



AN ANALYTICAL APPRAISAL OF ISRAEL-PALESTINE CRISES

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Abstract

Israeli-Palestinian conflict has remained in lime light for the humanitarian crises attached to it. The crises between Israel and Palestine is not new. Palestinians have been shrunk in limited spaces having no autonomy. Israel has even been employing precision guided munition in residential buildings. The emotions on both sides generally remain highly sensitive and carries all the possibilities of spiraling unexpectedly. Its an issue of identity, survival and threat to the respective existence of Palestinians and Israeli nations. The article focuses on questions as to why there is an element of perpetuality in Israeli-Palestinian crises, what could be the possible building blocks for ensuring peace between the two belligerents and unfolding the possible scenarios of Israel – Palestine issue in future.

Key Words: Middle East, Zionism, Apartheid, Identity, Co-existence, Anti-Semitism.

Historical Background

Israeli-Palestinian issue and its resultant crises is centuries old with its centrality pivoting around competition for a religious identity and its resultant supremacy. The Jews are known for their strong mutual binding based on ethno-religious nodes. They are candid, focused and highly educated with a high global representation at policy level. The Jews;



however, remained conscious of their identity having no land of their own to represent them as a nation-state. Being a blessed community from the Divine Side (as per their claim), they have been playing leading role impacting global policies specially in political and technological domains wherever they exist.

Without getting prejudice to the Jews supremacy, it is also a fact that they are not accepted whole-heartedly due to their self-centered approach. The Jews, thus, needed a land which could give them their lost identity (Shumaila Zahoor 2018). For that, the influentials among the Jews cashed the religious motivation and focused on getting back into the land named Jerusalem to which they belonged historically and hence coined Zionism as an ideology. The term 'Zionism' was extricated from the word 'Zion' which refers to Jerusalem in Hebrew language – the language which is historically associated with Judeans and Israelites.

As a first step, the Israelites, who were in minority and spread over different continents, started their movement in smaller groups and promoted the Jewish cause of getting a land where they could live as an identity (Mao 2009). They silently but firmly started with their most initial objective of resettling the staggered Jews in their historic and religiously acquainted homeland in Palestine before they could get back their lost Levant Area. The Levant is a geographical area East of the Mediterranean which the Jews lost to the Muslims in 7th Century. (Harris 2012) Current day Levant comprises of Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

Zionism basically aims at winning an inspiration among Jews for nationalism which could trigger the motivation for investing monetarily and individually for the 're-establishment of a Jewish state' in order to address and mitigate the humiliations, antisemitism and persecutions as a nation. With the passage of time, the Zionist movement flourished under an umbrella organization namely the Zionist Organisation (ZO), established in 1897, under the 'Basel Program' (Jewish Virtual Library n.d.).

The Basel Program categorically identified the mission of the Zionist Organisation which was 'to secure legally assured homeland in Palestine for the Jewish people'. For achieving the mission, a number of steps were also listed; inter-alia, *one*, globally promote and encourage the settlement of Jewish agriculturists, tradesmen and other artisans in Palestine, *two*, formation of the Jews' groups according to the laws of the respective countries where the Jews' diaspora lived (to avoid being noticed), *three*, inculcation of nationalism and strengthening motivation among the Jews across the world for their sole and superior identity with a religious fervor and *fourth*, creation of funds for achieving the Zionist mission (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1897)



The ZO categorically identified Palestine as their target state which was then controlled by the Ottoman Empire till the end of World War-I. It played a major role in getting a homeland for the Jews in Palestine when the United Kingdom decolonized the Palestinian land after the World War-II. (Mohammed n.d.) It is important to mention that for the last 51 years, the ZO had already raised and managed sleeping operative Jewish organizations which did not take long to establish their foothold as soon as the British divided the Palestinian land between native Palestinians and Israelites. Although, the division of Palestine was rejected out-rightly but then it was too late. Jewish organizations under the ZO took control of the allocated lands. Later, in 1960, it was renamed as World Zionist Organization (WZO).

