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How has terrorism developed within the Israeli and Palestinian conflict?

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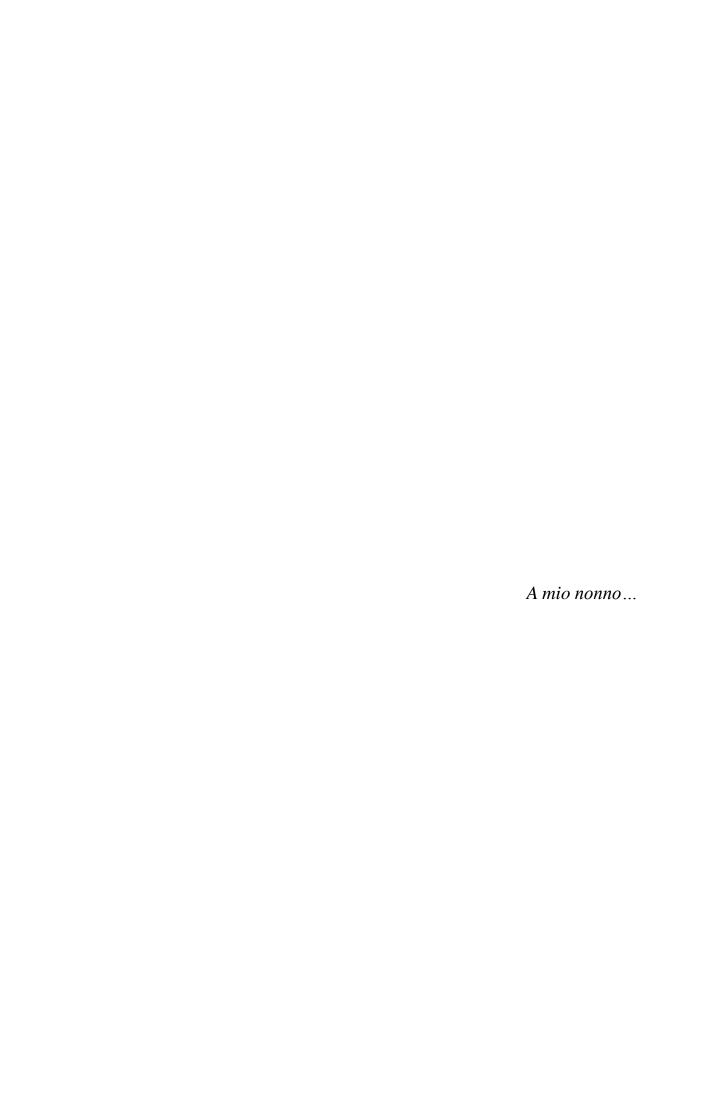Prof. Pasquale FERRARA

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ABSTRACT

Over the years, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has changed from being a nationalist fight to one that is becoming more and more characterized by terrorist attacks. In order to understand how unequal power relations, territorial disputes, and ideological extremism have influenced the character of violence in the region, this thesis looks at the historical, political, and sociocultural elements that have contributed to this change. According to the report, the war began in the early 20th century when rival Jewish and Palestinian nationalism groups established the framework for a long-running conflict over territory and identity. Grievances grew after Israel was established in 1948 and Palestinians were displaced, creating a climate of resistance that eventually moved away from conventional warfare and toward asymmetric tactics.

This study also looks into how geopolitical factors, such as regional alliances and foreign involvement, might exacerbate the conflict and encourage violent reactions. The emergence of groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad is indicative of a change in Palestinian resistance tactics, as terrorism has been used as a political leverage tactic as well as a form of vengeance. In the same vein, Israel's counterterrorism tactics, such as military actions, targeted killings, and security measures, have strengthened violent cycles and deepened hostility.

This work offers a perspective of why terrorism has become a recurring aspect of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by placing its growth within the larger framework of nationalist conflicts and state-building processes. Finally, it makes the case that ending this long-standing cycle of violence necessitates a multifaceted strategy that takes into account both sides' historical grievances, political ambitions, and security concerns.

INTRODUCTION

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the most enduring and complex geopolitical crises in modern history, characterized by a deeply rooted struggle over land, national identity, and religious significance. Over the years, the conflict has escalated into wars, uprisings, and ongoing violence, with failed peace negotiations leaving both sides locked in a cycle of hostility. While much has been written about the subject, the continued instability and the evolution of the conflict into acts of terrorism necessitate further analysis. Understanding this conflict is crucial not only for academic discourse but also for international relations, security studies, and peace-building efforts. Given its historical significance, far-reaching humanitarian impact, and global ramifications, this topic was chosen to provide a structured and comprehensive examination of the conflict's origins, its geographical and cultural divisions, and the way it has evolved into modern terrorism.

This thesis seeks to explore the Israeli-Palestinian conflict due to its multifaceted nature and its ongoing influence on regional and international affairs. The conflict is not only a local issue but also a focal point of global diplomacy, with major powers intervening through political, military, and economic means. The repeated breakdown of peace talks, the rise of militant groups, and the humanitarian crises resulting from decades of occupation and resistance underscore the need for a fresh, analytical perspective. Moreover, media portrayals and political narratives often present a one-sided view, making it essential to engage in a balanced, discursive examination that accounts for historical, geographical, cultural, and ideological factors.

Furthermore, terrorism has become a defining feature of the conflict, affecting both Israeli and Palestinian civilians, reshaping security policies, and influencing global counterterrorism strategies. The shift from conventional warfare to asymmetric warfare and terrorist tactics requires a deeper exploration of how the conflict has evolved and what it means for future peace efforts. By studying these elements, this essay aims to provide an objective, well-researched, and critical perspective on a conflict that continues to shape Middle Eastern and global politics. In order to critically analyze the complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this thesis will be guided by three central research questions. These questions are designed to provide a structured framework for understanding the historical roots of the conflict, the geographical and cultural divisions that sustain hostilities, and the ways in which the struggle has evolved into modern terrorism. Each question will be explored in depth, acknowledging differing perspectives and interpretations while engaging with the broader geopolitical and humanitarian implications.

The first question that is taken under analysis is what the historical origins of are the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and how have they shaped the current situation. Any analysis of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must begin with a historical exploration of its origins, as the past serves as the

foundation upon which present tensions rest. This research will investigate how the competing nationalist movements, Zionism and Palestinian nationalism, emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and how these ideological frameworks shaped the aspirations of both communities. It will examine the role of British colonial rule, particularly the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which promised British support for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, despite the fact that the land was already inhabited by an Arab majority.

Furthermore, this section will critically analyze the pivotal events that cemented divisions between the two groups, including the impact of Jewish immigration to Palestine, Arab resistance to Zionist settlement, and the growing tensions during the British Mandate period. The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and the subsequent Arab-Israeli War, which led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, a tragedy known as the Nakba (catastrophe), remains one of the most contentious moments in the history of the conflict.

This historical inquiry will also address the aftermath of the 1948 war, the rise of Palestinian refugee issues, and the role of the United Nations in proposing solutions, such as the Partition Plan, which was accepted by Jewish leaders but rejected by Arab states. Additionally, the impact of subsequent wars, including the Six-Day War of 1967, in which Israel occupied the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights, will be analyzed. The research will engage with the question of whether Israeli territorial expansion was a matter of self-defense or aggressive state-building and how this occupation has influenced modern Palestinian resistance movements.

This section will conclude by assessing the various peace efforts and agreements, including the Oslo Accords, the Camp David Summit, and the role of international mediators, to determine why peace negotiations have repeatedly failed. The historical dimension of the conflict is not merely a matter of documenting events but is integral to understanding why both Israelis and Palestinians continue to assert deeply entrenched claims to the same land, making reconciliation increasingly difficult.

Moreover, it is necessary to consider how do geographical, cultural, and religious factors contribute to the persistence of the conflict. Beyond historical grievances, geography, culture, and religion play significant roles in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This question will explore how territorial disputes, demographic realities, and competing national identities have contributed to an ongoing cycle of hostility.

Geographically, the conflict is largely defined by contested spaces, most notably the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. The research will assess how Israeli settlement expansion in the West Bank, the blockade of Gaza, and the status of Jerusalem have remained major stumbling blocks in peace negotiations. While Israel claims a historical and security-driven justification for its

control over these areas, Palestinians view such policies as acts of occupation and colonialism. This essay will critically engage with these opposing narratives and explore the implications of international law on territorial disputes, particularly regarding Israeli settlements and the right of return for Palestinian refugees.

Cultural and national identity also play a critical role in the conflict, as both Israelis and Palestinians construct their historical narratives in opposition to one another. This research will analyze the way education systems, media portrayals, and political discourse in both societies reinforce notions of victimhood and resistance. While Israelis see themselves as a people returning to their ancestral homeland after centuries of exile, Palestinians view themselves as an indigenous population resisting dispossession. These competing narratives contribute to an ongoing sense of existential threat on both sides, which in turn affects political decision-making and public attitudes toward peace efforts.

Religious tensions further complicate the conflict, particularly regarding the status of holy sites in Jerusalem. The Western Wall, Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the Dome of the Rock are religiously significant to Jews, Muslims, and Christians alike, making the city one of the most contested spaces in the world. Periodic clashes over access to these religious sites have escalated into violent confrontations, reinforcing broader hostilities between Israelis and Palestinians. The research will analyze how religious extremism on both sides, whether in the form of Jewish nationalist movements advocating for expanded Israeli sovereignty over biblical lands or Islamist factions calling for the destruction of Israel, has shaped the trajectory of the conflict.

By exploring these geographical, cultural, and religious factors, this section will demonstrate that the conflict is not merely a political or military struggle but also an ideological and existential battle, making resolution particularly difficult.

Lastly, the third question to be considered is how the conflict has evolved into terrorism, and what are its implications. Perhaps the most critical and contentious question concerns the transformation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into a struggle increasingly characterized by terrorism and asymmetric warfare. This section will investigate the origins of Palestinian armed resistance, the rise of organizations such as the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Hamas, and how violent tactics have influenced both Palestinian and Israeli strategies.

Terrorism in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a deeply polarizing issue, with differing perspectives on whether certain acts constitute resistance or terrorism. Palestinian militant groups argue that their attacks against Israeli military and civilian targets are forms of legitimate resistance against occupation, while Israel and its allies classify such actions as acts of terrorism. This thesis

will critically analyze how both perspectives are shaped by political ideologies, historical grievances, and international law.

This research will also explore how the Second Intifada (2000–2005) marked a turning point in the use of suicide bombings and mass-casualty attacks against Israeli civilians, leading Israel to implement drastic counterterrorism measures, such as the construction of the separation barrier in the West Bank. The Israeli government has justified these measures as necessary for national security, while Palestinians argue that they represent collective punishment and territorial annexation. The discussion will extend to how Israel's military responses, ranging from targeted assassinations to large-scale military operations in Gaza, have fueled further cycles of violence and radicalization. Additionally, this section will consider the role of external actors in the expansion of terrorism within the conflict. Regional and international powers, including Iran, the United States, and Gulf nations, have played significant roles in funding, arming, or diplomatically supporting different factions.

Lastly, the research will examine the ethical and legal dimensions of terrorism within the conflict. How does international law define terrorism in the context of occupation and resistance? Is there a clear distinction between state and non-state violence, given Israel's military actions and Palestinian militant attacks? What are the long-term consequences of viewing the conflict primarily through the lens of terrorism rather than political negotiation? By engaging with these questions, this section will provide a nuanced discussion on the challenges of achieving peace when terrorism becomes a central component of warfare.

By addressing these three core research questions, this thesis aims to provide an in-depth and discursive exploration of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Through historical analysis, an examination of geographical and cultural factors, and a critical assessment of terrorism's role in the conflict, this research will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the struggle. Ultimately, these questions highlight the complexity of the conflict and the multiple barriers that have hindered its resolution, reinforcing the need for a multifaceted approach to achieving lasting peace.

To explore these research questions in a structured and coherent manner, this thesis will be divided into three main chapters:

The first chapter will delve into the origins of the conflict, exploring its historical foundations dating back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It will analyze the rise of both Zionism and Palestinian nationalism, the impact of colonial rule, and key turning points such as the Balfour Declaration, the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, and subsequent wars and peace efforts. By understanding these foundational events, it becomes possible to appreciate how deep-seated historical grievances continue to shape contemporary hostilities.

The second chapter will shift focus to the geographical, cultural, and religious differences between Israelis and Palestinians. It will examine how territorial divisions, such as those between Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza, have contributed to the conflict and how contested spaces like Jerusalem hold profound religious and cultural significance for both sides. Additionally, this section will analyze the role of identity and nationalism in perpetuating divisions, as well as how cultural narratives and historical memory influence the perspectives of both communities.

The third and most critical chapter will explore the transformation of the conflict into one characterized by terrorism and asymmetric warfare. This section will analyze how groups such as Hamas and other militant organizations emerged, the role of suicide bombings, rocket attacks, and Israeli counterterrorism strategies, and how both state and non-state actors have influenced the conflict. It will also discuss the impact of global terrorism trends on the Israeli-Palestinian struggle, examining the extent to which external influences, such as regional alliances and international interventions, have exacerbated or mitigated the violence.

