

THE 21st CENTURY ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT OVER JERUSALEM AND ITS PEACE PROCESSES

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ABSTRACT

Jerusalem is a depiction of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict's national politics and contrasting identities. The continuous rise in violence, with its devastating effect on peace and security prompts the examination of the conflict, various peace processes and the status of Jerusalem. The major objectives of this paper are to examine the Israel-Palestine conflict over Jerusalem in the 21st century and analyse the status of Jerusalem and different peace talks through external mediation and intervention. The theory of structural realism was adopted for this study; which, concerning the conflict over Jerusalem, emphasises that war is a significant, and fundamental instrument of change in international affairs. Secondary data was used in this paper, by reviewing and analysing data gathered from scholarly publications, journals, articles, and online materials. The paper finds an intensified increase of violence between Israel and Palestine, especially regarding the status of Jerusalem and Palestine as an independent state. The paper concludes that despite numerous peace processes and diplomatic efforts, a lasting resolution has remained elusive. The failure to achieve a comprehensive agreement stems from a combination of factors, including conflicting narratives, incompatibility of goals, deep-rooted mistrust, geopolitical complexities, and the influence of external actors. Peace, stability, and acceptable status of Jerusalem can only be initiated and resolved solemnly between Israel and Palestine, but until then, neither the status of Jerusalem nor Palestine would be defined.

Keywords: Conflict, Israel, Jerusalem, Palestine, Peace process

INTRODUCTION

The city of Jerusalem is located in the western region of Asia. It is one of the oldest cities in the world and has long held immense symbolic significance as a holy city for the three major Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (United Nations, 2008). Jerusalem is considered to be the capital city by both Israelis and Palestinians; this is because Israel keeps its primary governmental institutions in Jerusalem, and the State of Palestine intends to eventually make Jerusalem its capital city (United Nations, 2008). As a result of this controversy, neither assertion has received widespread recognition across the international community. The city comprises the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the

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Gaza Strip. With a majority of Jews, West Jerusalem has been part of Israel since 1948, while East Jerusalem houses the al-Aqsa Mosque - which is primarily populated by Palestinians and was captured by Israel in 1967; and also houses the Old City of Jerusalem (Al Jazeera, 2020).

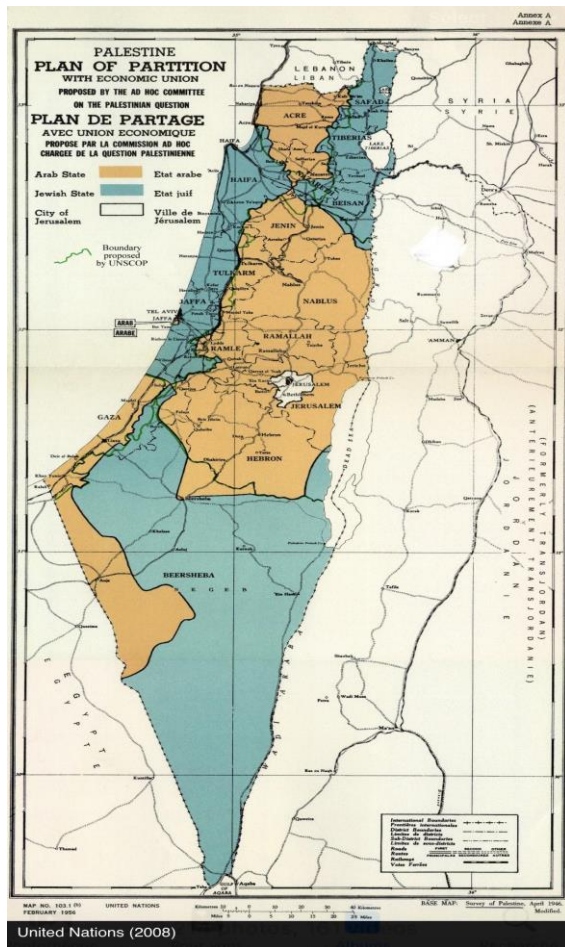
In the long history of Jerusalem, the city has been attacked 52 times, captured and recaptured 44 times, besieged 23 times, and destroyed twice (Cline, 2008). According to history, King David conquered Jerusalem in 1000 B.C. and made it the capital of the Jewish Kingdom, later after his death, his son Solomon took over the throne and built the first Holy temple in Jerusalem. In 586 B.C. the Babylonians occupied Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple built by Solomon, and sent the Jews into exile, and between 536 B.C. and 37 B.C. Jerusalem fell through so many hands who controlled the city and its affairs (Moore & Kelle, 2011). By 70 A.D. the Romans destroyed the second Temple of the Jews, leaving only the Western Wall (also known as the Wailing Wall) as a remnant of the sacred structure. The destruction of the Second Temple had significant implications for the Jewish people, leading to a period of religious and cultural transformation. However, over the centuries, Jerusalem remained under Islamic control during the mediaeval period, with the construction of significant religious structures such as the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount. The importance of Jerusalem in Islam, as the third holiest site after Mecca and Medina, grew during this time, especially after the death of the Prophet in 632 A.D; which shaped the historical trajectory of Jerusalem and its religious significance to Muslims (Epstein & Goulden, 2015).

