countries, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iran, State of Palestine etc, which surround Israel.

Islam and Judaism share many beliefs and holy sites, therefore, although much of the conflict is not directly caused by religion, Arab states want these lands, especially Jerusalem.

There are two different Islamic denominations, Sunni and Shia, but states such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the territories of Palestine, West Bank and Gaza Strip, are primarily Sunni. Islam abides under Sharia law, which is a set of beliefs derived from the Quran. Each denomination has different laws, Sunni Muslims must obey the Five Pillars of Islam and Shia obey the Seven Pillars of Islam.



Islam mosque.

Religious Tensions

Throughout history there have been many conflicts in the region of Middle East primarily due to religion. During biblical times as shown in the Old Testament many wars were fought between Israel and surrounding countries like Babylonia, Assyria and so forth, however the conflicts of this past century are not solely a continuation of the long religious history of the region. Jerusalem is regarded as a holy city for Islam and Judaism for many reasons. Therefore, due to this pursue to control the city and other holy lands surrounding it, have given rise to many wars. The conflicts in and around Israel are not primarily religious, but political and geographical. However, there is a lot of controversy over holy sites and cities such as the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and the holy city itself, as Palestine and Israel have both called it their capital city.



Dome on the Rock, East Jerusalem.

Economics

Israel

Israel is a prominent state in the Middle East and has a good economy compared to the rest of the world. The Member State has high infrastructure and technology. According to the World Bank⁶, Israel's GDP is USD 350 billion dollars, and a GDP per capita is USD 40,270 dollars. It has a very developed finance services and a large amount of exports with its close partner, the US.

East Jerusalem

This part of the city belongs to Palestine in the West Bank. The city used to be Palestine's economic city, however Israel's separation barrier has limited economics possibilities and isolated the city. According to Ir Amim (an Israel activist non-profit) a 72.9 percent of Palestinians in East Jerusalem are living in poverty. In addition, 29.8 percent of Israel citizens living in this area of the city are also under the poverty line.

Gaza Strip

The Gaza Strip is the region with the worst economic possibilities and stability. The GDP per capita in 2009 was at US\$ 3,100. The CIA world factbook⁷ states that in 2017 there was a 27.9 percent unemployment and in 2011 had 30 percent of the population under the poverty line.

Politics

Israel states that Jerusalem is the capital city, however the international community has not recognized this, which is the reason why embassies are still located in Tel Aviv. The US however has moved embassies into Jerusalem in 2017 by the Trump administration recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital on the 6th of December, 2017. This move has not settled well in the International Community as it is the only nation supporting Israel's claim over Jerusalem.

Another issue of the politics in the region is the statehood of Israel. This recognition caused much of the turmoil in the early stages of the establishment of Israel, as the surrounding Arab League did not want a Jewish State in the Middle East. Furthermore, as this state was

⁶ <https://www.worldbank.org/>

⁷ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gz.html>

recognized by the International Community, its neighbor Palestine has remained unrecognized due to its inability to establish a sole government over the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza Strip. Palestine is divided into the primarily Fatah, Palestine National Authority ruling in the east, meanwhile Hamas ruling the Gaza Strip. Recently, the PLO has stopped its recognition of Israel as a state, an issue that has been present ever since its initial establishment.

Furthermore, the International Community and United Nations has condemned the action of the State of Israel as they support the establishment of settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, as it is believed to be illegal according to the Fourth Geneva Convention and Hague Convention. However, Israel believes it is legal since the West Bank is not under the domain of a recognized state, but a disputed territory.

Relevant International Laws

Some important laws adopted by the international community are from the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 and the Fourth Geneva Convention, as some in the International community believe Israel is violating the law established in these conventions.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

State of Israel

A State founded in 1948 is a large contributor to unrest and war in this region. As a state formed to house Jews from all around the world, cultural and religious differences has produced enemies from the surrounding Arab nations. Furthermore, the actions of the government and citizens to build settlements in the West Bank has made it difficult to find a solution.