Through this structured analysis, this thesis aims to provide a balanced and discursive discussion of the conflict, addressing the complexities that make resolution so elusive. By tracing its historical roots, understanding the cultural and geographical divisions, and examining the rise of terrorism as a defining feature, this study will shed light on the multifaceted nature of one of the world's most intractable disputes.

1. THE ROOTS OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

1.1 Introduction to the conflict

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the most complex and long-lasting disputes in modern history, rooted in territorial, religious, and national issues that date back several centuries. Before the First World War, the region we know today as Israel and Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire. With the end of the war and the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Palestine was placed under British administration through the Mandate of the Society of Nations in 1920 (Al Tahhan, 2018). During this period, tensions between the Palestinian Arab community and the growing Jewish community primarily immigrated from Europe because of Zionism and anti-Semitic persecution, increased. In 1917, the Balfour Declaration expressed British support for the creation of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine (Al Tahhan, 2018), intensifying Zionist hopes and Arab concerns. The tension between the two communities continued to grow, culminating in violence and riots in the 1920s and 1930s. In 1947, the UN General Assembly approved a plan to partition Palestine, which provided for the creation of a Jewish and an Arab state with Jerusalem under international control. The Jews accepted the plan, while the Arabs rejected it. On 14 May 1948, Israel declared its independence. The next day, a coalition of Arab armies invaded the new state, starting the first Arab-Israeli war.

The conflict ended in 1949 with an armistice, leaving Israel with more territory than was provided for by the partition plan, while the West Bank and Gaza were administered respectively by Jordan and Egypt. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced during this period, an event known as Nakba (catastrophe). In 1967, during the Six-Day War, Israel occupied the West Bank, Gaza, Sinai and the Golan Heights. The occupation of Palestinian territories is one of the main points of contention in the conflict (Golani, M., & Manna, A., 2011). UN Resolution 242 called for Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories in return for recognition of Israel's right to exist in peace. In the 1990s, the Oslo Accords marked a vital attempt to resolve the conflict through direct negotiations. The agreements led to the creation of the Palestinian Authority, with a certain degree of autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza and established a framework for future negotiations. However, the expectations were not met, and new cycles of violence and failures in the negotiations led to a deterioration of hopes for peace (Golani, M., & Manna, A., 2011).

The current situation sees the West Bank occupied and divided into areas of different control, with numerous illegal Israeli settlements under international law and Gaza under a tight Israeli blockade administered by Hamas, an Islamist group considered a terrorist by Israel and other Western countries (UNICEF, 2022). The main problems that stand in the way of a resolution to the conflict

include the status of Jerusalem, a holy city for Jews, Muslims, and Christians, with both sides claiming Jerusalem as their capital; Palestinian refugees, millions of Palestinians living as refugees or descendants of refugees are demanding the right to return, Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, which are illegal under international law and represent a significant obstacle to peace; security, with Israel demanding security guarantees against terrorist attacks, while the Palestinians demand an end to the military occupation (United Nations, 2023).

Prospects for peace remain uncertain. Numerous international and regional initiatives have attempted to resolve the conflict, but none has been a lasting success. The two-state solution, which involves the creation of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel, is often cited as the most feasible. Still, the practical achievements of this solution seem far off. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to be one of the most intricate and explosive issues in global politics, with profound implications for regional and international stability (Shlaim, A., 2001).

1.2 The Aftermath

At the end of the conflict, the victorious countries decided to divide up the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. At the Sanremo Conference in 1920, the territory of Palestine and those of present-day Iraq and Jordan was given to Britain, while the territories corresponding to present-day Syria and Lebanon came under French control (Barr, J., 2011). London and Paris' presence in this region was then institutionalized by the League of Nations - the nucleus of what would become the United Nations - with the creation of the Mandates. This system provided that the colonial powers administered these territories and accompanied them on their way to independence (Barr, J., 2011).

However, the granting of the British Mandate for Palestine, which had publicly declared its intention to facilitate the immigration of European Jews into that territory, was poorly received by the local population. The years of the Mandate were marked by frequent protests, often characterized by episodes of violence against the British and the Jewish community, which grew continuously with the arrival of new migrants. This influx changed the demographic structure of Palestine: in 1922, the Jews represented 11% of the population; in 1947, their number reached 32%, despite the growth of the Arab population, which doubled during the same period (Segev, T., 2000).

The Second World War was a clear break for the English colonial system and Palestine. Because of the economic needs of post-war reconstruction and the complexity of the situation on the ground, London decided to transfer the Mandate to the United Nations, which had replaced the League of Nations, leaving them to determine the region's future. In November 1947, the UN General

Assembly adopted Resolution 181, which provided for the partition of Palestine into two states, one Jewish and one Arab, and the designation of Jerusalem as a territory under international jurisdiction. This decision was welcomed by the Jewish community but rejected by the Arab community (United Nations, 1947).

After years of opposition to the mass immigration of European Jews, the Arab population rejected the idea that they could achieve an independent state. As a result, relations between Jews and Arabs degenerated rapidly, leading first to guerrilla warfare and then, with the official end of the mandate and the departure of the British, to an actual armed conflict. On the 15th of May of 1948, following the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel, the armies of Egypt, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq attacked, starting the first Arab-Israeli war (Segev, T., 2000).

1.3 Political developments

At the end of the 1948-1949 conflict, which saw the defeat of the Arab armies, the borders of the newly created state of Israel included about 78% of the territory of the Palestinian mandate. The West Bank (West Bank) remained under the control of Jordan, and the Gaza Strip was under the control of Egypt. During the conflict, about 700,000 Palestinians were forced to leave their homes, either for fear of war or because of threats from the Israeli army (Amnesty International, n.d.). This forced exodus, known as the Al-Nakba (Arab word for ''catastrophe''), is at the origin of the Palestinian refugee issue, one of the main unresolved points of the conflict.

In the decades following the founding of Israel, relations with the Arab states remained deeply conflicted. After the 1948-1949 war, further conflicts followed, including the 1967 Six-Day War, during which Israel quickly defeated Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, occupying the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem, previously controlled by the Jordanians (Oren, M. B., 2002). This occupation radically changed the political geography of the region and intensified the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, adopted immediately after the Six-Day War, called for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied territories in return for recognition of Israel's right to live in peace within secure and recognized borders. However, the interpretation and implementation of this resolution have been the subject of continuing dispute. Immediately after 1967, Israel began to build settlements in the occupied territories, a move seen as illegal by most of the international community and a source of further tensions with the Palestinians and the Arab states, Complicating the prospects for a two-state solution (United Nations, n.d.).

In 1973, the Kippur War broke out when Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack on Israel on the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur. Despite the initial surprise, Israel repelled the attacks and

maintained control of the occupied territories. The war highlighted Israel's vulnerability and led to intense diplomatic efforts for a lasting peace. The 1978 Camp David Accords, mediated by the US, led to the first peace treaty between Israel and an Arab country, Egypt, which officially recognized Israel in exchange for the return of the Sinai Peninsula. This marked a historic moment that demonstrated the possibility of peace but did not resolve the Palestinian question.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the situation remained unstable with the first Palestinian Intifada of 1987 against the Israeli occupation. This period increased international awareness of the Palestinian problem. It paved the way for the 1993 Oslo Accords, which sought to establish a framework for peace and initiate a two-state solution. The Oslo Accords led to the creation of the Palestinian National Authority. They gave the Palestinians limited autonomy in the occupied territories. Still, many crucial issues, such as the status of Jerusalem, the final borders, the refugees' security, and the right to return, remained unresolved (PalQuest., n.d.).

Despite the initial enthusiasm, the peace process broke down in the late 1990s and early 2000s, culminating in the second Intifada. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to be characterized by periods of intermittent violence and failed attempts at negotiation. Internal divisions between the Palestinian factions, between Fatah and Hamas, and internal political dynamics in Israel, including the continued expansion of settlements, have further complicated efforts to achieve lasting peace. The international community's intervention, including the US, the European Union, and the United Nations, has had a significant impact but failed to produce a final solution.

The current situation is characterized by a fragile truce, sporadic outbreaks of violence, and constant tensions. The issue of Palestinian refugees, control of Jerusalem, borders, security, and mutual recognition remain the main obstacles to lasting peace. While some peace efforts continue, mutual mistrust and the deep wounds of the past make it difficult to imagine a quick and lasting solution. The complexity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict lies not only in its long history but also in its interconnectedness with regional and global political dynamics, making it one of the most intractable conflicts in the modern world.

1.4 The emergence of Palestinian parties and the role of the PLO

The defeat of the Arab armies in 1967 was a catalyst for increased political activism among the Palestinians. Between the late 1960s and early 1980s, numerous Palestinian groups and parties emerged that sought to pursue their national aspirations through political and military means. Most of these groups joined the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), becoming the primary representative of Palestinian bodies internationally (Britannica.). However, in 1982, due to the civil

war. In Lebanon, the PLO was forced to leave the country and find refuge in Tunisia, marking a period of decline for the organization. In 1973, Israel and the Arab countries again collided in the Yom Kippur War, known by the Arabs as the Ramadan War or Israeli-Arab of '73. The main protagonists were Egypt and Syria. The outcome of the war led to the return of Sinai to Egypt and the further consolidation of Israeli control over the Golan Heights, occupied in 1967. In 1987, exasperated by the failure to recognize their national aspirations, the Palestinians of Gaza and the West Bank began a series of protests against the Israeli occupation, which soon turned into the First Intifada. This popular uprising lasted until 1993 and led to the deaths of thousands of people (Sayigh, Y. s.d.). During these years of conflict, the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) was born, an Islamist organization derived from the Muslim Brotherhood, characterized by its intransigence towards Israel (National Counterterrorism Center. s.d.).

The years of the Intifada also saw a rapprochement between the Palestinian and Israeli leadership, culminating in the Oslo Accords between 1993 and 1995. These uprisings and agreements, while deeply rooted in the localized grievances of Palestinians and Israelis, were inextricably linked to broader geopolitical dynamics and the personalities driving them. Understanding these intersections is essential to comprehending their outcomes and legacies. The term "Intifada," derived from the Arabic word for "shaking off," encapsulates the essence of Palestinian resistance against Israeli occupation. Both the First Intifada (1987-1993) and the Second Intifada (2000-2005) were critical junctures in the conflict, characterized by grassroots mobilization, societal upheaval, and evolving methods of struggle. Yet, these uprisings did not occur in a vacuum. The socio-economic realities of Palestinian life shaped them under occupation, the failure of diplomacy, and the broader global forces of the Cold War and its aftermath (Palestine Remembered. s.d.).

The First Intifada emerged during the waning years of the Cold War, a period marked by shifting global alliances and ideological realignments. This uprising, sparked by a seemingly mundane traffic accident in Gaza, quickly escalated into a widespread movement for Palestinian self-determination. It was driven by decades of frustration stemming from Israeli occupation, land confiscations, and economic hardships (Palestine Remembered. s.d.). At the same time, the Cold War's global dynamics provided a backdrop that shaped its trajectory. The United States and the Soviet Union, as the dominant Cold War powers, viewed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through their ideological rivalry. For the U.S., Israel was a crucial ally in a region dominated by Soviet-aligned Arab states. This relationship ensured a steady stream of American military and economic support for Israel, reinforcing its control over the territories occupied after the 1967 Six-Day War. Conversely, the Soviet Union supported Palestinian factions and Arab states, framing their struggle as part of a global anti-imperialist movement. The grassroots nature of the First Intifada, with its reliance on civil

disobedience, strikes, and symbolic acts of defiance, challenged the military superiority of Israel and gained international attention (Palestine Remembered. s.d.). However, the global Cold War context limited the potential for meaningful international intervention. Superpower competition often reduced the conflict to a zero-sum game, where supporting one side inherently meant opposing the other. This polarization hindered multilateral efforts to address the root causes of Palestinian grievances. By the time the Second Intifada erupted in 2000, the Cold War had ended, and the geopolitical landscape had shifted. The U.S. emerged as the sole superpower, and its dominance in the Middle East was largely uncontested. This new unipolar world order, however, failed to deliver a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Instead, the Oslo Accords, a key post-Cold War diplomatic effort, had faltered, leaving Palestinians disillusioned and angry. The Second Intifada was marked by significant violence, including suicide bombings, armed clashes, and Israeli military incursions. The immediate trigger was Ariel Sharon's provocative visit to the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, but the deeper causes lay in the unfulfilled promises of Oslo. Settlement expansion, economic stagnation, and the absence of a viable Palestinian state underscored the failure of diplomacy. Without the balancing force of the Soviet Union, U.S. mediation efforts were seen as heavily skewed in favor of Israel, further eroding Palestinian trust (Palestine Remembered. s.d.).