By the end of the First World War, under the authority of the League of Nations, the Middle East region was mandated to France and Britain, to govern and rule the territories. Through the Sykes-Picot Agreement, Britain took over Palestine and Jordan, while France took over the territories of Syria and Lebanon (Smith, 2017). Following the genocide committed by Germany against the Jews and the crisis of anti-Semitism towards the end of the Second World War, the high influx of Jews into Palestine land became extensive, as they claimed the land to be their ancestral home. However, with the disastrous and devastating effect of the Wars on the economic and financial status of the Allied Powers, Britain and France in their incapacity to control the region mandated their occupied territories to the United Nations, amongst which was the land of Palestine and other Arab States (Abuzayyad, 2018).

The administration of the United Nations in Palestine established the General Assembly Resolution 181 of November 29, 1947, known as the “Partition Plan” Resolution. The Plan divided historical Palestine into two states: for the Jews and the Arabs, and Jerusalem maintained special status, defined as “*Corpus Separatum*” - an independent international entity, governed under a special international system (United Nations Resolution 181). When the British Mandate ceded on May 14, 1948, the Jews in Palestine declared the land of Israel sovereign and independent, and Jerusalem their ancestral Holy City (Sabel, 2022).

Highly aggravated by Israeli acclaimed independence, the Arab states, led by Syria, Egypt and TransJordan attacked the state of Israel in June 1948. The war in its disastrous ending gave Israel dominant control over West Jerusalem, while TransJordan took over the West Bank. In the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel won over the remaining East Jerusalem and annexed it as part of its territory (United Nations, 2008). With subsequent violence and conflict in the region, the land of Jerusalem has been under the jurisdiction of the Israeli government, leading to a high refugee crisis and displacement of many citizens, especially the Palestinians. In defiance of international law, which maintains that the city should be governed by the United Nations due to its significance to the three Abrahamic religions,

Israel passed the Jerusalem Law in 1980, declaring that "Jerusalem, complete and undivided, is the capital of Israel" (Napolitano, 2012). Jerusalem's land use regulations favour Israeli development while restricting Palestinian expansion. Less than 30 percent of the properties in Jerusalem's municipal boundaries were held by Jews before 1948, but by 2015, more than 90 percent of Jerusalem was owned or under the authority of Jews (Kapitan, 2015). Around 85 percent of extended East Jerusalem was expropriated by Israel in the years following 1967 under the authority of a British Mandate Land Law (United Nations, 2016). Jews who lost property in East Jerusalem after 1948, unlike Palestinians, were able to get it back or equivalent compensation under Israeli law.



168,500; in 2002 - Israelis 458,600, Palestinians 221,900 (American Friends Service Committee, 2004). The contest over the land of Jerusalem between the State of Israel and Palestine still exists, even with the numerous peace agreements that have been overseen by the United Nations and other States since 1979. The Peace processes have been complex and have faced numerous challenges, including political disagreements, violence, security concerns, and issues related to settlements and borders, as the path to a lasting peace agreement remains a difficult and ongoing process - Israel wants full ownership of Jerusalem as they claim that Jerusalem is their Holy city and cannot be divided, whereas, Palestine wants East Jerusalem to be returned to them, the United Nations still maintains

the stand that Jerusalem belongs to neither Israel nor Palestine, but an independent city under its administration (Stockmarr, 2012).

This study is divided into five parts: the first is the introduction of the topic; with comprehensive background details about the Israel-Palestine conflict over Jerusalem and the United Nations' interventions, the second part is the literature review, which through the revision of past and present literature works, observed some gaps in literatures, concurred or contrasted what the authors have said. The third part of the study is the theoretical framework which addresses the aims of the study through the lens of Structural Realism. The fourth part which is analysis, findings and discussion explicitly examines the research aims, and through collected secondary data, analyses the Israel-Palestine conflict and peace processes in the twenty-first century. The final part of the study is the recommendation and conclusion.

Literature Review



The Left in the European Parliament (2020)

The Israel-Palestine conflict over Jerusalem is a highly complex and contentious issue with deep historical, religious, and political roots. The conflict revolves around competing claims and aspirations of Israelis and Palestinians regarding the status and control of Jerusalem, a city that holds great significance for multiple religious groups (Beinin & Hajjar, 2014). Through the Balfour Declaration of November 1917, the British Government issued a

mandate which was in favour of “the establishment in Palestine a national home for the Jews, and nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine” (United Nations, 2008).

As one of the most important factors that shape Middle East politics, the Palestine issue as analysed by Sinkaya (2016), is in three dimensions. Firstly, the Arab-Israeli issue - the legitimacy and sovereignty of Israel is not recognised by the Arab nations, since the land ‘occupied’ by Israel belongs to them. Secondly, the Palestine-Israeli conflict - the interruption of a peace process between Palestine and Israel began when Israel captured and occupied East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, which were previously occupied by Palestinians. Thirdly, the religious conflict - Jerusalem has been recognised as one of the three holiest cities of Islam but has fallen to Israel after the 1967 war, which declared the whole of Jerusalem as their capital in 1980 and has given the Palestine subject a

religious dimension.