Unfortunately, Muslims were not united, while on other hand Jews remained focused on their ultimate objective of securing a Jewish State. The Jewish community was so dedicated and resolved that for achieving the Zionist's ideology objective they had established a fund in 1899 called 'Jewish National Fund' for acquiring additional land from the local Palestinians (Leon 2005). The acquired land was later converted into Jewish settlements for the strategic purpose of changing the demography (Hayesod 1920).

The Zionist supporters project a soft image of Zionism as being a liberation movement so as to bring back the dislocated Jews who are living in exile (Joel Kovel 2007). The Palestinians do not agree to the notion and term the Israeli settlements totally unjust and a true reflection of neo-colonialism and expansionism by the Jews. In a nutshell, the unjust division of the Palestinian land by the British paved the way for a Zionist state right in the middle of the Arab World (Knesset, n.d.), thus, opening the door for a perpetual Arab-Israel conflict.

Role of the United Nations (UN) in Palestine-Israel Issue

The UN role with regard to creation of Israel has been lukewarm and insignificant (Phyllis Bennis 2001). It is commonly believed that the victors of World War-II i.e. the US, Great Britain, Soviet Union and their allies who had formed the UN for maintaining a peaceful international environment used it unjustly to enact the Jewish State in Palestine without the natives' consent through resolution 181 – the partition plan, that provided legitimacy to the state of Israel (Bennis Summer 1997). It is also argued that since Israel has not yet submitted its map with the UN for the reason that it aims at 'Greater Israel' (Ofira Gruweis-Kovalsky 2017). The US, besides his other allies inter-alia the UK, also desired to have a likeminded Jewish State in Middle East through which they could exercise control over resource rich Middle Eastern Region (Amanda Shendruk 2020). Until now, the US has used its veto power for more than 30 times to overrule international community's



criticism and preventing killing of Palestinian non-combatants. The US biased approach towards Israelites has given them a sense of impunity to Israelites which is detrimental to initiate an objective peace process. Israel has yet to make an effort to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 242 (1967) and UNSCR 338 (1973), regarding inadmissibility of land acquisition through war besides implementation of numerous international Court of Justice (ICJ) rulings on Palestine for peace in the region. (Resolutions 2016)

In a nutshell, the UN has yet to play a major role in mitigating the Middle East crises. If at all some resolution gets adopted or even discussed at the UNGA, it is vetoed by the US using the UNSC platform. Even the draft resolution by China to condemn Israeli atrocities of May 2021 was vetoed by the US (Zheng, 2021) It is a true reflection of the real-politics being practiced in international relations.

Reasons for the May 2021 Conflict

It is an unending issue which if not addressed will keep converting temporary peace into yet another conflict between the relatively weak Palestinians and the strongly entrenched and equipped Israeli Defence Forces (IDF). Obviously, the result would be in favor of IDF vis-à-vis casualty toll and destruction of infrastructure.

The May 2021 conflict that proved to be a catalyst pitched extra regional actors against each other for supporting either side. The reason was Israeli settlements in areas where Palestinians lived for ages. The eviction of Palestinians from the occupied neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem fumed the current crises in the Gaza Strip and erstwhile. However, forced entry of Jewish forces into Al-Aqsa Mosque besides banning Palestinian Muslims' gathering around the Damascus Gate to protect activities related to Israeli Remembrance Day, jet fueled the fragile peace (Alsaafin 2021). The Israeli Prime Minister, who has an assured moral support of the US administration, did not blink an eye to take offensive actions against unarmed Gaza residents.

Historically the Israeli Prime Ministers remained focused to encircle Jerusalem which Israel believes to be their capital city since their inception in 1948 (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs n.d.). The unjust and unprecedented occupation by Israel of the Palestinian land has an astonishing support of the US administrations including the present administration of Joe Biden. In December 2017, the ex US President Trump announced unilaterally that the US recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's new Capital Town (Landler 2017) Such a biased and unethical international practice by the sole Super Power is unprecedented and against international peace and stability especially when the issue is



religious oriented (Kuttab 2021). The US will have to be realistic and cannot ignore the rising tension in Palestine (Liebermann 2017).