The Oslo Accords of the 1990s represented a historic attempt to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through diplomacy. Brokered under the auspices of Norwegian mediators and heavily influenced by the Clinton administration, these agreements sought to establish a framework for peace based on mutual recognition and incremental steps toward Palestinian self-governance. However, their successes and failures were deeply intertwined with the legacies of the Cold War and Clinton's unique approach to diplomacy. Bill Clinton's presidency coincided with optimism in the post-Cold War world. As the leader of the United States, Clinton played a central role in the Oslo process, leveraging America's unrivaled influence to bring Israeli and Palestinian leaders to the negotiating table. His approach was characterized by a focus on personal diplomacy, exemplified by his close relationships with Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin. Clinton's vision for peace was rooted in the belief that dialogue and incremental trust-building could overcome decades of hostility (Clinton, W. J. 2004). This optimism culminated in the signing of the Oslo I Accord in 1993, followed by Oslo II in 1995. These agreements established the Palestinian Authority (PA) and outlined a phased approach to resolving core issues such as borders, refugees, and the status of Jerusalem. The iconic handshake between Rabin and Arafat on the White House lawn symbolized a new era of hope. However, Clinton's reliance on personal diplomacy and incrementalism also revealed the limitations of his approach (Clinton, W. J. 2004). The accords deferred the most contentious issues to future negotiations, creating opportunities for spoilers to undermine the process on both sides. In Israel,

right-wing factions opposed territorial concessions, while Palestinian groups like Hamas rejected Oslo as a betrayal of their cause (Oslo Accords. n.d.). The assassination of Rabin in 1995 and subsequent political shifts in Israel further destabilized the process. The Cold War's legacy also loomed large over the Oslo process. During the Cold War, the U.S. and the Soviet Union had framed the conflict as part of their broader ideological struggle, often sidelining the specific aspirations of Palestinians and Israelis. After the Cold War, the absence of a rival superpower allowed the U.S. to dominate the peace process, but this dominance came at a cost. Perceived American bias toward Israel undermined the legitimacy of U.S.-led initiatives, particularly among Palestinians.

Furthermore, the Cold War's emphasis on militarization and alliances left a lasting imprint on the region. The Oslo Accords failed to address the power asymmetry between Israel, a regional military superpower, and the Palestinians, who remained stateless and divided. This imbalance, reinforced by decades of Cold War dynamics, hindered the implementation of the agreements and fueled skepticism about their viability (Ross, D., 2004). The Intifadas and the Oslo Accords illustrate how global forces and individual leadership have shaped the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Beilin, Y., 1999). The Cold War provided the geopolitical framework within which the conflict escalated, fostering polarization and militarization. Its end created new opportunities for diplomacy but also revealed the limitations of a unipolar world order dominated by the United States. Bill Clinton's role in the Oslo process exemplifies the potential and pitfalls of personalized diplomacy (Beilin, Y., 1999). While his efforts brought the parties closer than ever to a resolution, they ultimately failed to address the deep-seated grievances and asymmetries at the heart of the conflict. The collapse of the Oslo process and the outbreak of the Second Intifada underscored the fragility of peace efforts that do not fully account for the historical and structural complexities of the conflict (Makovsky, D., 1996).

However, the stalemate in negotiations on crucial issues, accentuated by Netanyahu's rise to power in Israel in 1996, put an end to the peace process, thus dealing a blow to hopes of a peaceful resolution of the conflict (Shlaim, A., 2000). After the failure of peace negotiations and the rise to power of Netanyahu, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continued to live in periods of tension and violence. In 2000, the peace talks were definitively interrupted by the outbreak of the Second Intifada, an escalation of violence that led to a significant increase in terrorist attacks by Palestinian groups against Israeli targets and Israeli military counter-terrorism operations (Shlaim, A., 2000). During the Second Intifada, the construction of a separation wall in the West Bank by Israel, which was criticized as further restricting the freedom of movement of Palestinians, became a focal point of international controversy. Israel justified the wall as a security measure to protect civilians from terrorist attacks (Shlaim, A., 2000).

In 2005, Israel unilaterally evacuated some 8,000 settlers from the Gaza Strip, ending its direct military presence in the region but maintaining control of borders and maritime boundaries. This episode is known as the unilateral withdrawal from Gaza. In the following years, Hamas consolidated its control over the Gaza Strip, taking full power in 2007 after violent clashes with forces loyal to the Palestinian Authority (Wagner, D., 1995). This led to a political split between Hamas-ruled Gaza and the West Bank, under the control of the PNA and President Mahmoud Abbas. Efforts to relaunch peace negotiations have been sporadic and have failed to reach a final agreement. Attempts at mediation by international actors, such as the US and the European Union, have encountered numerous obstacles due to the complexity and political sensitivity of the conflict (Wagner, D., 1995). The political and social landscape between Israelis and Palestinians continues to be marked by tensions, occasional clashes, and unresolved territorial disputes, keeping alive the hope and challenge of finding a lasting and peaceful solution to the conflict (Corbin, J., 1994).

1.5 Progress of Israeli forces in the Palestinian territories

Between 2000 and 2005, the stalemate in negotiations led to an intensification of conflict in the Palestinian territories, culminating in the Second Intifada. This period of violence was significantly more intense than the first Intifada, causing the deaths of almost five thousand Palestinians and more than a thousand Israelis (Britannica. n.d.). In 2002, at the height of the Palestinian uprising, Israel began building a wall separating its territories from the Palestinian ones in the West Bank. The declared objective of the wall was to control movements to prevent terrorist attacks against the Israeli population. However, the wall's route did not follow the Green Line established in 1949 between Israel and the Kingdom of Jordan, deviating at some points by tens of kilometers (UNOCHA, n.d.).

The Israeli authorities claimed that the wall was essential for national security. However, its construction had a devastating impact on the lives of Palestinians. According to a UN report, "the wall divides communities and prevents access to services, religious, cultural facilities, and livelihoods." Since then, the situation in the Palestinian territories has worsened further. Israel has maintained a significant military presence in the West Bank. It has accelerated its policy of expanding Israeli settlements, towns, and settlements on Palestinian territory, a practice considered illegal by the international community (UNOCHA, n.d.).

Since the late 1960s, with the rise of Palestinian groups and parties and the affirmation of the PLO as a representative of the Palestinian authorities, the conflict has intensified, culminating in the Second Intifada between 2000 and 2005. Parallel to this, the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights has further exacerbated tensions. Israeli

settlements, built in occupied Palestinian territories and often financed by the Israeli government, although they are considered illegal under international law, have continued to proliferate over the years. Today, more than 450,000 settlers reside in over a hundred settlements in the West Bank (Mokski, 2022), While another 220,000 live in East Jerusalem. Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, not recognized by the international community, has accentuated divisions and further complicated the search for a peaceful solution to the conflict.

1.6 The Palestinian refugees

The Palestinian refugee issue has roots in the Nakba, the forced exodus of some 700,000 Palestinian Arabs during the 1948-49 war (Manna, A., 2022). The UNRWA25 (United Nations Relief and Occupation Organization) defines a Palestinian refugee as anyone who habitually resided in Palestine between June 1946 and May 1948 and has lost his home and means of subsistence due to the Arab-Israeli war of 1948 (UNRWA, n.d.). Currently, nearly six million Palestinian refugees are scattered throughout the region and beyond, with over a third living in refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. Only Jordan has fully integrated and recognized refugees with full citizenship rights (UNRWA, n.d.).

The refugee issue is one of the main obstacles to a negotiated conflict settlement. The UN General Assembly resolution 19426 enshrined the right to return to the Mandate of Palestine, but this right has never been seriously addressed in the negotiations. Israel fears that the return of Palestinians could significantly alter the country's demography, increasing the Arab population and reducing the Jewish one, with possible adverse political consequences for the Jewish state. The refugee issue includes not only the right to return but also recognition of suffering, financial compensation, and family reunification (UNRWA, n.d.).

The international community, through various UN resolutions, has stressed the importance of resolving the Palestinian refugee issue for lasting peace in the region. However, the positions of Israelis and Palestinians remain deeply divergent. Palestinian refugees often live in precarious conditions, with limited access to essential services such as education, health, and work, despite UNRWA's efforts to provide humanitarian assistance. Refugee camps, conceived as temporary solutions, have become permanent communities, marking generations of Palestinians with a sense of loss and expectation for an ever-distant solution. The situation in refugee camps varies significantly from country to country (UNRWA, n.d.). In Lebanon, refugees face severe restrictions on the right to work and property, often living in extreme poverty. In Syria, the civil war has further aggravated their situation, forcing many of them back to the countryside. In Jordan, although they have been

integrated with full citizenship rights, Palestinian refugees face economic and social challenges. In the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, refugees live under Israeli occupation, facing restrictions on movement, insecurity, and difficult living conditions (Morris, B., 2004).

The right to return is fundamental for Palestinians not only as a matter of historical justice but also as a symbol of their national identity and rights. For Israel, on the other hand, the reception of many Palestinian refugees is seen as an existential threat to the Jewish nature of the state. The Israeli leadership fears that the return of refugees could lead to social and political tensions, altering the demographic balance and potentially destabilizing the country. Peace negotiations, including the Camp David talks in 2000 and subsequent international mediated talks, have tried to find a compromise on the refugee question but have failed. Proposals such as the limited return of a symbolic number of refugees, resettlement in other countries, and financial compensation were discussed but did not satisfy either side (Morris, B., 2004). The question of Palestinian refugees remains one of the most complex and controversial in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Resolving this problem will require intense political negotiations and a genuine willingness to reconcile and acknowledge each other's suffering. The international community will be crucial in facilitating a fair and sustainable agreement for all parties involved. Until a just solution is found, the Palestinian refugees will remain a symbol of unresolved conflict and challenges to peace in the region (Flapan, S., 1987).

1.7 The evolution of the crisis in the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, characterized by cycles of violence and prolonged tensions, has reached a significant escalation between 2023 and 2024, with serious human and destructive consequences. Hostilities began with a series of conflicts in East Jerusalem, triggered by disputes over the avoidance of Palestinian families and policies to expand Israeli settlements. These events have led to violent protests and clashes between Palestinian demonstrators and Israeli security forces. The escalation quickly degenerated into an armed conflict, with Hamas and other Palestinian groups in the Gaza Strip firing thousands of rockets at Israeli cities, targeting civilians and infrastructure. In response, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) conducted massive air and ground bombardments on Gaza, trying to eliminate Hamas' military capabilities and prevent further attacks (Amnesty International, 2024).

The humanitarian consequences have been devastating: the conflict has caused more than 500 deaths, including at least 200 Palestinian civilians, including many children and women. Densely populated towns and neighborhoods such as Gaza City have suffered severe damage, with many

homes, schools, hospitals, and public infrastructure destroyed or severely damaged (Security Council Report, 2024). The bombing also affected life-long infrastructures such as power plants and water installations, further aggravating the difficult living conditions of the civilian population. In the face of this humanitarian crisis and growing international pressure, numerous initiatives have been taken to mediate a ceasefire and end hostilities. The UN, in particular, has played a central role in trying to facilitate a ceasefire (United Nations, 2024). The UN Security Council has held emergency sessions to discuss the situation and issued several resolutions calling for an immediate ceasefire and unrestricted humanitarian access to Gaza (Security Council Report, 2024).

Despite these efforts, attempts to negotiate a lasting agreement have been hampered by deep divisions and a lack of mutual trust between Israel and Palestinian groups, further complicated by the complexity of internal and regional dynamics. However, international pressure continues to grow, with many countries and international organizations urging all parties to seriously engage in the peace process and respect international humanitarian law (Amnesty International, 2024).

1.8 Relevant authors

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been the subject of extensive scholarly analysis, with historians, political scientists, and intellectuals offering divergent perspectives on its origins, dynamics, and possible resolutions. Among the most influential contributors are Benny Morris (*Righteous Victims*), Ahron Bregman (*A History of Israel*), Edward Said (*The Question of Palestine*), Gershom Gorenberg (*The Accidental Empire*), David Shipler (*Arab and Jew: Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land*), and Ilan Pappé (*The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*). While these authors share an interest in unpacking the complexities of the conflict, their works are marked by distinct methodologies, ideological frameworks, and focal points. This essay explores the similarities and differences among these scholars, emphasizing how their narratives converge and diverge on key historical, political, and human dimensions of the conflict.

One of the most striking differences among these authors lies in their methodological approaches. Benny Morris and Ilan Pappé, both members of Israel's "New Historians" movement, rely heavily on archival research, yet their interpretations diverge significantly. In *Righteous Victims*, Morris emphasizes a balanced, document-driven narrative, often presenting the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a tragic clash between two national movements. For example, he writes, "The conflict was born of opposing national aspirations, with neither side holding a monopoly on suffering or righteousness" (Morris, 2001, p. 21). By contrast, Pappé adopts a more polemical stance, using the same archival sources to argue that the 1948 Nakba was a deliberate campaign of ethnic cleansing.

He asserts, "The Zionist leadership implemented a systematic plan to depopulate Palestine of its Arab inhabitants" (Pappé, 2006, p. 63). While Morris provides a nuanced analysis that seeks to contextualize both sides' actions, Pappé's work is unapologetically critical of Zionism. This divergence reflects their ideological commitments: Morris acknowledges Israeli transgressions but remains sympathetic to Zionism's goals, whereas Pappé frames Zionism as an inherently colonial project.