According to Beinun and Hajjar (2014), if a historical connection is the subject of consideration, then the Arabs are the owners of Jerusalem, as they have been the major occupants in Palestine for over a century. Cattani, a Palestinian said that no amount of propaganda can alter the historic and cultural connection of Arabs to Palestine. The Arabs have played a greater part in the development of the land, and even if Jews have done well in their sectors, the argument that development grants title could be used to justify any aggression of a technologically advanced society over a more backward people (Cattani, 2022). As much as the Jews need a home, it should not be granted at the expense of those who were not responsible for Nazi actions. Allowing the Jewish refugees to live in Palestine would be an injustice to the Arabs living in the Land, and also a violation of the 1946 General Assembly Resolution concerning resettlements of displaced persons.

Gary Finkelstein, a Jewish-American political scientist asked “if I came with a Bible in one hand and came to your home, I knocked on your door and said ‘according to my Bible, my family lived where your home is, my family lived there two thousand years ago,’ would you pack up your bags and leave?” Calling Israel, a “lunatic state” he asked, “why should these Palestinians, who have lived in Jerusalem for hundreds of years, be evicted from their homes so that Jews from Brooklyn can live in them?” (Finkelstein, 2017) - referring to Ashkenazi Jews who left Germany in the late Middle Ages and settled in Poland and Russia as a result of persecution and expulsion, and also the Sephardi Jews, who first settled in Spain, before sojourning to America, after the Middle East was conquered by Islam (Buyce, 2023).

Through his “philosophical thinking” about the Israel-Palestine conflict and the persisting defensive stands by both parties, Kapitan asked: when does a community have a right to govern or possess a certain territory? Under what conditions are people entitled to self-determination? Are religious claims an affiliation relevant in resolving political disputes over territory? Is a state ever entitled to territorial expansion and conquest of foreign territory? Is violent resistance to occupation ever justified? (Kapitan, 2015). These questions directly circle the Israel-Palestine dispute and controversy over the legitimate ownership of Jerusalem. Critical and thoughtful answers to these questions will pave the way for peaceful resolutions between both entities. The conflict between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs have lasted for over a century, with no practical evidence of an agreed peaceful resolution. Decades of international diplomacy and arranged dialogues have failed to produce a solution that both parties agree on or can efficiently implement. Martine Buber called it “one of the most difficult political problems of our time, perhaps the most difficult of them all” (Kapitan, 2015).

THE CONFLICT OVER JERUSALEM

After several cease-fires and peace negotiations, the thirty-year conflict between Egypt and Israel was finally resolved in 1979 when leaders from both nations signed the Camp David Accords. The Camp David Accords did improve relations between Israel and its

neighbours, but the question of Palestinian self-determination and self-governance remained unresolved (Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), 2023). The 1993 Oslo I Accords served as a peace-making tool, establishing a framework for Palestinian self-governance in the West Bank and Gaza, after the first intifada in 1987, while also enabling reciprocal recognition between the newly constituted Palestinian Authority (PA) and the Israel Government. Building on the initial Oslo Accords, the 1995 Oslo II Accords introduced provisions requiring Israel to withdraw from six cities and 450 towns in the West Bank (CFR, 2023). The second Intifada which commenced in 2000 until 2005 was initiated by the Palestinians, in protest of Israeli control over the West Bank, the deadlock in the peace talks, and anger over former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's visit to the al-Aqsa mosque, the third holiest site in Islam. In retaliation, despite objections from the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, the Israeli government sanctioned the construction of a wall surrounding the West Bank in 2002 (Al Jazeera, 2019).

Hamas; one of the two major Palestinian political organisations, was created in 1987 following the first intifada and split from Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. In 1997, the US government recognised Hamas as a foreign terrorist organisation (CFR, 2023). However, this hurt the US and other Western powers' attempts to restart the West Bank peace talks in 2013, as the formation of a unity government in 2014 between Fatah, the official party of the Palestinian Authority, and Hamas, a breakaway faction, put an end to peace talks. In the summer of 2014, Hamas launched almost 3,000 rockets towards Israel, which prompted Israel to launch a significant offensive in Gaza (New York Times, 2014). Egypt mediated a cease-fire in late August 2014 after 2,251 Palestinians and 73 Israelis were killed (OCHA, 2015). Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas asserted that the Oslo Accords' territorial limitations did not apply to the Palestinians after the 2015 unrest between Israelis and Palestinians. From March to May 2018, Palestinians in the Gaza Strip protested along the Israel-Gaza border, which however ended on the 70th anniversary of the Nakba - the Palestinian exodus that preceded Israel's 1948 founding (CFR, 2023). Violence broke out, causing terrible humanitarian harm despite the majority of protestors being peaceful. The UN reports that live ammunition wounded over 6,000 protestors and killed 183. (UNHRC, 2018).

