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Israel/Palestine Conflict: Role of Regional and World Powers - India's Role and Impact Over it

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Indian politicians believe that, in an increasingly multipolar world, the best approach to maximise leverage is to compel other countries to work in one's favour rather than allowing them to take it for granted by joining an alliance. This has resulted in the evolution of what was once referred to as idealist nonalignment into what has now been labelled as realism strategic independence. In a similar vein, the strategic ambitions of India and Israel are fundamentally and long-term opposed to one another. Whereas Israel's interests are heavily influenced by the continuation of Western global dominance, India is advocating for multipolar world order. Recently we saw unrest in the region of middle-east, these conflicts are a day to day scenario for now, and there are several historical, mythological, and religious roots of the present-day conflict. This research paper is a summarization to know everything about the issue, the influence and involvement of the world in the conflict, the outcome, and the way forward.

Keywords: *israel, palestine, world powers.*

INTRODUCTION: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Jews fled due to anti-Semitism in Russia and Central Europe. They began immigrating to Palestine, and the roots of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are in the aforesaid incident in the 19th

century. In the **Balfour declaration**,¹ on November 2, 1917, the British promised the Jews, a national home in Palestine after capturing Palestine from the Ottomans during World War-I. In 1919, the emergence of Palestinian opposition was evident for the first time at a congress in Jerusalem. A British mandate in Palestine was obliged by the **League of Nations** in 1922, the major component of which was securing the “establishment of the Jewish national home”, the future Israel.²

The name **Israel** has its traces in ‘**Hebrew Bible**’ named **TANAKH**, which is the holy book of Jews. The first part of the Hebrew Bible is named Genesis, a part of which is known as “Covenant between God and Abraham”, which simply means an agreement between God and Abraham. This portrays an event, where according to Jews, their ancestor, **Abraham** initially resided in **Mesopotamia** on God’s order he left his residence and went to a place in West Asia which was known as the “**Land of Canon**”. According to Jewish beliefs, God had promised Abraham that on this place only, the successors of Abraham will settle to make a civilization and country.

Jacob, the son of **Izzaq** and the grandson of Abraham had 12 children who were later famed as **Twelve tribes**, successors of whom settled and made a Jewish country on the name of the father of Twelve tribes. Israel was another name of Jacob therefore the country was named as ‘**Land of Israel**’, which means the land of Israel and its successors. Modern-day claims of Israel are based on this historical belief. In November 1947, under United Nations Resolution 181³ Palestine was partitioned into Jewish and Arab states. Jerusalem was put under international control.

In the split, the West bank including the East Jerusalem went with Jordan and the Gaza strip was given to Egypt. The state of Israel was finally created on May 14, 1948, provoking an eight months war with Arab states. More than 400 villages were toppled down by Israeli forces and

¹ Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (Magnes Press, Hebrew University 1983)

² Eli E Hertz, “Mandate for Palestine” *The Legal Aspects of Jewish Rights* (*Myths and Facts*)

<http://www.mythsandfacts.org/conflict/mandate_for_palestine/mandate_for_palestine.htm> accessed 19 May 2021

³ UN General Assembly, ‘Question of Palestine : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly’ (15 December 1988), A/RES/43/177

approximately 7,60,000 Palestinian refugees moved to the West Bank, Gaza, and neighbouring Arab countries.

HISTORICAL WARS

Wars on this geographical location do not have a history of 73 years since the formation of Israel. The most important and significant wars are traced from the 11th to 13th century, that is from 1096 to 1291 A.D. These holy wars between Church and Mosque were known as **Crusades**. The very basis of the Crusades was religion. The barbarian conflicts propelled the glory of European Christians, making them major players in the fight for land in the Middle East.