Palestine

Palestine is a stateless country divided in the West Bank and Gaza Strip which has actively gone to war against Israel for the past decades. As Hamas fights for independence and the West Bank is being cut out by Israeli settlement, this occupied land has been trying to find statehood but has not yet achieved it.

West Bank

The West Bank is a region East of Israel and West of the Jordan River. This region belongs to Palestine. There is a lot of controversy in this region because it is the main

territory for Israeli settlements. According to Peace Now there is an estimated 413,400 Israelis that live in the 132 settlements and 106 outposts.⁸

Gaza Strip

Another region of the State of Palestine is the Gaza Strip. It is located on the Mediterranean Sea and borders Egypt to the South-West and Israel to the East. Gaza Strip has been governed by Hamas, an Islamic organization, since 2006. Israel imposed economic sanctions on Gaza Strip as a way to restrict Hamas. Due to Hamas gaining control over the region, alleged backed group by the United States, Fatah, took up arms in a civil war in an attempt to remove Hamas. Hamas took control of Gaza Strip and expelled Fatah, however, the war has continued, and as of the 28th of January, 2019 the war continues between these two parties.

United States of America

The US has played a major role in the development of peace in the region, mediating peace talks such as the Camp David Accords, Oslo Accords and Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty. However, recently the Trump Administration has moved the US Embassy to Jerusalem, a statement supporting Israel's claim of this city as their capital city. This is a controversial action for the region, as the world power recognized Israel's capital from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem on the 6th of December, 2017⁹. Meanwhile, the rest of the international continues to recognize the capital as Tel Aviv.

Syria

Syria has been involved ever since the establishment of Israel in the conflict. Prior to the Six Day War, Syria controlled the Golan Heights, a strategic high-ground which allowed the Syrian military to launch missile attacks into Israel. The IDF took control of the Golan Heights and remain in Israel's control due to the threat it imposes on Israeli citizens. Syria also took part in the Yom Kippur war, and is technically still in war with Israel.

Egypt

⁸ <http://peacenow.org.il/en/settlements-watch/settlements-data/population>

⁹

<https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/trump-recognizes-jerusalem-as-israeli-capital-says-final-borders-up-to-israel-palestinians-1.5627953>

Egypt has entered into many conflicts with Israel throughout its entire existence fighting for the state of Palestine. However, as Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel, the relations between the two nations have been somewhat peaceful in the past years, however, in 2011 there was an Egyptian attack on Israeli citizens killing eight Israelis. In 2012 there was another border attack. Tensions also rose during the Arab Spring, armed uprisings in the Arab world, where Israel

Jordan

Jordan and Israel relations are currently under a peace treaty that commenced with the Oslo Accords. However, prior to this treaty Jordan attacked Israel in multiple occasions. Recently, as Jordan was pushing to produce nuclear fuel, Israel objected due to its possibility of using that fuel for weapons of mass destruction. Current issues are only diplomatic and the two countries have not been engaged in a war in decades.

United Nations

The United Nations Organization ever since its creation has tried to create peace and find a solution in the region by passing resolutions to solve the issues at hand. Furthermore, by sending UN Peacekeepers into Egypt and Lebanon in order to establish peace.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1936-1939	Arab revolt
1948	Declaration of Israel as a sovereign state Arab-Israeli War
1949	Armistice Lines
1967	Six day war
1978	Camp David Accords
1981	Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty
1982	Lebanon War
1987	First Intifada begins
1993	First Intifada ends Oslo Accords
1995	Oslo II Accords

2000	Camp David II Second Intifada
2005	Removal of settlers in the Gaza Strip
2006	Hamas takes control of Gaza, and the Gaza Strip civil war began
2008	Gaza War
2014	Israel joined the OECD Israel-Gaza conflict
2017	President Trump recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's capital
2018	PLO Central Council suspends recognizing the statehood of Israel