Former US President Donald Trump made the Israeli-Palestinian Accord a global foreign policy priority during his administration from 2017 until 2020. In 2018, the Trump administration slashed money to the UN Relief and Works Agency, which helped Palestinian refugees (Washington Post, 2018). Its move of the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in December 2017, welcomed by Israel but opposed by Palestinians and some Western countries, was the pinnacle of its changed policy. Palestinians say East Jerusalem will be the capital of a future Palestinian state, but Israel says "full and unified Jerusalem" is its capital (CFR, 2023). Palestinians rejected the Trump administration's "Peace to Prosperity" proposal in January 2020 because it supported Israeli annexation of West Bank settlements and authority over an "undivided" Jerusalem (CFR, 2023).

In September 2020, the Abraham Accord was signed by Israel, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE); later joined by Morocco and Sudan. The Accord aims to establish peace in the Middle East, by establishing economic cooperation in the region. Creating free trade deals between Israel and the UAE and increasing the volume of bilateral trade amongst the nations, the agreement further aims to solidify their connections and cooperation. By examining whether and how the Abraham Accords are polarising the contemporary geopolitical scene, Tohme (2022) investigated the Abraham Accords and how they are forging a new geopolitical phase for the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA). The Abraham Accords according to him are ending a long-standing, historic religious dispute between Arab states and Israel, according to the author's investigation. However, for this agreement to be effective and realise its full potential, it must put constant collaboration ahead of interests; as a result, it must adhere to a zero-sum game to achieve positive outcomes for the region.

Khan and Shahzad (2021) aimed to ascertain whether the declaration's political and theological repercussions could make it the cornerstone of Middle Eastern peace. The report claims that the Abraham Accords do not directly address the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and instead focus on the bilateral ties between the nations involved in its fate. The declaration cannot therefore be viewed from the viewpoint of the Palestinian people, although it has profound regional ramifications.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Regardless of the peace processes and proposals facilitated by the international community for peace and stability between Israel and Palestine, Ziv (2021) stated that, in October 2020, an Israeli court ruled that many Palestinian residents in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah be removed by May 2021 and their land handed to Jewish households. After a judge ordered the evictions, protests flared in May with Israeli police attacking the Protesters. On 7 May, demonstrators, Israeli settlers, and police clashed at the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem after weeks of regular rallies and rising hostilities throughout Ramadan. Israeli police fired stun grenades, rubber bullets, and water cannons at protesters, injuring hundreds of Palestinians (International Crisis Group, 2021).

Following the Old City fighting and Jerusalem Day celebrations, East Jerusalem tensions escalated. On May 10, 2021, after many days of rioting in Jerusalem and Israeli police use of fatal and nonlethal force, Hamas, the militant group that controls Gaza, and other Palestinian militant groups fired hundreds of rockets into Israel (Al-Mughrabi & Heller, 2021). Following numerous killings and escalation of violence, Israel and Hamas reached a cease-fire on May 21, 2021, mediated by Egypt, with both sides declaring success and no violations (BBC, 2021). As reported by the International Crisis Group (2021), approximately 250 Palestinians, almost 2000 Jews, and at least 13 Israelis were murdered in the 11-day fighting, thereby intensifying the conflict between Israeli and Palestinian forces in May 2021. A report from Al Jazeera in 2021, stated that the deadly 11-day military attack against the blockaded Gaza Strip was the fourth significant offensive against Palestinian territory in 14 years.

According to the United Nations, the attack left more than 2,200 people injured and at least 261 dead, including 67 children. The violence has since turned considerably bloodier as a result of Hamas, the Palestinian Islamist movement that rules Gaza, started to fire rockets towards Israel, and Israel responded with airstrikes. According to the health ministry in Gaza, Israeli aircraft and artillery bombardment resulted in 830 Palestinians being injured and 119 deaths, including 31 children. In the same time frame, Hamas rocket assaults resulted in the deaths of 9 Israelis, including one child, and more than 400 injuries. On May 13, over 2,000 rockets and mortars were shot from Hamas against Israel, while Israel launched several air and artillery strikes. From its report, Tel Aviv accuses Hamas of being responsible for the retaliation and claims that the offensive was a necessary response to rockets and other munitions fired from the area against the Israelis (Al Jazeera, 2022).



Source: Human Rights Watch, 2022

According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) of the UN, 49 Palestinians, including 17 children, died. During the escalation, 360 Palestinians and 70 Israelis were greatly injured. In August 2022, fighting escalated in Gaza over the movement restriction placed by the Israeli government for the past 15 years. With very few exceptions, more than 2 million Palestinians living in Gaza are denied their right to freedom of movement and opportunities to improve their lives due to Israel's closure policy. The UN Middle East envoy reported that 2022 witnessed the most Israeli and Palestinian conflict-related deaths since 2015, and was a critical moment for the emergence of a new Israeli government administration in 2022 (United Nations, 2023).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In examining the Israel-Palestine conflict over Jerusalem in the 21st century, following numerous peace talks, negotiations and external interventions, this paper will utilise the theory of structural realism, as a lens for explicit understanding. Structural realism assumes

that the international system is anarchic, and in the absence of a higher authority, states are considered sovereign and have to rely on their capabilities to ensure their survival and security. In addition, structural realists argue that states are primarily concerned with relative gains rather than absolute gains in their interactions with other states. This means that states focus on ensuring that their gains are greater than those of their rivals or potential adversaries. This perspective can lead to scepticism and caution in cooperative efforts, as states may worry about losing relative power or being taken advantage of by others (James, 1995).