The major reason behind all the historical and holy wars is a rectangular plot of 35 acres called **Temple Mount**. '**Har HaBayit**' is the Hebrew name given by the Jews and "**al-Haram al-Qudsi al-Sarif**" is the Arabic name of the Temple Mount given by Muslims, geographically the Temple Mount falls in the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is claimed to be historical and holistic by three major religions in the world, Christians, Muslims, and Jews. All of them have their own philosophical and theoretical reasons to claim the 35 acres disputed plot of Jerusalem.

According to Jewish beliefs [the oldest], this is the place where God formed the source particles of Adam, who is the source of human existence. Due to this belief the King of Israel in 1000 B.C, **King Solomon** made the **First temple** at Har Habayit which was demolished by the Babylonian civilization.⁴ In 516 B.C, the **Second Temple** was made on the same land, which was demolished by the Romans.⁵

After Romans, Muslims took control of Jerusalem. The Islamic theory to claim Temple Mount is in Quran, According to Quran, **Prophet Muhammad** came from Mecca on a flying horse and landed on "**al-Haram al- Qudsi al- Sarif**", and from here only he followed the stairs to heaven. The place, Prophet landed is where the **Al- Aqsa** mosque is situated, according to Islam Al-Aqsa mosque is the third holiest place after Mecca and Medina.

⁴ My Jew Learning, 'What Is the Temple Mount?' (*My Jew Learning*)
<<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/what-is-the-temple-mount/>> accessed 19 May 2021

⁵ *Ibid*

After Muslims, Christians won Jerusalem in 1099 after the First Crusade from 1097 to 1099 and took control over Jerusalem. Christians believe that Jerusalem is the place where Jesus Christ died and was born again on the next day, they do also believe that Jerusalem will play an important role in returning Jesus to this world. In all these scenarios Jerusalem saw many empires, rulers, beliefs, ruling over it. Jews again emerged as one of the claimers of this land when they immigrated to this land of modern Palestine in the late 19th century as a consequence Israel was created between the **Gaza strip** and **West Bank** on May 14, 1948.

ISRAEL BECOMES A STATE

Israel declared itself an independent state on May 14, 1948, with the allude of willingness to ratify the partition plan a year after the introduction of **the Palestinian partition plan**, consequently, Britain withdrew from the land of Palestine and Israel got its independence and existence. Immediately after the establishment of Israel, the land saw the first war in 1948 involving Israel, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and Lebanon, consequently, in July 1949, Israel controlled more than two-third of the former British mandate while Jordan took control of the West Bank, Egypt and the Gaza Strip.⁶

The 1948 snarl unscrewed a new segment in the clamber between Jews and Palestinian Arabs, which now became a regional contest in girdling the nation-states and a snafu of diplomatic, political, and economic interests.⁷

SIX DAY WAR

The most important Arab-Israeli percussion of modern times was “**the Six day War**”, which was impelled during a mutable period of diplomatic friction and prangs between Israel and its neighbors. In April 1967, the mishaps worsened after Israel and Syria fought a hideous air and artillery engagement in which six Syrian fighter jets were destroyed. In arouse of this, the Soviet Union provided Egypt with intelligence support and information about the movement of Israeli

⁶ ‘Palestine’ (*History*, 11 August 2017) <<https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/palestine>> accessed 20 May 2021

⁷ *Ibid*

soldiers to the northern borders in preparation for a full scale invasion of Syria. Egypt expelled the peace keeping force of the U.S.A in the **Sinai Peninsula** that had been guarding the border with Israel for over a decade.⁸

Israel defense forces then embarked on a preemptive aerial attack against Egypt on June 5, 1967, which was consummated on June 10, and also drew in Jordan and Syria, who sided with Egypt. **The Six day War** resulted in major land gains for Israel. Gaza strip, the West Bank, Sinai Peninsula, and the Golan Heights were taken over by Israel.⁹ The consequence of **the Six Day War** led to the continued tension and armed strife between Israel and its neighbors for decades to come.

RECENT SCENARIO

Recently we saw a violent bustle in the Middle East. Israeli armed forces and a political organization of the Gaza strip, Hamas, which is globally recognized as a terrorist organization, engaged in artillery exchange. This issue is the very reason to provide the aforesaid information to all the readers.