In contrast to the empirical rigor of Morris and Pappé, Edward Said's *The Question of Palestine* employs a postcolonial framework to critique Western narratives that have marginalized Palestinian voices. Said emphasizes the symbolic and cultural dimensions of the conflict, arguing, "The Palestinian people have been dehumanized, their history erased, and their identity denied" (Said, 1979, p. 5). Unlike Morris and Pappé, Said's methodology is less rooted in archival research and more focused on deconstructing dominant discourses.

While also employing historical analysis, Gershom Gorenberg and Ahron Bregman focus more on internal Israeli dynamics. Gorenberg's *The Accidental Empire* explores the unintended consequences of Israeli settlement policies using a combination of archival research and journalistic inquiry. Similarly, Bregman's *A History of Israel* offers a concise narrative of Israel's state-building process and a pragmatic critique of its leadership and military culture. David Shipler's *Arab and Jew* takes yet another approach, prioritizing personal stories and social interactions to explore the psychological and human aspects of the conflict.

The events of 1948, a foundational moment in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, are a key point of divergence among these authors. Benny Morris and Ilan Pappé, despite their shared reliance on Israeli archival sources, offer sharply contrasting narratives. Morris argues that the displacement of Palestinians during the war was not part of a premeditated plan but rather a consequence of wartime chaos and Arab rejectionism. He notes, "The majority of Palestinian refugees fled due to fear, propaganda, and the exigencies of war" (Morris, 2001, p. 181).

Pappé vehemently disagrees, asserting that the exodus was the result of a deliberate Zionist policy. In *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, he contends, "The depopulation of Palestinian villages was not incidental but integral to the Zionist project" (Pappé, 2006, p. 63). This fundamental disagreement underscores the ideological rift between the two historians: Morris's work reflects a commitment to historical nuance, while Pappé's seeks to challenge the moral foundations of Zionism.

Edward Said's perspective on 1948 aligns more closely with Pappé's, though his analysis is less focused on the specifics of the war and more on its symbolic significance. Said frames the Nakba as the culmination of a colonial enterprise, arguing that it marked "the erasure of Palestinian presence and the imposition of a settler-colonial identity" (Said, 1979, p. 12). Gershom Gorenberg, while not

directly addressing the events of 1948 in *The Accidental Empire*, critiques the long-term implications of Israeli policies that emerged in its aftermath, particularly the settlement enterprise.

Ahron Bregman and Gershom Gorenberg provide valuable insights into Israeli society's internal dynamics, offering perspectives often overlooked in broader narratives. Bregman's *A History of Israel* emphasizes the tensions between Israel's secular and religious communities, as well as the centrality of military culture in shaping its national identity. He critiques Israel's leadership for prioritizing security over reconciliation, observing, "Israel's obsession with military strength has often undermined opportunities for peace" (Bregman, 2003, p. 112). Gorenberg's *The Accidental Empire* narrows this focus to the issue of settlements, tracing their evolution from marginal projects to a central feature of Israeli policy. He argues, "The settlement enterprise has not only eroded the possibility of a two-state solution but also compromised Israel's democratic values" (Gorenberg, 2006, p. 89). Both authors highlight the internal contradictions within Israeli society, though Gorenberg's detailed case study of settlements offers a more focused critique.

In contrast, Said and Pappé are less concerned with internal Israeli dynamics and instead focus on the structural injustices faced by Palestinians. Shipler's *Arab and Jew* provides a middle ground, exploring how Israeli and Palestinian societies perceive each other and how these perceptions fuel the conflict. His humanistic approach emphasizes personal stories over political analysis, offering a poignant reminder of the conflict's human cost.

All six authors acknowledge the profound human cost of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, though they approach this theme differently. David Shipler's *Arab and Jew* stands out for its focus on the voices of ordinary people, highlighting the mutual fears, prejudices, and aspirations that sustain the conflict. "The conflict is not merely about land," he writes, "but about the narratives, each side tells itself and the other" (Shipler, 1986, p. 15).

Edward Said and Ilan Pappé similarly emphasize Palestinian suffering from a structural perspective. Said critiques the dehumanization of Palestinians in Western discourse, while Pappé documents the tangible consequences of displacement and violence. Morris and Bregman, while acknowledging Palestinian suffering, focus more on the broader historical and political context, often framing it as a tragic consequence of competing national aspirations.
Gorenberg's exploration of settlements also touches on the human dimension, particularly in his critique of their impact on both Palestinians and Israeli society. However, his primary focus remains on policy and governance rather than individual experiences.

The authors' visions for resolving the conflict reflect their ideological and methodological differences. Benny Morris and Ahron Bregman advocate for pragmatic solutions, emphasizing the need for compromise and coexistence. Morris supports a two-state solution, though he is skeptical of

its feasibility given the entrenched hostility on both sides. Bregman similarly emphasizes the importance of dialogue, critiquing Israel's failure to pursue meaningful reconciliation.

In contrast, Edward Said and Ilan Pappé challenge the premises of a two-state solution, arguing that it fails to address the structural inequalities embedded in the Zionist project. Said advocates for a binational state based on equality and mutual recognition, while Pappé calls for a fundamental rethinking of Israel's role in the region. These radical proposals reflect their commitment to justice for Palestinians, though critics argue that they are overly idealistic and politically unfeasible.

Gershom Gorenberg and David Shipler occupy a middle ground, acknowledging the need for structural change while emphasizing the potential for grassroots reconciliation. Gorenberg's critique of settlements highlights the importance of addressing specific policies, while Shipler's focus on personal narratives suggests that peace begins with mutual understanding.

The works of Benny Morris, Ahron Bregman, Edward Said, Gershom Gorenberg, David Shipler, and Ilan Pappé offer a diverse array of perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Their methodological, ideological orientation and narrative focus differences reveal the complexities of interpreting such a deeply contested history. While they converge in acknowledging the conflict's human cost and historical depth, their divergences underscore the multifaceted nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These contrasting perspectives highlight the challenges of achieving a unified historical narrative and emphasize the importance of addressing structural injustices and human dimensions in resolution efforts.

2. A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CONFLICT

2.1 Cultural differences: identity and heritage

The ethnic composition and historical context of the Israel-Palestine conflict represent a complex storyline intertwined with narratives of identity, displacement, and nationalism. At the core of this enduring conflict lies the interplay between two distinct ethnic groups: Jews, predominantly associated with the state of Israel, and Palestinians, predominantly Arab Muslims with a significant Christian minority. Understanding the conflict requires deeply exploring these groups' historical trajectories, cultural identities, and geopolitical forces shaping their interaction. This chapter will thoroughly analyze the ethnic composition and historical context of the Israel-Palestine conflict, emphasizing the competing narratives that fuel this intricate and persistent dispute.

Jewish identity is deeply rooted in historical and religious narratives that date back to ancient times. Central to Jewish tradition is the covenant between the Hebrew patriarch Abraham and God, a narrative that situates the land of Canaan (Fig 1, Canaan, Palestine or the Holy Land &C. Divided into the Twelve Tribes of Israel., 2015), roughly corresponding to modern-day Israel and Palestine, as the promised homeland for the Jewish people. The ancient Kingdoms of Israel and Judah, which existed during the first millennium BCE, further solidified Jewish claims to the region. However, successive conquests by Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, and Romans disrupted Jewish sovereignty. The destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE (Solow, 2023) and the subsequent Roman dispersal of Jews marked the beginning of the Jewish diaspora. For centuries, Jewish communities were scattered across Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa, often facing persecution and marginalization. The diaspora fostered a collective memory of exile and the need to return to the ancestral homeland, a theme deeply embedded in Jewish liturgy and cultural practices. The modern Zionist movement, emerging in the late 19th century, sought to transform this historical longing into political action. Theodor Herzl's Der Judenstaat (The Jewish State, 1896) articulated the vision of a Jewish homeland as a refuge from European anti-Semitism. Herzl's ideas resonated with Jews facing pogroms and discrimination in Eastern Europe. Moreover, waves of Jewish immigration, known as Aliyahs or Intifadas, began in Palestine under Ottoman rule, setting the stage for demographic and political changes that would later lead to conflict.

On the other hand, even if shaped by various historical and cultural influences, Palestinian identity is rooted in the Arab and Islamic traditions that have dominated the region since the 7th century CE. During the Islamic Caliphates, Palestine became a significant cultural and religious center, with Jerusalem housing the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, key sites in Islamic tradition.

Under the Ottoman Empire, which controlled Palestine from the early 16th century until World War I, the region was integral to a broad, multi-ethnic polity. Palestinians were located predominantly in the rural areas, with agricultural practices being the backbone of their society. While there was no Palestinian national identity in the modern sense, the region's people identified strongly with their land, religious heritage, and local customs. The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw the emergence of Arab nationalism in response to Western colonialism and declining Ottoman authority. Palestinian identity began to coalesce during this period, mainly as Zionist immigration increased, leading to tensions over land ownership and political sovereignty. As Rashid Khalidi argues in Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness (1997), the development of Palestinian identity was a natural evolution and a reaction to external pressures, especially the growing presence of Zionist settlers.

A central element of the Israel-Palestine conflict is the competing claims of indigeneity and sovereignty. Both Jews and Palestinians claim to have historical and cultural connections to the land, often framing their narratives in ways that exclude the other's legitimacy. For many Jews, the establishment of Israel represents the fulfillment of a historical and spiritual connection to the land. Nevertheless, Zionist leaders often emphasized the continuity of Jewish presence in Palestine, even if as a minority, throughout history. The Balfour Declaration of 1917, in which the British government expressed support for a Jewish national home in Palestine, further legitimized these claims in the eyes of many Jews. Moreover, the horrors of the Holocaust during World War II added urgency to the Zionist project (Morris, B., 2001). The systematic extermination of six million Jews underscored the vulnerability of diaspora communities and the perceived necessity of a sovereign Jewish state. The establishment of Israel in 1948 was celebrated by Jews worldwide as the realization of a long-held dream of self-determination and safety.

For Palestinians, the creation of Israel is inextricably linked to the Nakba (catastrophe) of 1948, when over 700,000 Palestinians (Amnesty International, n.d.) were expelled or fled from their homes. This event shattered Palestinian society, dispersing its people across refugee camps in neighboring countries and the broader diaspora. Palestinians view their connection to the land as uninterrupted and deeply rooted, with many tracing their ancestry to ancient peoples such as the Canaanites and later Arab inhabitants. Palestinian narratives emphasize the dispossession and ongoing occupation they have experienced since 1948. As Ilan Pappé argues in The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine (2006), the displacement of Palestinians was not an incidental outcome of war but a deliberate strategy to create a Jewish-majority state. This perspective underscores the sense of injustice and loss that permeates Palestinian identity.

About the demographic landscape there's also to spend some words. Palestine began to change significantly with the Zionist immigration waves of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The First Aliyah (1882–1903) and Second Aliyah (1904–1914) brought thousands of Jews to the region, primarily from Eastern Europe. These immigrants established agricultural settlements and revived Hebrew as a spoken language, laying the cultural and infrastructural foundations for a future state (Marzano, A., 2018).

The British Mandate period (1920–1948) saw further Jewish immigration, facilitated by policies that supported the Zionist project. The influx intensified after the rise of Nazism in the 1930s, as Jews sought refuge from persecution. By 1947, Jews comprised approximately one-third of Palestine's population, a dramatic increase from the late 19th century. The establishment of Israel and subsequent conflicts led to the mass displacement of Palestinians. The 1948 Arab-Israeli War resulted in the depopulation of hundreds of Palestinian villages, many of which were destroyed or repurposed by the nascent Israeli state (Morris, B., 2004). Today, millions of Palestinians live as refugees in camps across the Middle East, their right to return to their ancestral homes remaining a contentious issue in peace negotiations. Moreover, The Six-Day War of 1967 further exacerbated Palestinian displacement. Israel's capture of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem brought millions of Palestinians under Israeli military occupation. These territories remain central to the conflict, with ongoing settlement activity and restricted Palestinian autonomy fueling tensions (Morris, B., 2004). Moreover, the Jewish population of Israel is far from being homogeneous. Ashkenazi Jews of European origin historically dominated Israeli society, particularly in politics and culture. However, Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews, whose origins lie in North Africa and the Middle East, have increasingly asserted their presence and influenced Israeli identity. Ethiopian Jews and recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union add further layers of diversity, contributing to a multifaceted cultural landscape. Palestinians, too, are a diverse group. While the majority are Sunni Muslims, there is a significant Christian minority, particularly in cities like Bethlehem and Ramallah. The Palestinian diaspora includes communities in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and beyond, each shaped by their host countries' political and social contexts. This diversity reflects the adaptability and resilience of Palestinian identity despite displacement and fragmentation.