In addition, the Palestinians don't recognize Israel's domestic laws to be applicable on occupied territories, which is right as far as international law is concerned. The current displacement of Palestinian families from Sheikh Jarrah was given legal value by the Israeli Court which over-ruled Jordanian authority to settle the Palestinian refugees back in 1967 when the West Bank was under Jordan's control (Younus 2020).

Israeli settlement in Sheikh Jarrah was strongly rebutted by the Palestinians who called it as part of *Nakba* or 'the catastrophe' when the state of Israel was unjustly declared by the United Kingdom on May 15, 1948. The day is always observed as black day in Palestine which the Jews don't like (Hearst 14-5-2021).

Probability of Sustaining Zionist Mission for Crafting a Jewish State in Palestine

Historically, since the inception of Israel in 1948, the Jews have not been able to establish themselves. The Palestinians in particular and Arabs in general believe the *Nakba* being an open wound which can only be healed when the unjust division is reversed (Soussi 2018). The ethnic cleansing of Palestinians by the Jews and denial of equal rights to the Palestinian population in terms of civic amenities, share of water, protection of law and above all economic activities is a reflection of apartheidism (Israel Shahak 1988). Racism is at its peak in Israel, although many Jews have started delinking themselves with the Israel's apartheid approach (Raphael Mimoun 2021).

Historically, the Balfour Declaration proved to be the '*Mother of all Problems*'. The Balfour Declaration of 1917 paved the way for establishment of a separate Jewish State in Palestine area where they were mere 10 percent of the natives. Besides influence of Zionism, there were numerous strategic interests of Britain which led to crafting of the Balfour Declaration, which included maintaining strategic influence over Egypt and India in general and Suez Canal in particular (Mathew n.d.) In the words of the late Palestinian-American academic Edward Said, "[Balfour Declaration] was made by a European power... about a non-European territory... in a flat disregard of both the presence and wishes of the native majority residents in that territory" (Said 1979)

The establishment of Israeli State, which has been politically accepted by several important Arab countries, did not make difference for the native Palestinians and they are of the strong belief that one day their land will be returned to them provided they continue with their resistance. They don't believe in Israeli cosmetic peace processes which do not have



their true representation and are Israel's effort to divert the attention of international audience from Palestine issue and silently pursue Zionist mission of Israeli settlement. In the end, it can be concluded that with a globalized world, it may not be tenable for Zionists to sustain their movement when majority of the World community is on the side of oppressed Palestinians. Hence, it is imperative to discuss the way forward for a lasting peace.

The Suggested Ice-Breakers

- **Palestinian and Israeli Responsibilities.**

For initiating a peace process leading to sustainable peace and security, both the parties have to accept the reality about their respective existence as two different nations. Palestinians have to live with the reality that Israel is an existing entity which cannot be undone. Asking for its dismantling is a utopian idea. It is the equal right of Israel and Palestine to live and exist in peace and security. Most importantly, Israel has to come out of the phobia of anti-Semitism. The term is especially developed which represents prejudice, hostility and discrimination against Jews. On the flip side, the Jews also need to take an account of the reasons for being hated in the Middle East in particular and elsewhere in general and pursue corrective measures. One of the leading reasons for the anti-Semitism sentiments could be due to their occupations and illegal settlements totally UN resolutions and International Law.

- **International Community Responsibilities.**

The international community led by the US and its like-minded states have to condition their financial, political and diplomatic support to Israel. As a whole, the international community will have to push Israeli Government to respect democracy and human rights. It has to bring Israeli administration on the negotiating table. An even-handed international effort is needed. Condemn the Israeli inhumane actions against Gaza civilians (Steven Erlanger 2021).

The Arab states also need to reconsider recognition of Israel, provided it abides by the international law and enters into negotiating a mutually acceptable solution to the Palestinian issue. The Muslim community as a whole is required to be on the same page using Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) forum to develop narrative and counter narratives in the face of western narratives, which are generally perceived to be pro-Israel.