East Jerusalem was captured by Jordan in the 1948 war. Jordan used the land to settle down the Palestinian refugees who moved towards Jordan after the Israeli evacuation. In 1967, East Jerusalem was recaptured by Israel on May 10, 1967, during the Six day war.¹⁰ Control of East Jerusalem was given to a Jewish trust, they again started to encroach the Palestinians from the area and a percussion broke out between them, later on, both parties agreed that the ownership of land will be with the Jewish and Palestinians will live here as tenants.

Recently five Palestinian families of **Sheikh-Jarrah**, a Palestinian settlement in East Jerusalem were ordered by the Supreme Court of Israel to leave their homes, which ignited the recent conflict as Palestinian again took it as an onslaught on their existence.¹¹

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁰ *Ibid*

¹¹ Paul Adams, 'Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah: The land dispute in the eye of a storm' (*BBC News*, 26 May 2021) <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-57243631>> accessed 27 May 2021

On May 10, every year Israelis celebrate Jerusalem Day on account of the Impressments of Israel over East Jerusalem on May 10, 1967. On this day Jews organize rallies all over Jerusalem, to prevent these rallies from entering the Western Wall, which is a holy site of Jews in the Temple Mount, Muslims in Al-Aqsa Mosque started to throw stones at the Israeli police who were there to prevent any sort of mutiny. In an act of self-defense Israeli police entered the campus of Al-Aqsa mosque, consequently, Muslims took this as an attack on their religion as weapons are prohibited in mosque premises.

After this mutiny breaks out, Hamas threatened Israeli police to evacuate themselves from the campus of Al-Aqsa by 6.30 P.M. on May 10, 2021, or they will attack Israel. Seeing that there is no response from Israeli police, by the evening of May 10, 2021, Hamas fired more than 150 rockets on Israel, few of them were on the city of Jerusalem. Preventing this Israel launched **Operation Guardian of the Walls** on May 11, 2021.

Hamas was established in 2006 and since then Hamas and Israeli armed forces are consistently engaged in a remorseless quarrel. Hamas emphatically carried out several attacks over Israel involving suicide bombing. Israel and Hamas have fought many unrepentant battles, including **Operation Cast lead in December, 2008, Operation Pillar of Defense in November, 2012 and Operation Protective Edge in July 2014.** In April 2014 Hamas and Fatah together formed a unified national Palestinian government.

ROLE OF REGIONAL POWERS

On 13th August 2020, **Israel** and the **United Arab Emirates** signed a historic settlement or agreement to normalize the rapport between them, and in the following weeks, other Arab states, that is Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan ratified the accords named **Abraham Accords**.¹² This was praised by many as a major diplomatic breakthrough in Arab- Israeli relations, as they agreed upon “each state’s sovereignty and to live in peace and security”.

¹² Hunton Andrews Kurth LLP, ‘UAE-Israel Trade and Business Opportunities - The Benefits of the Abraham Accords’ (*Lexology*, 19 November 2020) <<https://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=d1acc2e2-8437-43e9-8b7f-89bfee55bfae>> accessed 22 May 2021

The recent violence and airstrike bustles against Gaza drew heavy attention in Global media and have fomented serious excoriations at signatories of Abraham accords for their lack of support to Palestinians. As it is evident that there has been censure of Israeli operations in Jerusalem and Gaza from all Arab states, but the signatories' condemnation has typically been weak.

Despite increment in violence, the states which normalized the relations with Israel have officially been absent to comment on the situation. In fact, prominent influencers from UAE gave commendations on Israeli behavior, even after the storming of Al-Aqsa mosque, the third holiest site in Islam. Meanwhile, Turkey and Iran, who are not among the signatories of Abraham's accord strongly criticized Israeli operations and dented the accords as a “dagger in the back of all Muslims, and a betrayal of the Muslim world”. Once again the Palestinian tragedy has become a modality using which the regional powers can derive vigor.