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

Question of Palestine: A/RES/181(II) (1947)

Resolution 242(1967)

SC Resolution 338 (1973)

Resolution 446 (1979)

Resolution A/HRC/37/43

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

- United Nations Resolution 181
- Camp David Accords
- Oslo Accords
- Oslo II Accords

Possible Solutions

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the most recent issue in the area, which I would define as the root cause for conflict in the region, In this following section I will discuss some of the possible solutions which the International Community, Israel and Palestine should entail. I will include insight from external sources and my own opinion on the matter. This section is structured in three areas, a brief summary of the events of the past century and causes of conflict, an analysis of a Two State solution, and finally a One State solution.

Firstly, to provide a summary of the events in this region of the Middle East and state the principle causes of conflict in the Levant. Throughout the 20th Century through the Zionist movement, hundreds of thousands of Jews began migrating towards these lands, due to their Jewish religious significance and God's Promised Lands, according to the Tanakh. The Jewish community began gaining a large presence in the region after multiple Aliyah's, especially post-WW2. The horrifying terrors of the persecution of Jews provoked the establishment of a Jewish state located in their historical and religious region, modern day Israel. The Jewish state of Israel was founded in 1948, provoking conflict with the predominant Islamic states in the Middle East. The United Nations established a Green Line representing the territories belonging to the nation of Israel and Palestine, West Bank and Gaza Strip. In the following years, states such as Egypt, Jordan, Syria and others began wars with Israel in an attempt to expel the Jewish State, from lands they also believe to be holy according to their beliefs, culture and Quran. In summary, many wars and attempts were made to bring peace to the region, however, as Israel has shown its resilience towards the threats of the surrounding countries, especially during the Six Day War, Israel has remained a Jewish State in the region. Meanwhile, the Palestine, people culturally living in the region and predominantly Muslim, have a divided state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Recently, in 2006, a group called Hamas have taken over the Gaza Strip, producing a civil war with Fatah. Furthermore, after the Six Day War, Israeli citizens began constructing settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, protected towns of Israeli citizens in these territories. Israeli Settlements have produced tension with Palestinians and the International Community, calling them illegal according to the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Hague Conventions. Over four-hundred thousand Israelis live in the West Bank in these settlements which is also dividing the region, as they have been called an imposing of territory of Israel into Palestine. Recently, the United States presidential administration has recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and is in the process of moving the US embassy to the city. Jerusalem is a city divided by religion, ethnicity and two states. This political decision by the US is controversial for the region as many think it is imposing Israel's control over Jerusalem, which is also the capital of the State of Palestine.

Two-State solution

The Two State solution calls for a Jewish State of Israel and another Islamic State of Palestine, comprised of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This proposition was first introduced in

1937 during the British Mandate of Palestine, before the establishment of Israel. The idea was to create a Jewish State and another one for Muslims, the separation was determined by the Green Line in 1949. This demarcation did not work, as conflict erupted shortly after, and in 1967 Israel took over large amounts of land after the Six Day War. The Jerusalem Post showed a poll that was taken regarding the Two State solution. The results were “poll conducted in June 2017, 52% of Palestinians and 47% of Israeli Jews backed a two-state solution.” (Jerusalem Post, 2018)¹⁰ These results show half of the population in favor of the idea, however it may be the best one out of the possibilities even though the percentages are low.

One of the issues with this solution in the present situation is that Israeli settlements have been built in the large areas in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, connected by a web of Israeli roads. This has complicated the situation as hundreds of thousands of Israelis are living in the Disputed Territories of Palestine. However, in an article of the Washington Post, David Makovsky, proposed that this is a feasible solution. He stated the following facts:

“According to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, approximately 85 percent of Israelis living east of the Green Line but within the security barrier’s delineated area live in approximately 8 percent of the West Bank, in areas largely adjacent to Israeli urban areas. This translates to just under 556,000 Israelis living inside, or west, of the security barrier and more than 97,000 living outside of the barrier.” (Makovsky, 2017)

This means that the Israeli settlements should not impede the possibility of a two state solution, due to the close proximity of the most populous settlements. This allows the State of Israel to incorporate these lands where many of their citizens live. Furthermore, Makovsky stated that the territorial disputes can be solved by the exchange of lands and coming to an agreement for giving land to the State of Palestine in exchange for the land which the settlements lie on.