Suggested Building Blocks for Developing Trust and Confidence



The two sides are required to be realistic and accept the ground realities for initiating a constructive and meaningful peace process in Middle East. The way-forward is required to be based on essential mutually acceptable political building blocks that could contribute towards mitigating the mutual fear and mistrust. Following are the few suggested building blocks only and separate study is needed to weigh their respective pros and cons for each side besides acceptability:-

- Pledge at highest level both domestically and internationally that none of the two nations can be deprived of their distinctive existence and identity.
- Palestinians have to unite for formulating a collective response to the issue. Hamas versus Hezbollah friction must end.
- Implementation of cease fire without conditions.
- Rejection of apartheidism i.e. offering equal rights for all without discrimination.
- Development of a mutually acceptable mechanism of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) to avoid misperceptions and miscalculations. A few to mention are:
 - ✓ Joint patrolling of the borders between Palestinian areas and Israeli settlements.
 - ✓ Establishment of the Palestinian and Israeli Joint Check Posts and carrying out of joint patrolling for maintenance of order.
 - ✓ Formation of commission or mechanism for judicious distribution of resources inter-alia water.
 - ✓ Access to the sieged Gaza and West Bank to modern facilities including hospitals and educational institutions.
 - ✓ Offering of jobs to unemployed Palestinian youth, agreement on avoiding hostile and provoking statements.
 - ✓ Access to the sea for trade etc.
 - ✓ Immediate freezing of Israeli settlements (Zaha Hassan n.d.).
 - ✓ Equal and just chance for Hamas and Hezbollah to participate in Palestinian representation. Increasing their stake would compel them to be on problem solving side instead of being part of the problem.
 - ✓ Mutual agreement on deployment of a UN peace keeping force of mutually acceptable countries.
 - ✓ Declaration of Jerusalem as an open city to all religions.
 - ✓ Lifting of sanctions.
- The new US administration should announce that it will go by the UNGA and UNSC resolutions besides the International Law for seeking peace in the region.



- Formulation of a mutually agreed Commission for monitoring the progress of peace process.

Unfolding Likely Future Scenarios of Israel – Palestine Crises

A permanent solution, thus, is essential for the peace and stability in the region which can only materialize if the international community joins hands under the UN mandate. The building blocks suggested above are essential to develop a peaceful environment for bringing the two sides on negotiating table with sufficient level of trust and confidence.

As expressed earlier, prpetuality is not the right course and must be addressed. Instead, a meaningful, gradual and constructive peace process is to be carved out while keeping in view the sensitivities of either side. For that, the great powers need to take the lead and play their respective influences especially the US. The probable peace leading discourses are discussed in ensuing paragraphs which could be food for thought for the strategic planners.

- **Zero State Solution**

There are hardliners on both sides i.e. Palestine and Israel. They, being rightists, have zero tolerance for the idea of dividing Palestinian land. The right wingers on either side have strong belief that Palestine land belongs to them starting from river [Jordan River] to the sea [Mediterranean]. (Cofman 2021). Hardliner Jews are of the view that they were evicted from their holy land Jerusalem by the invaders and they are the actual custodians of the area. They don't want to see the Arabs [Palestinians] on their land and want them to go back to their Arab countries (Chomsky 2018). Similarly hardliners on Palestinian side argue that the division of Palestine by Great Britain was unjustly done and the Jews, who were welcomed by them after the holocaust, broke their trust and occupied their territories. Complete eviction of the either Palestinians or Jews from Palestine or Israel is a utopian idea and off course not a viable one. The division of Palestine was done by the UN under International Law and which can't be undone at this stage. Majority of the nation states have already recognized Israel as a state. Moderate Palestinians and Jews also admit it as an unviable option. The option is expected to be a catalyst for the prpetuality of the issue leading toward status-quo and killing of innocent people on either side.

- **Single State Solution**

As per this option, the proposal is to have a single state where all persons from different religions inter-alia Jews and Muslims could live peacefully with due share in parliament, forces and judiciary. More and less it would be a secular state model. Jerusalem could be



an open city for all religions and may be mutually administered. Autonomy can be given to the areas where majority from a particular clan or religion are concentrated for smooth functioning of the domestic affairs.