ROLE OF GLOBAL POWERS

As we know war is not the end, the fatal consequences of war are unbiased in their effects. Everybody gets affected after the war, the economy, infrastructure, and business including other sectors suffer a lot. Keeping the aforesaid facts in view, global powers are urging for peace in the middle-east.

United States of America

The U.S.A. historically has been the strongest ally of Israel in every sector, military, intelligence, infrastructure has been the core fields of co-operation between them. Washington urged for peace between Hamas and Israel, Mr. Biden was convinced enough to advise Mr. Netanyahu to work in self-defense, keeping in view the lives of civilians across the borders.

Russia

Russia, one of the biggest world powers urged for peace in the area, advising Israel to stop their border expansion policy and operations on its neighbors and contribute towards the peace talks for a settlement.

European Union

Countries of the European Union are of diverse opinions, close allies of Israel like Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria are among the strongest supporters of Israel. Hungary showed its support by blocking the statement of E.U Ambassador to United Nations Mr. Olof Skoog on the pillory of ragging in the middle- east. Austria and the Czech Republic also showed their support to Israel, as the Israeli flag flying over the official buildings. Countries like Greece and Cyprus have been closer to Israel because of the tensions with Turkey.

Meanwhile, Germany has been of neutral approach by offering resources and aids to both the countries and encouraging the peace talks between them. Meanwhile, Paris also has been of neutral approach, however, President Emmanuel Macron's office is deemed to be tilted towards Israel in their issued statements. Elysee's statement sturdily twitted rocket launching claimed by Hamas.

Britain

Some experts believe that Britain is the main cause of everlasting tensions between Israel and its neighbors. In **Balfour Declaration**,¹³ Britain divided Palestine inappropriately that is considered to be the root cause of today's tragedy. However, in the current scenario, Britain is urging both nations to restrain their operations. Prime Minister of Britain Mr. Boris Johnson urged for urgent de-escalation of both the parties and advised them to resolve the dispute with peace talks. He also gave deep condolences to the civilians who lost their lives in the action.

INDIA'S STAND

India's stand has been tilted towards Palestine and Arab countries, due to some major reasons. The Middle East and Arab countries are the major employment destinations for India, which yields a major share of foreign remittances. People from India mainly migrate to the Arab countries in search of employment.

¹³ Stein (n 1)

Trading ships, Cargo, and oil tanker ships from India goes to Europe, Central Asia, and Russia through Suez Canal connecting the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea which is the path to Europe and Central Asia by crossing Yemen and Saudi Arabia, India's enmity or against stand on these nations can cause huge economic loss.

Apart from this, Middle East is a huge export destination of India. Medicines, Rice, Spices, etc. are exported from India to the Middle East, which yields huge economic perks to India.

INDIA AND ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

In the international community, the cordial relationship between the head of States of India and Israel is phrased as "a sense of **bromance** could be felt between Mr. Modi and Mr. Netanyahu.

Defense Level

As we all know India is the biggest importer of arms in the world. Israel has been a major exporter of arms to India. Israel proved its reliability in **Operation Vijay** during **the 1999 Kargil war** by providing weapons to India when India was facing sanctions after the 1998 Pokhran tests. Since Israel has been one of the major market shareholders of defense in India.

Intelligence Level

The terror attacks of 26/11 in 2008 was the incident after which Israel offered intelligence support to India since then **MOSSAD** from Israel and **RAW** from India work together.

Agricultural level

Israel provided many agricultural technologies such as the method of drip irrigation to India, which eventually helped India to foster agricultural growth and development. As we all know agriculture is a major occupation in India and more than 50% of India's population depends upon agriculture, these technological ties with Israel helped a lot India.

Health Level

Israel provided India, advanced health technologies and machines that helped to fulfill the demands of the health sector. India has seen evident advancement in the health sector recently.