Another of the current issues is the group ruling as the de facto government of Gaza Strip. Hamas has been listed by the International community as a terrorist group. It is involved in a war with Fatah who is trying to expel Hamas from power. In order to make the two state solution a feasible solution, the Hamas government will have to be expelled from Gaza in order

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<https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Poll-Under-50-percent-of-Palestinians-Israeli-Jews-support-two-state-solution-539780>

to create a State of Palestine under one government. The West Bank is governed by the Fatah Palestinian National Authority and Gaza Strip by Hamas. In 2014, Hamas called for a government to unite the two states, ruled by the Palestine Unity Government, however it was condemned by Israel as the state would not recognize Israel as an official state. Shortly after its establishment in Gaza, the new government was dissolved by President Mahmoud Abbas as he stated it was unable to operate in Gaza. Even though there is a strong tension between Islam and Judaism, however, there is also conflict between Hamas and Fatah which would need to be solved in order to make the two state functional.

Finally, the Arab and Jewish tensions are an important factor to take into account, since it has produced conflict for over 70 years in the region. In essence, the State of Israel and Palestine both want each others land since it is remarked as holy according to their religious beliefs. However, Israel's Prime Minister Mr Netanyahu's has stated the lack of interest in the two state solution, reported by the newspaper Independent:

“Mr Netanyahu's acceptance of the Palestinians' right to their own state is not shared by Naftali Bennett, his own education minister, who responded: ‘The president of the US is a true friend of Israel. However, it must be emphasised that... there will not be a Palestinian state. That would be a disaster for Israel.’”¹¹

A challenge is convincing Israel to agreeing to the two state solution, since the Prime Minister Netanyahu expressed the idea as an unfavorable option.

This solution produces a feasible answer to the conflict in the Middle East. A two state solution produces answers to important issues such as the Israeli settlements and a designated state for Jews and Palestinians. If Hamas can be removed from power in the Gaza Strip, establishing a sole government over the State of Palestine. Furthermore, the issue of the settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem may be resolved through territorial exchanges in order to annex the territories where the settlements are established.

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<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/two-state-solution-what-is-israel-palestine-trump-middle-east-peace-deal-west-bank-a8559241.html>

One State Solution

Furthermore, as the two state solution has never come to fruition, another solution to the conflict has surfaced. The idea of a single state comprised of Jews and Muslims has come into debate. The state would unify the territories of Israel, East Jerusalem, West Bank and the Gaza Strip, holding Jews and Muslims with equal rights under one democratic government. Many are skeptical about the idea especially because there would no longer be a Jewish State. Equivalently, Hamas has to be dealt with in order to reach to a solution. However, the threats posed to Israelis by Palestinians are protected from the public by Israeli Defense Forces, protecting cities from Islamic extremist groups sending missiles and suicide bombers to harm Israeli citizens. This is a reason why creating a single state would result in internal problems between the ethnic and religious differences. Another issue is dealing with the economic gap as Israeli citizens earn around USD 37,000 and Palestinians around USD 3,000 on average. There is currently a great divide between these neighbors but a unified state would mean balancing the charts in order to have higher income for Palestinians.

Another issue with this solution would be the government and politics. The population sizes are of different sizes, with around 8.7 million Israeli citizens and a combined 4.5 million Palestinian citizens. This gives a large difference in size which would affect the outcome of power in the state. The politics in a one state solution would be a difficult challenge as each side would want a leader of equal ethnicity in power.

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