According to Waltz (1979), in his seminal work "Theory of International Politics," the international system's structure, specifically the distribution of capabilities among states, shapes their actions and interactions. The anarchic nature of the international system, where states operate without a central authority, necessitates a focus on the structure and dynamics of power relations (Lobell, 2017). Structural realism considers the balance of power in multipolar and bipolar systems as a key factor in maintaining peace because the participants in these systems are supposed to prevent one another from attacking. The use of force or the fear of it has traditionally been the focus of realists when advocating for change, with the belief that using statecraft tactics such as diplomacy or economics is necessary for achieving peaceful change (Wivel, 2018).

About these assumptions, the Jerusalem conflict has been a constant warfare for power, dominance, autonomy and sovereignty over the city - rival competition instead of cooperation. The region's continual fighting and unacceptance of defeat explains its power struggle. The PLO's principal goal was to liberate Palestine from Israel and establish a recognized state (Mohamad, 1997). Structural realism emphasises that the international system is anarchic; there is no central authority to enforce rules or resolve conflicts and as a result, states are driven to act in their self-interests to survive. In the Israel-Palestine conflict, this dynamic is evident, as both Israel and the Palestinians have pursued strategies based on their perceived self-interests. Israel has focused on maintaining its security through military actions and control of territories, while the Palestinians have sought international recognition, statehood, and an end to occupation. On the balance of power to the favour of states' security and survival, negotiations and diplomatic efforts often involve external actors such as the United States and regional powers, who try to influence the balance of power between Israel and Palestine. The distribution of power and the interests of external actors can impact the peace processes and the potential for a resolution.

Furthermore, following the Abraham Accord facilitated by the US, and signed in 2020 among Israel, Bahrain, and the UAE, the deal was intended to serve as a building block for long-term peace and stability in the region, as well as a means of halting Iran's territorial expansion, according to President Trump's diplomatic team. Recent developments have seen the withdrawal of most Middle Eastern countries from the US, and closer ties with Russia, after Moscow intervened in Syria in September 2015. However, the US strongly maintains its military presence in Qatar, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, with the major aim of protecting its national interest, the state of Israel and stopping the further development of nuclear weapons by Iran (Surdel, 2020). Just like the structural realist's assumption, states are rational, and their interventions in conflicts are primarily for their national interests.

The realist conceptual framework of "states" holds that they are unilaterally rational actors who meticulously calculate costs and alternatives to pursue their national interests. Notwithstanding all nonviolent steps and initiatives, Israel's main goal is to keep Jerusalem as their capital, while the Palestinians want it as their future capital. Consequently, power is both parties' only means of existence, and to be powerful, they need military capability and ultimate security.

WHO OWNS JERUSALEM?

Jerusalem, is the heart of the Israel-Palestine conflict; a solution to the question of Jerusalem is a solution to the impending friction between both parties (Napolitano, 2012). But how would this be resolved? Who would be said to own Jerusalem? In finding answers to the question about the ownership of Jerusalem, Tomis Kapitan raised some challenging philosophical questions: when does a community have a right to govern or own a certain territory? What circumstances provide people with the right to self-determination? Are claims of religion and affinities relevant in settling territorial political disputes? Have moral legitimacy political organisations, states, or resistance groups? Is it ever permissible for a state to conquer other lands and expand its borders? Is there ever a time when violent resistance to occupation is justified? If so, under what circumstances and in what forms? (Kapitan, 2015).

The law Donald Trump signed on December 6, 2017, to relocate the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem should be viewed in this context. It represents a significant step in the campaign to give Jews sole ownership of Jerusalem. With more than \$130 billion in direct aid (from 1948 to 2018) and additional billions in indirect aid, it exemplifies the overwhelming support the US political and civil establishments have given to Israel. Add to this the massive American diplomatic cover has allowed Israeli governments to avoid political and legal responsibility on the international stage for their blatant violation of international treaties and agreements as well as their treatment of the Palestinians. It is undeniable that several strong Western European nations, as well as several Arab states, have secretly or publicly backed Israel's efforts to turn the political sovereignty of Jerusalem into an exclusive ownership (Mourad, 2019).

Most countries view the status of Jerusalem as a final status issue to be resolved through negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians. The international consensus is that any changes to Jerusalem's status should come through a mutually agreed-upon agreement, as various peace processes have been proposed by international actors for the establishment of lasting peace in the Middle East. Some proposals have suggested dividing Jerusalem, with West Jerusalem under Israeli control and East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state, while another proposal suggested Jerusalem as a shared capital, where both Israelis and Palestinians have their capitals in different parts of the city. Regardless of peace proposals over Jerusalem, Israel retains that "Jerusalem undivided is the capital of Israel," while to the Palestinians, Jerusalem will be the capital of their future State.

21ST CENTURY ISRAEL-PALESTINE PEACE PROCESSES AND ACTS

i. The Declaration of Principles

On September 13, 1993, the Israeli government and the PA signed a joint Declaration of Principles (DOP) on Palestinian Self-Rule in Washington which outlined the planned temporary self-government arrangements between both parties (Bani Salameh, Bani Salameh & Al-Shra'h, 2012). The DOP includes provisions for immediate Palestinian self-rule in Jericho and the Gaza Strip, early Palestinian empowerment in the West Bank, a deal on self-government and the election of a Palestinian council. The interim agreement was planned to be implemented.