The British Mandate over Palestine, lasting from 1920 to 1948, represents one of the most significant periods in the modern history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Administered under the authority of the League of Nations following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, the Mandate was intended to prepare Palestine for self-governance. However, its implementation sowed the seeds of profound conflict as it attempted to reconcile competing national aspirations, those of the Jewish Zionist movement and the Arab population indigenous to the region. The policies of

the British government, the rise of nationalism on both sides, and the geopolitical pressures of the interwar and postwar periods converged to create a volatile and contested landscape that continues to shape the Israeli-Palestinian conflict today. The origins of the British Mandate lie in the broader geopolitical transformations of World War I. The Ottoman Empire's alignment with the Central Powers prompted Britain and its allies to seek control over its vast territories, particularly in the Middle East, a region of strategic importance due to its proximity to trade routes and oil reserves.

During the war, Britain made a series of promises to different parties that would later come into direct conflict (Segev, T., 2000). The McMahon-Hussein Correspondence (1915–1916) suggested British support for Arab independence in exchange for a revolt against the Ottomans, while the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916) secretly divided the Middle Eastern territories between Britain and France, indicating no intention of granting full Arab sovereignty (Bard, M., 2019). Compounding these commitments was the Balfour Declaration of 1917, in which Britain expressed support for establishing a "national home for the Jewish people" (Al Tahhan, 2018) in Palestine, provided that it did not undermine the rights of the existing non-Jewish population. These overlapping and contradictory promises laid the groundwork for tension and distrust among the parties involved. When Britain officially took control of Palestine in 1920, the stage was set for conflict between the Jewish and Arab populations.

For Zionists, the British Mandate represented an opportunity to realize their aspiration of establishing a Jewish homeland, a goal that gained urgency in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Jewish immigration to Palestine increased significantly during the 1920s and 1930s, bolstered by financial support from international Jewish organizations and the facilitation of the British government. Land purchases by Jewish agencies also accelerated, often displacing Arab tenants and small farmers, as land previously held in large estates was transferred to Zionist settlers. For Palestinian Arabs, these developments were perceived as a direct threat to their national identity, land ownership, and way of life. British policy, which sought to balance its commitments to both communities, only deepened the divisions, as neither side was delighted with the compromises imposed by the colonial administration (Smith, C. D., 2013).

The rise of nationalist movements among both Jews and Arabs exacerbated the growing tensions in Palestine during the Mandate period. For the Jewish community or Yishuv, the Mandate offered a framework within which Zionist organizations could establish political, economic, and military institutions in preparation for statehood. Key institutions such as the Jewish Agency, the Haganah (a paramilitary organization), and a network of schools, farms, and settlements allowed the Jewish community to develop a parallel state structure that would later serve as the foundation for Israel.

Meanwhile, Arab nationalism was fueled by opposition to Jewish immigration and land acquisition, as well as broader struggles against colonialism across the Middle East. Palestinian Arabs increasingly identified as part of a wider Arab nationalist movement seeking self-determination and independence. These competing nationalisms were irreconcilable, as they both claimed the same land and resources. The 1920s and 1930s saw a series of violent clashes between Jews, Arabs, and the British authorities. The Jaffa Riots of 1921, the Hebron Massacre of 1929, and the Arab Revolt of 1936–1939 emphasized the deepening divisions and the failure of the British to maintain order or address the underlying causes of the conflict. The Arab Revolt, in particular, was a watershed moment, as it represented a sustained and organized effort by Palestinian Arabs to challenge both British rule and Zionist expansion (Matthews, W., 2006). While the revolt was ultimately suppressed through harsh military measures and the co-option of local elites, it left a lasting impact on Palestinian society, weakening its political leadership and contributing to internal divisions. At the same time, the revolt demonstrated the limits of British authority and foreshadowed the increasing militarization of the conflict. The British responded to escalating tensions between attempts to appease the rival parties and efforts to extricate itself from the growing quagmire. A series of commissions and policy papers were issued during the Mandate period, including the 1937 Peel Commission Report, which proposed partitioning Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. This proposal was rejected by both sides: by Palestinians who opposed any division of their land and by Zionists who felt the proposed Jewish state was too small. The 1939 White Paper, issued in the wake of the Arab Revolt and the looming threat of World War II, marked a significant shift in British policy, as it limited Jewish immigration to Palestine to 75,000 (1939 British White Paper on Palestine, n.d.) over five years and restricted land sales to Jews. For the Zionist movement, the White Paper was seen as a betrayal, mainly as it came at a time when European Jews were facing unprecedented persecution under Nazi rule.

World War II further complicated the dynamics of the Mandate. The Holocaust intensified international sympathy for the plight of European Jews and increased support for the establishment of a Jewish state. At the same time, Palestinian Arabs found themselves in a weakened position, both politically and economically, as a result of the suppression of the Arab Revolt and the war's broader impact on the region. The end of the war brought renewed urgency to the question of Palestine, as displaced Jewish refugees sought a haven, and the Zionist movement intensified its efforts to achieve statehood. The British government, burdened by economic difficulties and rising anti-colonial sentiment in its empire, sought to transfer the issue to the newly formed United Nations, signaling its intent to withdraw from Palestine. The United Nations' involvement culminated in the 1947 Partition Plan, which proposed dividing Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem under international administration. The Zionist leaders accepted the plan despite its limitations, as it

provided a legal framework for the establishment of a Jewish state. However, it was vehemently rejected by Palestinian Arabs and the wider Arab world, who saw it as unjust and illegitimate.

The partition plan's approval by the UN General Assembly sparked widespread violence as both sides mobilized to secure their territorial claims. The British, caught between conflicting pressures, accelerated their withdrawal, leaving the situation to unravel into full-scale war. The British Mandate officially ended on May 14, 1948, with the declaration of the state of Israel and the subsequent outbreak of the Arab-Israeli War. However, the Mandate's legacies continue to shape the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The policies of the British administration, characterized by ambiguity, inconsistency, and a failure to address the underlying causes of tension, contributed to the polarization of the two communities and the escalation of violence. The seeds of conflict sown during the Mandate period have become one of the most intractable disputes of the modern era, as competing nationalisms and historical grievances remain unresolved.

Furthermore, the Cold War was not only a global conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union for ideological and geopolitical dominance but also a critical factor shaping the dynamics of the Middle East. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as the broader Arab-Israeli disputes, were deeply influenced by Cold War politics and the regional alignments that emerged during this period. The superpowers' rivalry, combined with the strategic importance of the Middle East due to its energy resources and proximity to Europe, Asia, and Africa, entrenched regional divisions and intensified local conflicts. The Cold War transformed the Israeli-Palestinian issue into a significant theater of global competition, complicating efforts toward peace and exacerbating the polarization of the region (Donno, A., 2009). The roots of Cold War involvement in the Middle East can be traced to the post-World War II global order. The United States and the Soviet Union emerged as superpowers with competing ideologies, capitalist liberal democracy versus communist socialism, each seeking to expand its sphere of influence. The Middle East's importance to both superpowers lay in its vast oil reserves and geographical position, serving as a critical crossroads for trade and military strategy.

As European colonial powers such as Britain and France retreated from the region, the United States and the Soviet Union moved to fill the vacuum, offering financial aid, military assistance, and ideological support to regional actors. Israel's establishment in 1948 coincided with the early stages of the Cold War and placed the nascent state at the center of the superpower rivalry. Initially, the Soviet Union supported the establishment of Israel, viewing it as a potential socialist ally in the region (Oren, M. B., 2002). The Soviet bloc provided military and logistical assistance to Zionist forces during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, a stance motivated in part by the hope that Israel would serve as a counterbalance to Western influence (Shlaim, A., 2000). However, the relationship between Israel

and the Soviet Union quickly soured as Israel aligned itself with the United States and Western Europe, particularly during the 1950s. Israel's democratic institutions, market-oriented economy, and reliance on American support made it an increasingly natural ally for the capitalist bloc (Spiegel, S. L., 1985). For the Arab states, the Cold War presented both opportunities and challenges. Many Arab leaders, particularly in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, sought to capitalize on superpower competition to secure economic aid and military support for their development and defense. Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser emerged as a prominent figure during this era, championing Arab nationalism and seeking to unite the Arab world against imperialism and Zionism. Nasser's policies, including the nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956, brought him into direct conflict with Western powers but earned him significant support from the Soviet Union (Kyle, K., 2003). The Soviet bloc provided arms and financial assistance to Egypt and other Arab states, solidifying its role as a key backer of Arab opposition to Israel. The United States, in response, deepened its commitment to Israel and pro-Western Arab regimes such as those in Jordan and Saudi Arabia. American support for Israel became a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy in the region, driven by strategic, ideological, and domestic considerations.

Strategically, Israel was seen as a reliable ally in a volatile region, capable of countering Soviet influence and protecting Western access to oil. Ideologically, American leaders framed their support for Israel in terms of shared democratic values and the legacy of the Holocaust. Domestically, the influence of pro-Israel advocacy groups and the broader American public's sympathy for Israel reinforced this alignment. The superpower rivalry intensified regional divisions, as Arab states aligned themselves with the United States or the Soviet Union based on their strategic interests and ideological leanings (Golan, G., 1990). The Arab-Israeli conflicts of 1956, 1967, and 1973 were not only local or regional wars but also proxies for the Cold War. The United States consistently backed Israel with military aid, intelligence support, and diplomatic protection, particularly during the Six-Day War of 1967 and the Yom Kippur War of 1973. The Soviet Union, in turn, provided arms, training, and political backing to Egypt, Syria, and other Arab states, positioning itself as a champion of anti-imperialism and the Palestinian cause. The Palestinian struggle for self-determination also became entangled in Cold War politics as Palestinian factions sought support from superpowers and regional allies. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), established in 1964 and led by Yasser Arafat in 1969, initially aligned itself with the Soviet bloc and other socialist-leaning states, including Cuba and Vietnam. The PLO's emphasis on armed resistance and its anti-imperialist rhetoric resonated with the Soviet Union's broader ideological agenda. However, the PLO also maintained a degree of independence, seeking to avoid becoming overly reliant on any single power and attempting to garner support from non-aligned countries. The broader Cold War dynamics also shaped the

internal politics of Arab states, often to the detriment of stability and democracy. Many Arab regimes, both aligned with the Soviet Union and with the United States, used the Cold War as a justification for authoritarianism, suppressing political dissent in the name of national security and ideological loyalty. In countries such as Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, leaders consolidated power through one-party rule, military coups, and emergency laws, often with the backing of their respective superpower patrons.

The Arab-Israeli conflict provided a rallying point for these regimes, allowing them to frame opposition to Israel as a unifying national cause while deflecting attention from domestic challenges such as economic inequality and political repression. The Cold War's influence on the Middle East began to wane in the late 1980s, as the Soviet Union's economic decline and political reforms under Mikhail Gorbachev reduced its ability to project power abroad. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked the end of the Cold War and ushered in a unipolar world dominated by the United States. This shift had profound implications for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the region. Without Soviet support, many Arab states were forced to recalibrate their foreign policies, leading to a wave of peace initiatives and normalization efforts, such as the 1991 Madrid Conference and the 1994 Israel-Jordan peace treaty. However, the legacies of Cold War politics continue to shape the Middle East today.

The superpower rivalry entrenched divisions between Israel and its neighbors, militarized the region and reinforced authoritarianism in many Arab states. The massive arms buildup during the Cold War has had lasting effects, as the proliferation of weapons and military infrastructure continues to fuel conflicts. Moreover, the ideological and geopolitical alignments of the Cold War era have left a lasting imprint on the region's political and social dynamics, contributing to the complexity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the broader challenges of achieving peace and stability in the Middle East (Golan, G., 1990).

2.2 Linguistic landscape: Hebrew and Arabic as identity markers

Language is more than a tool for communication; it is an anchor of identity, culture, and belonging. In the Israeli-Palestinian context, Hebrew and Arabic are not merely languages but symbols of power, resistance, and historical narratives that define and divide communities. The predominance of Hebrew in Israel and the role of Arabic in Palestinian identity form a rich and complex tapestry of sociopolitical, cultural, and historical dynamics. These two languages reflect the competing nationalisms, asymmetries of power, and survival of cultural heritage in a context shaped by occupation, displacement, and evolving political realities (Harshav, B. 2009). The rise of Hebrew as the dominant language in Israel represents one of modern history's most remarkable linguistic revivals. By the late 19th century, Hebrew was a liturgical and literary language. With the advent of

modern Zionism, language took on a central role in nation-building. Zionist thinkers, particularly Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, emphasized the need to create a unifying linguistic identity that would support the emergence of a Jewish state. Hebrew's revitalization was not merely a practical endeavor but a deliberate ideological project. By reviving a "dead" language and making it central to the national consciousness, the Zionist movement sought to forge a collective identity that could connect Jewish immigrants from disparate backgrounds (Harshav, B., 2009).