Though a tricky one, but the option has its own pros and cons. Trust deficit between the two belligerents will not let it actualize. It needs to be seen whether the two parties would compromise on their respective ideological struggles since 1948 i.e. Palestinians for the right of self-determination and Jews for their separate state and identity. Moreover, in case the option gets materialized, demographically the Jews are likely to turn into a minority vis-à-vis local Palestinian population which the Jews will never like. In addition, the moment separate state quest is relegated by the Jews in favor of a single state, the Jewish settlers would prefer going back to the countries from where they migrated in the name of religion, thus, further diluting Jews' demography (Weiss 2020).

- **Two State Solution**

It is the most talked option for settling Israel-Palestine crises. According to this option, it is suggested to have two separate states i.e. Israel and Palestine. The option has multiple further sub-options/contours which are related to its borders. *One*, Palestinian state's borders may be as per the UN division plan of 1948, *two*, Palestine borders may be as per the borders of pre 1967 Arab Israel war as agreed in the UNSCR 242 (1967) , *three*, Palestine borders be organized as post Arab Israel War of 1967 and *lastly*, the borders to get formalized as of today. The options need to be discussed threadbare as it seems to be the only viable option which echoes commonly across the UN and among the two contestants.

However, chances for even this apparently viable option may not be suitable for the agenda of greater Israel which is perceived to be a Zionist Plan for the Middle East extending from Euphrates till the Nile (Fig-1) (Tandon 2021). The factor of fear with Israeli leadership could be a non-starter in this option. The Israeli administration might never like to have Arabs concentrating around them with their independent defence forces and diverse foreign policies.



Fig-1. Zionist Greater Israel Plan

Source: Jagran Josh, May 21, 2021, <https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/what-is-greater-israel-why-is-the-idea-not-acceptable-to-the-muslim-community-1621507466-1>

The Oslo Peace Process of 1993 which eyed next five years to find out a mutually agreed solution came to a standstill and went into back burner when the Israeli Prime Minister was assassinated. The two sides blamed each other for derailing the process. Palestinians suspected the Zionist Organization behind the assassination plot as they never wanted to adjust Palestinians in land sharing formula (L. E. Weiss 2011).

Although, the Oslo Peace Process has outlived its utility as it is time barred now; however, since it did make some headway, it is optimistically considered that the US led effort can bring dividend provided the two sides sit on negotiating table and discuss the revival of the Oslo process in its previous shape or amended version keeping in view the realities on ground.

For identifying the borders, an international commission can be constituted duly mandated by the UN for suggesting border adjustments. The border adjustment formula must be tied to a truce or peace treaty for at least 25 years in which both parties should pledge non-aggressive, non-subversive and peace making policies. Non-interference in each other's affairs besides mutual respect for the holy sites and religious activities in the Jerusalem should be the corner stone of the option.



Jerusalem could continue to be an open city with mutual administration in place for supervision by a mutually agreed international body. The Israeli unauthorized settlements which have been surging over a period of time may be accepted by the Palestinians and instead land in barter can be offered so that the Israeli settlers are also not displaced. Gaza and West Bank may be linked by a corridor. Both states should be allowed to have their own defence and foreign policies as required for a sovereign status.

- **Three State Solution**

The option pertains to loosing Palestinian identity in favor of Egypt and Jordan. Since the Palestinian stand is seemingly weak vis-à-vis Israel, it is suggested to handover Gaza Strip to Egypt and West Bank to Jordan permanently. However, it seems highly unlikely for multiple reasons. Palestinians will not agree to lose their identity and become Jordanian or Egyptian nationals. Similarly Egypt and Jordan will not like to face the brunt of intifada of hardened Palestinian Arabs which could adversely effect their society as well. Jordan, remembers the events of Black September when the Palestinian Refugees in Jordan stood up against the Jordanian monarch. Besides this, Palestinians can become a burden on their respective economies as currently the Palestinian demography is mainly the youth who are looking for work. Israel too is not likely to accept the arrangement especially when it is being led by an extremist Zionist Organization with an aim to secure greater Israel. *Lastly*, Israel will never like to have two strong Arab states right in its backyard; albeit, both Egypt and Jordan have recognized Israel.