Shimon Peres, the Israeli foreign minister, and Yasser Arafat, the PLO leader, reached an agreement in September 1993 after extensive behind-the-scenes negotiations in Oslo. In a letter to Prime Minister Rabin on September 9, 1993, Arafat categorically declared that the PLO: acknowledges Israel's right to exist in security and peace; resolutions 242 and 338 of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) are accepted; PLO is dedicated to a peaceful conflict resolution; rejects the use of terrorism and other violent methods; assuming control of all PLO components to assure compliance, stop infractions; and confirms that the PLO Covenant's provisions that reject Israel's right to exist are no longer in effect and are therefore no longer legitimate (Benvensti, 2014). In response, Israel acknowledged the PLO as the official representative of the Palestinians and is open to peace talks regarding the region (Benvensti, 2014). This peace agreement was followed by the Gaza-Jericho Agreement of 1994, and the Israel-Palestine Interim Agreement of 1995, which were all regarded as the Oslo Accords.

ii. Camp David 2000 Summit

At the peace summit organised by US President Bill Clinton in 2000, Yasser Arafat, the president of the PA, and Ehud Barak, the new prime minister of Israel, met. According to Thrall (2013), Israel ceded the Palestinians 66 percent of the West Bank in May 2000, with 17 percent of it in Israeli control and 17 percent being annexed, without exchanging any Israeli territory. While the Palestinian leadership was offered between 91 percent and 95 percent of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Israeli Prime Minister's plan called for Israel to annex 69 Jewish settlements, or 85 percent of the West Bank's Jewish population. With hefty monetary compensation for the Palestinian right of return, the majority of East Jerusalem's suburbs with sizable non-Jewish populations would have been under Israeli authority (Oren, 2007).

However, Arafat did not counter-offer, (Ross, 2015) and despite considerable U.S. pressure, no viable solution was met to satisfy Israeli and Palestinian aspirations (Ross, 2015). Following the failure of the peace process, Bill Clinton attributed Camp David's failure to Arafat, (Ben-Meir, 2009) and proposed in the fall of 2000 through the Clinton Parameters, for the Palestinian State to include 94-96 percent of the West Bank, 80 percent of the settlers to become Israeli citizens, and Israel to concede some territory (called "Territory Exchange" or "Land Swap") within the Green Line in exchange (1967 borders).

The trade would involve 3 percent of Israeli territory, leaving 97 percent of the original borders for the West Bank sector of the Palestinian state (The Times of Israel, 2015).

iii. Israeli–Palestinian Peace Talk in 2007 and 2008

Ehud Olmert, the Israeli prime minister, and Mahmoud Abbas, the president of Palestine, met 36 times, including lower-level encounters, between December 2006 and mid-September 2008. Olmert hailed the Arab League's 2007 reaffirmation of the Arab Peace Initiative and offered the Palestinians a strategy for peace talks and the creation of a Palestinian state (New York Times, 2011). Olmert's key proposal was the permanent boundary, which called for Israeli withdrawal from the majority of the West Bank and called for annexing at least 6.3 percent of Palestinian territory in exchange for 5.8 percent of Israeli territory. This required Palestinians to get alternate land in the Negev, close to the Gaza Strip, as well as a physical connection under Israeli control that would permit unrestricted travel between Gaza and the West Bank (Thrall, 2013). Almost 60 percent of settlers would stay under Abbas's offer according to the negotiations, as both Olmert and Abbas agreed that reciprocal interactions were needed, not hermetic separation. By working on water, security, broadband, banking, tourism, and more, they recognized the need to share a business environment, as both leaders decided that Jewish neighbourhoods in Jerusalem should stay under Israeli sovereignty and Arab neighbourhoods should return to Palestinian authority. The Palestinians requested clarification of the territorial land swap because Israeli and Palestinian assessments of the West Bank diverge by several hundred square kilometres (New York Times, 2011). However, in the absence of such disclosures, with the fear that Olmert's 6.3 to 6.8 percent annexation might be closer to 8.5 percent, four times the Palestinians' 1.9 percent swap limit, the negotiation could not continue as both parties claimed non-reciprocity from each other (Thrall 2013).

iv. 2010 Direct Peace Talk

In reaction to Obama's Cairo Speech, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu initially supported a Palestinian state. He highlighted that the Palestinians must reciprocate by acknowledging Israel as the Jewish people's nation-state, disarming a future Palestinian state, and providing substantial security guarantees, including specified borders for Israel. However, Palestinians would have to give up their right of return and accept Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Palestinians disputed his claim that Israeli West Bank settlements can develop. The sides agreed to direct talks in September 2010 as part of the Obama administration's peace process revitalisation (Burns, 2010). The meeting's main objective was to build a framework for a final agreement in one year, despite low expectations. The debates intended to end the Israeli–Palestinian conflict by establishing a two-state solution, advocating everlasting peace, ceasing land claims, and rejecting strong responses if violence restarted. If one side compromised, Hamas and Hezbollah warned of violence. Even though Hamas and Hezbollah signed the pact, the Israeli administration officially retreated on peace (Heller, 2014). The US had to focus on diminishing Hamas and Hezbollah, which Israel considers terrorist groups, as direct talks continued. As Hamas and Hezbollah would keep receiving backing, Israel doubted a final agreement would transform the situation. As long as Palestine refused to acknowledge Israel as a Jewish state, the Israeli government opposed any accord with it (Heller, 2014).