In this effort, Hebrew symbolized modernity, independence, and cultural renewal while rejecting diasporic languages such as Yiddish, Ladino, and Arabic. In contrast, Arabic occupies a central role in Palestinian identity as a living and deeply rooted language that has historically defined the culture, heritage, and daily lives of Palestinians. For Palestinians, Arabic is not only their primary means of communication but also an expression of cultural continuity and resistance in the face of ongoing marginalization. As the language of Palestinian literature, poetry, and oral history, Arabic preserves the stories of displacement and struggle while fostering a shared sense of belonging. Palestinian poets such as Mahmoud Darwish have used Arabic to articulate their people's collective grief and resilience, ensuring the Palestinian narrative remains alive even in displacement and exile (Darwish, M., 2003). Arabic is more than a language; it is a means of asserting identity and resistance in a political context where Palestinians face systemic erasure and dispossession. The relationship between Hebrew and Arabic in the region has been shaped by a hierarchy of power that mirrors the political and social dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Following the establishment of Israel in 1948, the state formally recognized Arabic as one of its official languages, alongside Hebrew. (Spolsky, B., & Shohamy, E., 1999). However, this recognition was largely symbolic. Hebrew dominated every sphere of public life, from education to government institutions. The supremacy of Hebrew reinforced the marginalization of Arabic, reflecting the broader political realities of occupation and ethnic hierarchy. For Palestinians living within Israel's borders, the diminishing status of Arabic served as a reminder of their subordinate position within the state. The adoption of the 2018 Nation-State Law, which downgraded Arabic from an official language to one with "special status," further institutionalized this linguistic hierarchy and underscored the unequal power relations between Jews and Palestinians in Israel. Palestinians living in the West Bank, Gaza, and the diaspora face a different but equally significant linguistic reality. Arabic remains the dominant language, serving as a unifying force for a fragmented population (Bekerman, Z., & Horenczyk, G., 2004).

However, the Israeli occupation and economic dependency on Israel have forced many Palestinians to acquire Hebrew as a practical necessity. In the West Bank, for instance, Palestinians who work in Israeli settlements or interact with the Israeli military often rely on Hebrew to navigate these interactions. This duality creates a tension between the symbolic importance of Arabic as a

marker of identity and the pragmatic need to use Hebrew as a tool for survival (Ben-Rafael, E., et al, 2006). For many Palestinians, learning Hebrew is not an act of integration but one of adaptation to an imposed system of control. This linguistic dynamic reveal power asymmetries and how language becomes a site of resistance and subjugation. The role of language in shaping identity is particularly evident in the education systems on both sides of the conflict. In Israel, the separation of Jewish and Arab schools perpetuates linguistic and cultural divides (Ben-Rafael, E., et al, 2006). Jewish schools prioritize Hebrew, with Arabic taught, if at all, as a secondary language. This limited exposure to Arabic among Jewish Israelis contributes to a lack of understanding and empathy for Palestinian perspectives, reinforcing stereotypes and perpetuating the conflict.

Meanwhile, in Palestinian schools, the curriculum emphasizes Arabic to preserve cultural heritage and foster a sense of national identity. However, the limitations imposed by the Israeli occupation, such as restrictions on curriculum content, resource shortages, and the destruction of schools, undermine these efforts and exacerbate the challenges of maintaining linguistic and cultural autonomy. The symbolic power of language is further evident in the public and political realms. Street signs in Israel, for example, are often trilingual, featuring Hebrew, Arabic, and English. However, the prominence and placement of these languages reflect the hierarchy of power, with Hebrew given precedence in size and visibility. Such symbolic gestures are far from neutral; they serve as daily reminders of the dominance of one identity over another. Similarly, debates over naming towns, landmarks, and historical sites reveal the deep connections between language and territorial claims. The Hebrewization of Palestinian place names, a practice that began during the early years of the Zionist movement, continues to this day as part of a broader effort to assert Jewish sovereignty and erase Palestinian ties to the land.

Literature and media also play a significant role in reflecting and shaping the linguistic dynamics of the region. In Israeli literature, Arabic is often limited or depicted in ways that reinforce cultural stereotypes. Conversely, Palestinian writers who write in Hebrew, such as Sayed Kashua, face unique challenges as they navigate the tension between expressing their identity and reaching a broader Israeli audience. Kashua's works, which blend humor and critique, offer a rare window into the complexities of Palestinian identity within the framework of Hebrew-language literature. His writing challenges the binary narratives that dominate the conflict and highlights the potential of language as a bridge rather than a barrier. The diaspora experience further complicates the intersection of language and power (Bernstein, D., 2013). For Palestinians living outside their homeland, Arabic serves as a vital link to their roots and a means of preserving their cultural identity. However, the pressures of assimilation and the dominance of other languages, such as English or French, often lead to a gradual erosion of Arabic fluency among younger generations. This linguistic shift raises

essential questions about the future of Palestinian identity and the role of language in maintaining connections to the homeland. Hebrew similarly fosters a sense of belonging and cultural continuity in the Israeli diaspora. However, the political implications of these linguistic ties differ significantly, reflecting the asymmetries of power and privilege that define the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Language also plays a role in the digital sphere as a tool of resistance and control. Social media platforms have become important spaces for Palestinians to assert their identity and challenge narratives of erasure. Arabic hashtags, memes, and videos have been used to mobilize protests, document human rights abuses, and share stories of resilience. At the same time, the suppression of Arabic content on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, often under the guise of combating hate speech, reveals the broader power dynamics at play. This digital linguistic struggle underscores the enduring relevance of language as a site of contestation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Aouragh, M., 2011). Despite these challenges, language also holds the potential to serve as a bridge between communities. Initiatives promoting bilingual education, such as the Hand in Hand schools in Israel, offer a glimpse of coexistence. By teaching Hebrew and Arabic side by side, these schools create spaces where Jewish and Palestinian children can learn to understand and respect each other's languages, cultures, and narratives (Bekerman, Z., 2005). While such efforts remain limited in scale, they represent an essential step toward breaking down the linguistic and cultural barriers that perpetuate the conflict.

To better understand the language landscape is also important to jump into a deep analysis of the cultural practices as expression of identity and resistance. From thi s point of view, religious traditions, historical experiences, and the diverse backgrounds of Jewish communities deeply influence Jewish cultural practices in Israel. Key practices include the observance of Jewish holidays such as Passover, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur, which are religious events and state holidays that shape the rhythm of public life in Israel. Integrating diverse Jewish traditions, from Ashkenazi customs rooted in Europe to Mizrahi and Sephardic practices from the Middle East and North Africa, has created a vibrant cultural mosaic. For example, Israeli culinary traditions reflect this diversity, with dishes like falafel, hummus, and shakshuka blending Middle Eastern and Mediterranean influences. Music and dance also play a significant role in Israeli culture, with traditional forms like klezmer coexisting alongside modern genres (Ben-Rafael, E., & Sharot, S., 1991). Cultural practices in Israel often serve as tools for nation-building and reinforcing collective identity. The Hebrew language, Jewish holidays, and national symbols like the Star of David and the Menorah are integral to fostering a sense of unity among Israel's heterogeneous population. At the same time, these practices also delineate the cultural boundaries between Israelis and Palestinians, reinforcing the division between the two groups (Khalili, L., 2007).

For Palestinians, cultural practices are both a means of preserving their identity and a form of resistance against occupation and displacement. Traditional Palestinian customs, such as dabke (folk dance), embroidery, and oral storytelling, serve as vehicles for expressing collective memory and pride. Embroidered garments, for instance, often feature patterns and motifs that reflect the wearer's regional origin, symbolizing a connection to the land and heritage. Food is another crucial aspect of Palestinian culture, with dishes like maqluba, musakhan, and kanafeh holding special significance. These culinary traditions are not merely about sustenance but also community and continuity, offering a taste of home for Palestinians in exile or under occupation (Sered, S. S., 1988).

Music and poetry have long been central to Palestinian cultural expression. Mahmoud Darwish's poetry, often described as the voice of Palestine, captures the pain of displacement and the longing for return (Hirshberg, J., 1995). Similarly, Palestinian musicians and artists use their work to highlight the struggles of their people, blending traditional forms with contemporary influences to reach global audiences.

In particular, it is important to underline how Jewish communities in the diaspora have historically played a significant role in shaping Israeli culture and supporting the Zionist project. Organizations like the Jewish Agency for Israel have facilitated cultural exchanges and promoted Hebrew education among diaspora Jews. Jewish cultural practices, including religious observances, language learning, and participation in pro-Israel advocacy, help maintain a sense of connection to Israel and reinforce solidarity with the Israeli state. The Palestinian diaspora, spread across the Middle East, Europe, and the Americas, has developed cultural practices that reflect the experience of exile and displacement. Festivals, cultural events, and community gatherings often serve as platforms for expressing Palestinian identity and advocating for their rights. Preserving Arabic language and traditions within diaspora communities underscores their commitment to maintaining a connection to their homeland. The Palestinian diaspora has also raised international awareness of their cause.

Through literature, art, and activism, diaspora Palestinians have highlighted the human impact of the conflict and challenged dominant narratives that marginalize their experiences. Figures like Edward Said, whose seminal work Orientalism critiques Western representations of the Arab world, have been pivotal in shaping global understandings of Palestinian identity and culture. Language and cultural practices are not peripheral to the Israel-Palestine conflict; they are central to its dynamics and deeply intertwined with identity, power, and resistance issues (Said, E. W., 1984). Hebrew and Arabic are potent symbols of the competing national narratives, while cultural practices reflect the resilience and creativity of both Israelis and Palestinians. Understanding the role of language and culture in this conflict offers valuable insights into the human dimensions of a struggle often defined

by political and territorial disputes. Acknowledging and respecting both peoples' rich linguistic and cultural heritage may lead to greater mutual understanding and coexistence.

Moreover, there is to consider some religious differences between sacred spaces and spiritual significance in the Israel-Palestine conflict that could be related to cultural differences in point of views.

Sacred spaces hold a profound significance in human history, serving as sites where the divine intersects with the mundane, where communities ground their collective identity, and where the weight of cultural, spiritual, and historical memory converges. In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, sacred spaces have played a dual role: as both barriers that exacerbate division and bridges that carry the potential for unity and transformation. The interplay between conflict and cooperation about these sacred sites reflects the broader dynamics of the region's struggles and aspirations and the enduring role of sacred spaces as catalysts for human division and reconciliation. At the heart of this dynamic is the contested geography of Jerusalem, a city revered by Jews, Muslims, and Christians alike. The Old City of Jerusalem is home to sacred sites that symbolize each community's spiritual and historical claims. The Western Wall, the holiest site where Jews can pray, stands alongside the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, a site of immense significance in Islam. For Christians, Jerusalem represents the crucible of their faith, whereas the Church of the Holy Sepulcher marks the site of Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection. These sacred spaces, layered with meaning and memory, have made Jerusalem both a microcosm of the conflict and a potential touchstone for peace. The barriers associated with sacred spaces emerge most sharply in the context of contested sovereignty and exclusive claims. Religious sites have often been imbued with political meaning, transforming them into arenas for nationalist agendas. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this dynamic is especially evident in the competition over access, control, and the right to define the sacred. For example, the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, known to Jews as the Temple Mount, has become one of the most charged symbols in the conflict. For Palestinians, it represents not only a central place of worship but also a site of resistance against Israeli occupation and a cornerstone of national identity. For many Israelis, the Temple Mount embodies a deep historical and religious connection to their ancient past. These overlapping claims have led to repeated clashes, with episodes of violence erupting over issues as seemingly straightforward as access rights or archaeological excavations. Such tensions underscore how sacred spaces can hinder mutual understanding and reconciliation. Religious sites as symbols of political sovereignty often intensify divisions, turning places of worship into flashpoints of conflict.

The construction of barriers, both physical and symbolic, has further deepened these divides. The separation wall built by Israel in the early 2000s, ostensibly for security purposes, has had profound implications for Palestinian access to sacred sites, particularly in Jerusalem. The wall has

restricted physical movement and is a stark reminder of the region's broader inequalities and power asymmetries. Denying access to places of worship or politicizing religious rituals exacerbates feelings of exclusion and fuels resentment, further entrenching the conflict. Yet, sacred spaces also hold the potential to act as bridges, offering moments of shared humanity and glimpses of transformation.

Despite their divisive history, these sites can transcend political boundaries and foster a universal connection. Religious traditions often emphasize themes of peace, justice, and compassion, values that can be invoked to counter-narratives of exclusion and hostility. Interfaith initiatives, though limited in scale, have sought to reclaim sacred spaces as places of dialogue and understanding rather than confrontation. Pilgrimages, for instance, can serve as acts of solidarity, where individuals from different faiths come together to honor shared spiritual heritage. The potential of sacred spaces as bridges is also evident in the deeply personal and transformative experiences they inspire. For many, visiting a holy site is a moment of profound reflection and connection that transcends the immediate political context. This spiritual dimension counterbalances the politicization of sacred spaces, reminding individuals of their shared humanity. Even amidst conflict, moments of unexpected solidarity can emerge. For example, during natural disasters or humanitarian crises, communities in the region have occasionally come together, setting aside their divisions to address shared needs. In these moments, sacred spaces can remind us of shared vulnerability and the potential for unity. However, the conflict's broader structural and political realities often limit the transformative potential of sacred spaces. The unequal distribution of power, resources, and agency shapes how sacred spaces are accessed and understood. For example, while interfaith dialogue holds promise, it often remains confined to elite circles, failing to address the systemic inequalities that underpin the conflict. Moreover, the instrumentalization of religion by political actors can undermine efforts to reclaim sacred spaces as neutral or inclusive. Religious nationalism, on both sides, has frequently used sacred spaces to bolster exclusive claims rather than to foster coexistence.