- **The Extreme Compelled Option - Decisive Arab - Israel War**

Historically, Jewish community is seen through pessimistic lens due to its strengths at global level; like, monopolizing the global economy, being a highly innovative and educated community able to control global media houses to project them as victims. The Jews are believed to be self-centered, intriguers and conspirators who can manipulate any economic, diplomatic and financial structures. Even the US administrations have been accused for being hostage to Jewish deep pockets.

Notwithstanding, the option being discussed here is the least desirable one which is not likely to be willfully opted but could be forced upon due to frustration, injustice, indifferent global attitude and hopelessness among Palestinians. Seeing the issue in historic and contemporary perspectives, it seems that no side neither Israel nor Palestine are in mood to step-a-side what to talk of stepping-back from their known positions which they have been glued with since 1948 and if stretched further, for the last around 3000 years of



their complicated past (Wolpe 2021). In case of failure of peace efforts, a final showdown between the Palestine and Israel is all likely.

Israel is a de-facto nuclear weapons state and thus has the option to use it depending upon the threshold which is yet to be made public. Since the Palestinian land is crisscrossing between Palestinians and Israeli so the use of nuclear weapons could be catastrophic for the entire population, as the radiations don't differentiate between religions. Moreover, using nuclear weapons on any land shall make it unlivable for times to come. Foregoing, it seems logical to anticipate and make a fair guess that instead of using nuclear weapons against the Palestinians either in Gaza Strip or West Bank, Israel might opt to use them against those states that are supportive of Palestinian narrative and providing them tangible support in terms of men and material.

The probable states against which Israel may opt to use nuclear weapons could include Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey and even Pakistan. The threat emanating from mainland Israel has been in security calculus of these countries. In order to safeguard any Israeli adventure, there are chances that some kind of military alliance surfaces in the Middle East with a spill over to South Asian Region where Pakistan is located. The bonding factor is likely to be pivoting around religion vis-à-vis geographical contiguity and relevance. Formation of such an alliance whether formal or informal may contribute towards arms race and piling up of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs). In such a scenario, the security will come on hair trigger which may ignite the options of employing preventive or preemptive strikes from Israeli or any other state out of anti-Israel alliance collectively or singularly.

The option is extremely dangerous; however, Israel when left with no option and seeing its centuries old struggle going down the drain, might act irrationally out of strategic frustration. Besides fear of losing the identity, Israeli nuclear threshold could have other trip-wires as well, inter-alia, economic strangulation, internal chaos and degradation of its troops. Thus, '*Samson Option*' may come into play (Hersh 1991).

In any of such dangerous eventualities, the conflict shall not remain restricted to the Middle East region but will surely spill over to other regions of the world due to the alliances' orientations on either side. The major powers could likely jump in to support either side in terms of military, diplomacy and finances. Thus happening of a nuclear winter does not remain a far-fetched fear and thus, may actualize. The resultant Armageddon, if happens, will bring in the end of history and planet Earth.



Conclusion

Middle Eastern region's security and peace has a global orientation for the obvious reason of oil and mineral richness of the area besides Israel- Palestine issue which has turned out to be a flash point for a nuclear winter. The great powers have their crisscrossed strategic interests which they can't afford to do away with.

Out of the five permanent members of the UNSC, Russia and China are visibly on Palestinian side while the US, UK and France are in the opposing club. Any untoward spiraling up of the conflict could lead to the direct involvement of these powers against each other and may turn into an unforeseeably disastrous catastrophe. Hence, the Palestine-Israeli issue has to be looked into in a holistic perspective. The international community led by the UNSC members will have to play their responsible role for maintaining peace and security in the region and globally. Israel and Palestine are two nation states and cannot be denied their respective identity. For a peaceful international environment, big powers will have to come forward and play their just and objective roles which recognize the identities of both the contestants namely Palestinians and Israelis.



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