v. 2013-2014 Peace Talk

On July 28, 2013, the Israeli Cabinet approved the start of diplomatic talks between the State of Israel and the Palestinians, with US support, intending to establish a final status deal over Jerusalem. The re-establishment of pre-1967 borders was one of five conditions outlined in the resolution for an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. Although Washington did not directly participate in the creation of the strategy, sources revealed that Washington had been giving Paris unofficial advice about what to put in the resolution. With several requests to end settlement construction but no mention of Hamas rocket and mortar attacks on Israeli citizens, Israel viewed the content of this resolution as being excessively pro-Palestinian.

After John Kerry attempted to relaunch the peace process, Israel and the Palestinians began direct negotiations again on July 29, 2013. Kerry's announcement was rejected by Hamas leadership, which said that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas had no right to negotiate on behalf of the Palestinian people (The Guardian, 2014). Israel was however furious at the 23 April 2014 Fatah–Hamas Gaza Accord, which sought reconciliation, a Palestinian unity government, and new elections (BBC, 2014), and halted the peace talks with the Palestinians, claiming it would not negotiate with a Palestinian government sponsored by Hamas, a terrorist organisation that calls for Israel's annihilation, thereby, threatened sanctions against the PA (Heller, 2014).

Netanyahu accused Abbas of undermining peace efforts and supporting Hamas, which was denied as Abbas promised reporters that his administration would acknowledge Israel, be non-violent, and adhere to previous PLO accords (Rasgon, 2017). Following this, Israel withdrew plans to build Palestinian houses in a subjugated area of the West Bank and planned economic sanctions on Palestinians. Abbas threatened to dissolve the PA, leaving Israel solely accountable for the West Bank and Gaza, but regardless, a new Palestinian Unity Government was created on 2 June 2014 despite Israeli protests and activities (Rasgon, 2017).

vi. Abbas' 2014 Peace Plan

In September 2014, Abbas provided John Kerry with a fresh plan for the peace process (Toameh, 2014), which called for nine months of direct negotiations, then a three-year plan for Israel to withdraw to the 1967 borders, leaving East Jerusalem as Palestine's capital (Khoury, 2014). Abbas, the president of the PA, suggested that with mutually agreed-upon land swaps, the borders of the future Palestinian state be based on the pre-1967 lines. While maintaining the territorial continuity of the eventual Palestinian state, the goal was to accommodate Israeli settlement blocs in the West Bank.

He stressed the value of protecting the Old City's religious and cultural significance, particularly the complex known as Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount, which is home to the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. He emphasised the need to uphold the status quo and make sure that all religious communities have access to and are allowed to practise their religions freely. The Israeli-Palestinian peace process was opposed by the US administration to any unilateral action. Following these events, Abbas proposed an

independent Palestinian State and threatened to pursue charges against Israel at the International Criminal Court (ICC). Israel retaliated by suspending US\$127 million in Palestinian tax receipts after Abbas signed a deal to join the ICC in response to Jordan's unsuccessful UNSC request (BBC, 2014). In retaliation, the PA banned six major Israeli companies' items from sale in the Palestinian territories (The Times of Israel, 2015).

vii. The Trump Administration Peace Proposal

Following the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel by the US in 2017, at a summit in Bahrain in July 2019, the Trump administration unveiled the economic part of its eagerly awaited peace proposal between Israel and Palestine. The conference's planning got off to an inauspicious start when the Palestinians declared they would boycott it because they believed it was an attempt to "buy off Palestinian political aspirations by financial means." However, even while few Arab countries sent lower-level representatives, the Arab states disregarded the Palestinians' request to boycott the conference (Council on Foreign Relations, 2022).



The Arab Weekly (2020)

The 38-page "Peace to Prosperity" plan demands that Arab nations provide the Palestinians with \$50 billion in development funding. Two of the objectives are to double the Palestinians' GDP and produce one million new jobs during the following ten years. In addition to financing for numerous projects, the budget also includes money to help women gain access to the workforce. Additionally, it aims to promote regional collaboration and integration. The \$5 billion plan for a road and railway connecting the West Bank and Gaza

Strip was rejected by the Israelis. They were concerned that this would imply that the government views the two regions as a single geographical unit and constitutes a security risk.