The challenge is navigating the tension between sacred spaces' divisive and unifying potential. For holy sites to serve as bridges rather than barriers, there must be a willingness to engage in honest and inclusive dialogue that acknowledges different communities' deep historical and spiritual connections to these places. This requires moving beyond zero-sum narratives and embracing a vision of shared stewardship. Examples of shared religious governance exist in other parts of the world, offering models that could inspire new approaches to managing sacred spaces in Jerusalem and beyond. At the same time, the role of sacred spaces in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot be separated from the broader context of occupation, displacement, and inequality. The transformation of sacred spaces into bridges will depend on addressing these underlying issues, including the right to self-determination, freedom of movement, and access to resources. Without these changes, efforts

to foster unity through sacred spaces will remain symbolic. Education also plays a critical role in shaping perceptions of sacred spaces and their potential to unify or divide. Curricula that emphasize mutual respect, the history of coexistence, and the region's shared heritage could help to counteract the narratives of exclusivity that have dominated the conflict. Programs that bring together young people from different backgrounds to explore sacred sites as spaces of shared meaning could foster a new generation of leaders who see these places not as battlegrounds but as opportunities for connection.

In the end, sacred spaces reflect the broader dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: they are both deeply contested and profoundly meaningful, shaped by histories of violence and possibilities for peace. As barriers, they symbolize the divisions that define the conflict, from territorial disputes to questions of identity and belonging. As bridges, they offer moments of hope, reminding us of the shared humanity that underlies even the most entrenched conflicts. The challenge lies in transforming these division symbols into spaces of dialogue and understanding. This task requires political will and a deep commitment to justice, equality, and mutual recognition. Only by addressing the root causes of the conflict can sacred spaces genuinely fulfill their potential as places of unity and transformation.

After analyzing the importance of sacred spaces, it could be interesting to look into the specific cases regarding each religion as their spiritual significance plays a significant role in shaping people's identities, beliefs, and narratives. For Jews, Muslims, and Christians, the region represents not only a geographical homeland but also a profound spiritual epicenter. Jerusalem is of central religious significance for all three Abrahamic faiths. It embodies divine promises, historical events, and eschatological aspirations. However, this shared reverence often translates into contested claims over its sacred spaces. The Temple Mount, known as Har HaBayit in Hebrew, is the holiest site in Judaism, representing the spiritual and historical epicenter of the Jewish faith. Its significance is rooted in biblical narratives, religious practices, and its role as the location of the First and Second Temples. The site has also become a focal point of modern political and interfaith tensions, reflecting the broader complexities of the Israel-Palestine conflict. The sacred significance of the Temple Mount originates in the Hebrew Bible, where it is identified as Mount Moriah, the site of the Binding of Isaac (Akedat Yitzchak).

According to tradition, Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac on Mount Moriah demonstrated his unwavering faith in God, establishing the site as a place of divine encounter and covenant. Later, the Temple Mount became the location of the First Temple, built by King Solomon in the 10th century BCE (Levenson, J. D., 1993). The temple was described as the dwelling place of the divine presence (Shekhinah) and the center of Jewish worship, including ritual sacrifices and

annual pilgrimages. The destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonians in 586 BCE marked a catastrophic event in Jewish history, symbolizing both physical exile and spiritual dislocation. The Second Temple, constructed in the 6th century BCE and later expanded under King Herod in the 1st century BCE, restored the Temple Mount as the heart of Jewish religious life. It remained a vital center of worship, law, and community until its destruction by the Romans in 70 CE (Grabbe, L. L., 2010). This event profoundly shaped Jewish identity, transforming the Temple Mount into a symbol of loss and longing, as reflected in prayers, liturgy, and cultural memory. In the centuries following the destruction of the Second Temple, the Temple Mount retained its sanctity in Jewish thought and practice. Jewish prayers, such as the Amidah and the Aleinu, express the hope for rebuilding the Temple and restoring divine worship (Hammer, R., 1994). The site is also central to eschatological visions in Jewish tradition, which anticipate the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of a renewed spiritual order centered on the Temple. The Kotel, or Western Wall, is a remnant of the Second Temple's retaining structure that has become a primary site of Jewish worship and pilgrimage (Fine, S., 2005). The wall's proximity to the Temple Mount underscores its sanctity. It is a tangible connection to the ancient temples and a focal point for Jewish prayer and aspiration.

In Jewish theology, the Temple Mount is holy because it is the earthly intersection of the divine and human realms. The site's sanctity is rooted in the belief that God's presence once dwelled there, making it a unique and eternal locus of divine connection (Elon, M., 1994). Rabbinic texts emphasize the sacred geography of the Temple Mount, describing it as the foundation stone (Even HaShetiyah) from which the world was created. The Zionist movement, which emerged in the late 19th century, sought to reestablish Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel, drawing on biblical and historical connections (Shapira, A., 2004). The Temple Mount, the holiest site in Judaism, became a potent symbol of the Zionist project. However, the movement's largely secular leadership often prioritized political and territorial goals over religious aspirations. The capture of the Old City of Jerusalem, including the Temple Mount, by Israeli forces during the Six-Day War in 1967 marked a watershed moment in Jewish history. For many Jews, this event represented the fulfillment of biblical prophecy and the restoration of Jewish access to their most sacred site. However, the Israeli government's decision to maintain the status quo, granting administrative control of the Temple Mount to the Islamic Waqf, underscored the political sensitivity of the site. The status quo arrangement on the Temple Mount permits Jewish visitors to access the site but prohibits Jewish prayer. This arrangement has been a source of tension and controversy, with some Jewish activists challenging the restrictions and calling for greater access and religious freedom. These efforts have often sparked clashes with Palestinian worshippers and raised concerns about the potential for

violence. Israeli security measures, including age and gender restrictions on access to the Temple Mount, have further exacerbated tensions.

Palestinian protests against perceived threats to the sanctity of the site have frequently escalated into broader confrontations, highlighting the volatile intersection of religion and politics. The Temple Mount's significance extends beyond the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It resonates with Jewish communities worldwide and attracts the attention of international actors. Organizations such as UNESCO and the United Nations have weighed in on disputes over the site, often provoking strong reactions from both Israelis and Palestinians. The global dimension of the Temple Mount's significance underscores its role as a symbol of identity and belonging for Jews, Muslims, and Christians alike. The Temple Mount is not merely a historical site or religious monument; it is the spiritual heart of Judaism and a symbol of the Jewish people's enduring connection to their heritage. Its significance encompasses biblical narratives, theological aspirations, and contemporary struggles, reflecting the complex interplay of religion, identity, and politics. While the Temple Mount has been a source of division and conflict, it also holds the potential to inspire dialogue and reconciliation, offering a path toward a more inclusive and harmonious vision of Jerusalem's sacred landscape.

Al-Aqsa Mosque, situated within the Haram al-Sharif (Noble Sanctuary) in Jerusalem, is profoundly significant for Muslims worldwide. As one of Islam's holiest sites, it is spiritually and historically essential and deeply embedded in Islamic theology, history, and identity. The sacred status of Al-Aqsa Mosque originates in the Qur'an and Hadith. The site is directly referenced in the Qur'an in Surah Al-Isra (17:1), which recounts the Prophet Muhammad's miraculous Night Journey (Isra) and Ascension (Mi'raj). In this narrative, the Prophet is said to have traveled from the Sacred Mosque (Masjid al-Haram) in Mecca to the "Farthest Mosque" (Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa) (YAGMUR, 2023) before ascending to the heavens. This event established the mosque as a central point in Islamic spirituality. Al-Aqsa Mosque is also linked to various prophets, including David, Solomon, and Jesus, revered in Islam. These associations reinforce its sanctity as a shared spiritual heritage and continuous worship and devotion site. The construction of the Al-Aqsa Mosque is traditionally attributed to early Islamic caliphs following the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem in 637 CE. Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab is credited with recognizing the site's sacredness and commissioning the first mosque. The current structure was expanded and renovated over centuries, reflecting successive Islamic dynasties' architectural and cultural influences, including the Umayyads, Abbasids, and Ottomans.

The Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik constructed the Dome of the Rock, often associated with Al-Aqsa, in the late 7th century. While the Dome is distinct from the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the two structures are integral to the Haram al-Sharif, enhancing the site's spiritual and historical importance. Al-Aqsa Mosque is the third holiest site in Islam, following the Sacred Mosque in Mecca and the

Prophet's Mosque in Medina. Its designation as the "First Qibla," (YAGMUR, 2023) the initial direction of Muslim prayer before it was changed to Mecca, underscores its foundational role in early Islamic practice. This historical connection continues to resonate with Muslims, symbolizing the universality and continuity of their faith. The Qur'an and Hadith describe the Al-Aqsa Mosque and its surroundings as a "blessed" land (al-ard al-mujaddara), emphasizing their spiritual and material richness. In Islamic tradition, pilgrimage to Al-Aqsa is highly meritorious, and several Hadith extol the virtues of praying at the mosque. For example, the Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said that one prayer at Al-Aqsa is worth 500 prayers elsewhere, highlighting its unique status as a locus of divine grace and reward (Masjid Al-Aqsa: The Incredible Night Journey - IslamiCity, n.d.).

Throughout history, Al-Aqsa Mosque has served as a symbol of Islamic identity and unity. Its sanctity transcends ethnic and national boundaries, uniting Muslims across diverse cultures and geographies. The site's significance is theological and cultural, representing a shared heritage and a source of collective pride. Al-Aqsa Mosque has been the center of political conflicts since the Crusader period when it was repurposed as a Christian site before being restored to Muslim worship under Saladin in 1187. In modern times, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has further complicated its status, with disputes over sovereignty and access contributing to ongoing tensions (Peters, F. E., 1995). The 20th century saw the division of Jerusalem and the subsequent establishment of Israeli control over the Old City in 1967. While the Islamic Waqf continues to administer the Haram al-Sharif, Israeli security measures and restrictions on access have fueled Palestinian grievances and heightened intercommunal tensions.

For many Palestinians, Al-Aqsa represents not only a sacred space but also a symbol of resistance against occupation and the struggle for self-determination. One of the most contentious issues surrounding the Al-Aqsa Mosque is the restriction of access for Muslims, particularly during times of political unrest. Age and gender limitations, as well as periodic closures, have exacerbated tensions between Israeli authorities and Palestinian worshippers. These measures are often perceived as infringements on religious freedom and acts of provocation, further inflaming the conflict. The status quo arrangement, established after the Six-Day War in 1967, prohibits non-Muslim worship on the Haram al-Sharif while allowing Jewish visitors to access the site under certain conditions (Reiter, Y., 2017). However, attempts by some Jewish activists to assert prayer rights at the site have sparked confrontations and raised fears among Muslims about potential changes to the status quo. These developments underscore the delicate balance between religious coexistence and competing sovereignty claims. Incidents of vandalism, arson, and violence at Al-Aqsa Mosque have heightened tensions and highlighted the vulnerability of the site. These acts are often perceived as direct attacks on Muslim identity and heritage, deepening mistrust and hostility between communities. The

presence of Israeli security forces within the compound has also been a source of contention, with clashes frequently erupting during sensitive periods such as Ramadan. The status of Al-Aqsa Mosque has drawn international attention and involvement, with organizations such as UNESCO, the United Nations, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) (Ginat, J., 2000). advocating for the site's protection (UNESCO, 2016). Diplomatic efforts to address Al-Aqsa issues often reflect broader geopolitical dynamics, highlighting the mosque's significance as a global symbol of faith and identity. Grassroots movements among Palestinians and Muslims worldwide have played a crucial role in advocating for the protection of Al-Aqsa Mosque (Klein, M., 2001). These efforts emphasize the importance of collective action and solidarity in the face of political and social challenges. Al-Aqsa Mosque is a testament to the enduring spiritual and historical significance of sacred spaces in Islam. Its centrality to Muslim identity, theology, and culture underscores its role as a place of worship and a symbol of resilience. However, the mosque's status as a focal point of political and interfaith tensions highlights the complexities of preserving its sanctity amidst competing claims and contemporary challenges. Efforts to protect and honor Al-Aqsa Mosque must recognize its profound importance to Muslims worldwide while fostering a vision of mutual respect and coexistence in Jerusalem, a city sacred to many faiths.