INDIA'S HOME SITUATION

Due to India's diverse culture and versatile home situation, it's hard to be sided with any of the parties involved in the conflict. There are several reasons, that India is avoiding partnering with any of the parties.

ISLAM SENTIMENTS AND RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL

Due to the raging in temple mount, the religious angle of the conflict is overpowering the geographical and historical angle. When Israeli armed forces entered the Al-Aqsa mosque, the conflict was no more a geographical or National issue. Muslims from all over the world took it as an act of violence against Islam. As we all know Muslims are the biggest minority community of India, more than 300 million Muslims reside in India, it was obvious that they favored Palestine, and the government's stand on Israel would have ended with riots and protests in the country.

Meanwhile, Israel and India are strategic and defense partners also Israel shares technology in every sector with India, it was not fruitful to stand against Israel, so India was of neutral view and urged for peace talks between them.

CURRENT KASHMIR/AKSAI CHIN ISSUE

Israel and China both follow their aggressive outward policy and constantly keep expanding their borders. Israel and China kept colonizing their poor neighbors after capturing their land. As we all know Aksai Chin formerly was the Indian land in eastern Kashmir, which was captured by the Chinese in the 1962 Indo-China war. Chinese controlled this land since then and regularly trying to invade further. India is the flag bearer of decolonization in the world, because of this India cannot support Israel's border expansion policy and colonization of the countries bordering with Israel.

INDIA'S HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIPS AND STAND FOR PALESTINE CAUSE

In 1947, during the creation of Israel, India voted against the partition of Palestine and the creation of Israel. India strongly supported Palestine's freedom during the cold war. India took a strong legal and moral stand against the Israeli actions in accordance with the International Laws and norms. Apart from this, India has been highly dependent on the Arab countries for petroleum and energy, India cannot sever the voices of Arab nations or be isolated in the general assembly. These are few reasons, why India didn't take a strong stand against Palestine.

INDIA'S NAM POLICY

In 1961, during the cold war, India, Egypt, Indonesia, and Yugoslavia together formed the Non-Aligned Movement, i.e. they refused to go with any of the two world powers, the U.S.A. and USSR. Under this, they were restricted to sign multi-military ties like NATO with any world power. Later on, many Arab countries joined the NAM which was majorly from middle-east and the Arab region at present there are 120 active members out of which 39 countries are from Asia and majorly from middle-east. NAM was an instrument to attain the sovereignty of the nation. Being the flag bearer of NAM India cannot stand strong with Israel and ask its fellow NAM members to compromise with their sovereignty.

CONCLUSION

Keeping the current scenario in mind the most possible resolution for maintaining peace in the middle-east is **Status Quo**, as we all know Israel is the biggest power in middle-east both with economic and military aspects. In these circumstances, the status quo will definitely help the neighboring nations as Israel's aggressive border policy is potent for capturing the highest returning assets of neighboring countries such as the Suez-canal of Egypt, consequently, it will end up in huge economic losses for the neighboring countries of Israel.

Two party negotiations are also important as we all know both the parties have imposed a ceasefire for now; this is the time when the world should urge Israel and other parties for peace negotiations and find a plausible resolution of the conflict. India's relation with both the

countries is really important, on one hand, India is highly dependent on technology and military advancement on Israel on the other hand India is highly dependent on Arab countries for energy requirements, employment, and export. The global community urged for peace and helped a lot in imposing a ceasefire on the borders, to restore peace. The world needs to remind the parties about many important conventions like the Vienna Convention, Madrid conference, etc. which were organized to maintain peace in the world.

It has been said by a prominent historian, “the formation of peace could only be laid upon the rock bed of blood” but as mentioned by Mahatma Gandhi “You can have, the flowers without the thrones, the selection of plant always lies in your hands,” and hence the path of peace could be attained without crossing the fire of wars. This way or that way peace is the only way forward, but maintaining peace with the help of violence seems to be self-contradictory.