According to Ward (2020), the plan clarified that there will be no "right to return" for the millions of Palestinians who were evicted from their ancestral homes when the Israeli state was created. The plan involves redrawing the map to give Israel extra territory in the West Bank, which is under Palestinian control, in exchange for "land swaps" that include two Negev Desert districts. While some pundits saw the economic strategy as a crucial first step in the development of peace. It was useless to concentrate on the economy without satisfying the political concerns of the Palestinians. The proposal also in no way included any information about a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

viii. The Munich Agreement

The Munich Group, which consists of the foreign ministers of Egypt, France, Germany and Jordan, discussed peace efforts in February 2020, and in July issued a statement declaring any annexation of Palestinian territories would be a violation of international law. Emphasising the importance of a two-state solution to end the Israeli-Palestinian issue to achieve lasting peace in the region, the group stated their steadfastness and dedication in facilitating and assisting all initiatives aimed at bringing about a fair and sustainable peace in the Middle East based on accepted guidelines, international law, pertinent UNSC resolutions, and the Arab Peace Initiative - through a two-state solution that is negotiated and based on the lines of June 4, 1967, following the relevant UNSC resolution.

In September 2020, the four countries called for a resumption of negotiations and praised recent deals establishing ties between Israel and the UAE and Bahrain (Al Jazeera, 2020). The group met in Cairo in January 2021 to discuss possible steps to advance the peace process in the Middle East and create an environment conducive to dialogue between the Palestinians and the Israelis. A further meeting was held in Paris in March 2021. At the Munich Security Conference, the group condemned the expansion of Israeli settlements and the ongoing Palestinian displacement in East Jerusalem (Security Council Report, 2021). On 22 September 2022, the group met with Josep Borrell and Tor Wennesland to discuss advancing the Middle East Peace Process towards a just, comprehensive and lasting peace based on the two-state solution (France Diplomacy, 2022).

ix. The Abraham Peace Accord

On September 15, 2020, Israel, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates signed the Abraham Accords (later joined by Morocco in December 2020; and Sudan in January 2021), which opened up unrestricted trade, direct flights, and tourist exchange amongst the countries. However, those accords served to construct new security structures in the Middle East rather than just begin a new chapter in tough bilateral relations.

With the US's reduced footprint in the region, Russia has increased its visibility after intervening in Syria in September 2015. Due to the US's minimised interference in the region, and the need to create new security structures in the region, there is a concurrent

change in the foreign policies of the Middle Eastern countries. The reconciliation between Israel and Saudi Arabia, who are allied with the UAE and The reversal of alliances, articulated as a global accord (the Abraham Accords), not only results in the formal recognition of Israel by the major regional capitals but also unequivocally separates the Muslim world into two opposing groups (Ben-Meir, 2022).

Before the signing of the Abraham Accords, the Palestinian issue of state recognition was very important in the Arab world. However, the demand for an Israel-Palestine peaceful negotiation over Palestine state status has no longer been a paramount topic amongst the Arab nations. It is significant that neither Jordan nor Egypt's officials, nor those of the Palestinian Authority, were invited to the Israeli-Arab negotiations; which conveys a great deal about Israel and the Palestinians' standing in the international community. The Palestinian Authority has however been unable to operate efficiently due to its internal circumstances and existing political structure.

In reality, as stated by Surdel (2020), neither the Gaza Strip, which is under the administration of Hamas, nor the West Bank, which is governed by Fatah, have a single political authority or hub. The infamous Camp David Accords, which were signed in 1978, did not definitively resolve the issue of freezing their construction. Instead, it concentrates on boosting the Palestinian Territories' economy, in no way emphatically establishing a permanent status of Palestine or Jerusalem. This is following the general public's viewpoint, which today expresses little interest in engaging in conversation with the Palestinians. For the Israeli administration, their emphasis is on international policy, and the status of Jerusalem to its interest.

However, the international world, the UN, as well as the European Union, consistently hold that the creation of two states - Israel and Palestine - is the only way to achieve a durable peace in the Middle East. There is not a viable alternative in this regard that could win over all the involved nations. Especially in light of the Palestinian Autonomy's dysfunction, the question of whether such a position needs to be reinterpreted arises.

CONCLUSION

Securitisation under a narrative of ontological vulnerability is evident in Jerusalem's Old City dispute. Israel faces existential dangers from conflicts between Islamic, Jewish, Hebrew, and Zionist identities as well as border issues with its neighbours. Thus, Jerusalem becomes a survival concern for the international community. Yet, securitisation frames the geography of Jerusalem as a security concern that demands military and institutional action rather than initiatives to lessen tensions, sidelining social and political issues. The perceived challenges to a unified Israeli identity and the militarisation of Israeli activities aim to give a sense of security through isolated group identity rather than minimising violence and inter-group confrontations.

Who owns Jerusalem? Would the state of Palestine ever be recognised as a sovereign state? And if so, what would be its defined territory? The unresolved geographical status of Jerusalem, the impending conflicts and humanitarian crises that continuously erupt between both parties, have affected the recognition of Palestine as an independent entity. Regardless of Palestine's observer status in the United Nations, and its recognition by Arab states, until the conflicting subject of Jerusalem is resolved, and peace established between both governments, the status of Palestine as a sovereign nation will remain on hold. Past external mediation and intervention have only heightened the velocity of the conflict over Jerusalem. Thus, this paper concludes that no nation, no international organisation can effectively create a lasting settlement over the status of Jerusalem except Israeli and Palestinian authorities. It is therefore greatly their responsibility to ensure that a lasting stable peace is actualised in the region.

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