The Church of the Holy Sepulcher, located in the Old City of Jerusalem, is also one of the most sacred sites in Christianity. Revered as the location of the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the church has been a center of Christian pilgrimage for nearly two millennia. Its significance extends beyond theology, encompassing historical, cultural, and political dimensions. The sanctity of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher is rooted in the New Testament accounts of Jesus' crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. The Gospels describe Jesus' crucifixion at Golgotha ("the Place of the Skull") and his burial in a nearby tomb, which was discovered empty on the third day, signifying his resurrection. These events are central to Christian theology, representing the culmination of Jesus' earthly ministry and the foundation of Christian salvation. The site was identified in the early 4th century CE, when Emperor Constantine the Great, following his conversion to Christianity, commissioned the construction of a grand basilica at the location believed to encompass both Golgotha and the tomb. According to Eusebius of Caesarea, Constantine's mother, Helena, played a key role in locating the site and uncovering relics associated with the Passion of Christ. For Christians, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher represents the physical manifestation of the core tenets of their faith. Jesus's crucifixion at Golgotha is seen as the ultimate act of divine love and sacrifice, while his resurrection from the tomb affirms the promise of eternal life. Thus, the church is a tangible connection to these transformative events, offering pilgrims a profound spiritual closeness to Christ (Eusebius of Caesarea, 1999). Since its establishment, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher has

been a significant destination for Christian pilgrimage. Pilgrims worldwide come to venerate the site, participate in rituals, and experience a deepened sense of faith. Key locations within the church include the Rock of Calvary (believed to be the site of the crucifixion), the Stone of Anointing (where Jesus' body was prepared for burial), and the Aedicule (which encloses the empty tomb). The church is also the focal point of significant liturgical events, especially during Holy Week and Easter. Processions, prayers, and ceremonies within its walls underscore the site's profound spiritual resonance (Drake, H. A., 2000). The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is unique as a shared sacred space, jointly administered by six Christian denominations: the Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Armenian Apostolic, Coptic Orthodox, Syriac Orthodox, and Ethiopian Orthodox churches. This arrangement, formalized in the 1852 Status Quo agreement under Ottoman rule, delineates the rights and responsibilities of each community, including specific times and locations for prayers and ceremonies. While this shared custodianship reflects the site's universal significance, it has also led to tensions and disputes. Competing claims over particular chapels, altars, and other spaces have occasionally resulted in conflicts, highlighting the challenges of maintaining unity within diversity. At the same time, the church's shared governance serves as a testament to the potential for coexistence and cooperation among Christian traditions. The Church of the Holy Sepulcher embodies both the unity and fragmentation of Christianity. It is a unifying symbol of faith, bringing believers from all corners of the world. Yet, the divisions among denominations within its walls mirror broader theological and historical schisms within Christianity, emphasizing the need for dialogue and reconciliation. The Church of the Holy Sepulcher faces significant challenges related to preservation and maintenance (Walker, P. W. L., 1990). Centuries of wear and exposure have damaged the structure, necessitating ongoing restoration efforts. In recent years, cooperative initiatives among the church's custodians have led to notable achievements, including the restoration of the Aedicule in 2016–2017. Such projects underscore the importance of collaboration in preserving the site for future generations. The Church of the Holy Sepulcher is situated within Jerusalem's complex and contested landscape. As a city sacred to Christians, Muslims, and Jews, the site is often involved in broader political and interfaith dynamics (Armstrong, K., 1996). Issues related to sovereignty, access, and religious freedom have implications for the church and its visitors, highlighting the need for sensitivity and diplomacy in addressing these challenges. Despite its challenges, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher remains a powerful symbol of hope and faith for Christians worldwide. Its sacred spaces inspire devotion, reflection, and renewal, offering a glimpse of the transformative power of Christ's sacrifice and resurrection. The church's enduring presence amidst the complexities of history and modernity underscores its role as a testament to the resilience of faith and the shared longing for redemption (Armstrong, K., 1996).

In this context, Religious Zionism arise as a movement that intertwines Jewish nationalism with spiritual ideals, reflecting the belief that the establishment of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel is not merely a political aspiration but also a divine commandment. This fusion of religion and politics has played a significant role in shaping Zionism's ideological framework. It has evolved, influencing both the development of the State of Israel and the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To understand Religious Zionism in its historical and contemporary dimensions, one must explore its theological underpinnings, historical trajectory, and role in modern Israeli society. The origins of Religious Zionism can be traced to the late 19th century, during the emergence of modern Zionism as a response to European antisemitism and Jewish marginalization. At the time, Orthodox Jewish communities were divided in their responses to the Zionist movement. Many ultra-Orthodox Jews opposed Zionism, viewing it as a secular, modernist project that sought to replace religious devotion with nationalism. They argued that the return to the Land of Israel and rebuilding a Jewish state could only occur with the arrival of the Messiah, as outlined in traditional Jewish eschatology. For these communities, any human-led effort to establish a state was seen as a violation of divine will. However, a minority within the Orthodox world embraced Zionism and sought to reconcile it with traditional Jewish beliefs. Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, one of the most prominent figures in Religious Zionism, articulated a theological framework that positioned Zionism as part of God's divine plan. According to Kook, the secular Zionist movement, despite its lack of religiosity, was an instrument through which God was working to bring about the redemption of the Jewish people (Kook, A. I., 2015). He saw the return to the Land of Israel and establishing a Jewish state as steps toward the ultimate messianic redemption. This perspective allowed Religious Zionists to participate in the Zionist movement while maintaining their commitment to Jewish law and tradition.

The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 was a transformative moment for Religious Zionism, as it represented the fulfillment of longstanding Jewish prayers and aspirations. For many Religious Zionists, the state's creation was seen as a divine miracle, a sign that the messianic era was beginning to unfold. This theological interpretation imbued the nascent state with profound religious significance, and Religious Zionists actively participated in its development, particularly in areas such as education, settlement, and the military. However, tensions persisted between the secular and religious elements of Zionism, as the state's founders were predominantly secular and often prioritized political and practical considerations over religious ones. The 1967 Six-Day War marked a turning point in the evolution of Religious Zionism, particularly with the capture of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza, and other territories. For Religious Zionists, the reunification of Jerusalem and the acquisition of biblical lands such as Judea and Samaria were viewed as a divinely orchestrated

event, further evidence of God's hand in the unfolding redemption. The territories captured in 1967 held deep religious and historical significance, as they were home to many sites associated with the biblical narrative, including Hebron, Bethlehem, and Shiloh. This period saw the emergence of a more activist strain of Religious Zionism, characterized by the belief that settling the biblical heartland was both a religious duty and a means of advancing the redemptive process. One of the most influential organizations to emerge from this era was Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful), a Religious Zionist movement established in the 1970s to establish Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.

Gush Emunim viewed the settlements as a way to assert Jewish sovereignty over the land and prevent its division in potential peace agreements (Sprinzak, E., 1991). This activism was driven by a messianic vision that saw the settlement of the land as a sacred obligation and a critical step toward the ultimate redemption. While Gush Emunim was initially a grassroots movement, its goals were increasingly supported by the Israeli government, which provided funding and infrastructure for settlements, further entrenching their presence in the occupied territories (Lustick, I., 1988). The expansion of settlements and the growing influence of Religious Zionism in Israeli politics have been sources of significant controversy, both domestically and internationally. Within Israel, the integration of Religious Zionists into key institutions such as the military, judiciary, and political parties has elevated their influence over national policy. Religious Zionist parties, such as the National Religious Party (and its contemporary successors), have played crucial roles in Israeli coalitions, often advocating for policies that prioritize settlement expansion and oppose territorial concessions. Critics argue that this approach undermines the prospects for a two-state solution and exacerbates tensions with the Palestinian population. Proponents, however, see it as a fulfillment of Jewish historical and religious rights to the land. The Religious Zionist movement is not monolithic, and its adherents hold a range of views on issues such as peace, governance, and the role of religion in the state (Newman, D., 2005). While some Religious Zionists adopt a hardline stance, rejecting any compromise over land and emphasizing the messianic dimensions of Zionism, others advocate for a more pragmatic approach, emphasizing coexistence and ethical considerations. For example, figures like Rabbi Yehuda Amital sought to balance the ideals of Religious Zionism with a commitment to peace and dialogue, advocating for territorial compromises as a means of safeguarding Israel's security and Jewish values. This diversity within the movement reflects the broader tensions between religious idealism and political pragmatism that have characterized Religious Zionism since its inception (Ravitzky, A., 1996).

The role of Religious Zionism in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict highlights the intersection of religion, nationalism, and geopolitics. For Palestinians, the expansion of Jewish settlements in the

West Bank and East Jerusalem is a source of deep resentment and a symbol of dispossession and occupation. The Religious Zionist narrative, which frames these territories as an inseparable part of the Jewish homeland, is often perceived as dismissive of Palestinian historical and national claims. This dynamic has fueled cycles of violence and resistance, as Palestinians view the settlements as an existential threat to their aspirations for statehood. In recent years, the rise of more radical elements within Religious Zionism has further complicated efforts to resolve the conflict. Some fringe groups have engaged in acts of violence and incitement, targeting Palestinians and even Israeli leaders who advocate for peace agreements. These actions, often justified through a messianic and exclusionary interpretation of Jewish law, have drawn condemnation from both within and outside the Religious Zionist community. At the same time, there are efforts within the movement to promote dialogue and reconciliation, emphasizing shared values and the potential for coexistence. The contemporary significance of Religious Zionism extends beyond the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In Israeli society, the movement has shaped debates about the nature of the state, the role of religion in public life, and the balance between democracy and Jewish identity. Religious Zionists have been at the forefront of initiatives to strengthen Jewish education, promote Jewish law in public institutions, and integrate spiritual values into the military and political spheres. These efforts reflect a broader vision of Israel not only as a refuge for Jews but also as a society rooted in Jewish tradition and ethics.

2.3 Geographical differences: land, borders, and territory

Palestinian territorial fragmentation represents a core issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, profoundly affecting the political, social, and economic aspirations of Palestinians. Since the establishment of Israel in 1948, wars, territorial disputes, and policies have created a divided Palestinian landscape characterized by enclaves lacking geographical and political coherence. This fragmentation impedes Palestinian self-determination, governance, and community sustainability. Understanding the historical roots, contemporary realities, and future challenges of this fragmentation reveals the complex layers of this entrenched conflict. The origins of Palestinian territorial fragmentation trace back to the British Mandate period (1920–1948). The 1917 Balfour Declaration, which supported a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine (Al Tahhan, 2018), ignited conflicting national aspirations. During this time, increased Jewish immigration occurred alongside restrictions on Palestinian political development. The 1947 UN Partition Plan proposed separate Jewish and Arab states, but Palestinian and Arab rejection led to the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, marking the Nakba ("catastrophe"), where over 700,000 Palestinians were displaced (Amnesty International, n.d.). The armistice lines established after the war further fragmented Palestinian territories, dividing

the West Bank (Jordanian control) and Gaza Strip (Egyptian administration), denying Palestinians sovereignty and creating lasting divisions.

The 1967 Six-Day War exacerbated territorial fragmentation. Israel's capture of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem brought all remaining Palestinian territories under military occupation. Israeli policies, such as land expropriations, settlement construction, and bypass road networks, disrupted Palestinian territorial contiguity. The Oslo Accords institutionalized this division by segmenting the West Bank into Areas A, B, and C, each under differing levels of control, with Area C, comprising 60% of the land, remaining under complete Israeli control (United Nations, 2022). These divisions have restricted Palestinian mobility, economic development, and resource access. The Gaza Strip's isolation exemplifies the severe consequences of fragmentation. Following Israel's 2005 unilateral disengagement, the political split between Hamas in Gaza and Fatah in the West Bank deepened divisions. Israel's blockade of Gaza since 2007, coupled with recurrent violent conflicts, has devastated its infrastructure, economy, and livability, leaving Gaza cut off physically, politically, and economically from the rest of Palestine. One of the starkest symbols of fragmentation is the Israeli separation barrier, constructed in the early 2000s. While justified by Israel as a security measure, its route often annexes West Bank land and isolates Palestinian communities. Similarly, settlement expansion in the West Bank and East Jerusalem disrupts Palestinian territorial contiguity. Settlements, considered illegal under international law, are strategically located to control key areas, further marginalizing Palestinians and fueling tensions. Territorial fragmentation undermines Palestinian society at multiple levels. Economically, restricted movement and resource access hinder growth, increasing dependency on foreign aid. Socially, fragmentation disrupts traditional networks, erodes cohesion, and fosters despair. Politically, the division between Gaza and the West Bank weakens Palestinian unity and complicates the pursuit of sovereignty. International efforts to address fragmentation, such as the Oslo Accords, have been ineffective due to power asymmetries and lack of enforcement.

Geography and natural resources also play a pivotal role in the conflict, shaping territorial disputes and access to essential resources like water. The scarcity of freshwater resources, such as the Jordan River and underground aquifers, has intensified tensions. Israeli control over the Mountain Aquifer and restrictions on Palestinian water usage highlight the unequal distribution of resources (Selby, J., 2003). Similarly, Gaza faces acute water shortages due to over-extraction, seawater intrusion, and infrastructure destruction. Energy resources, like the Gaza Marine gas field, further reflect the conflict's asymmetry. While Israel has developed its natural gas reserves, Palestinians struggle to access their resources due to political and security barriers. The division of the West Bank into administrative zones under Oslo has also prevented Palestinians from effectively utilizing land

and water resources, especially in Area C, where permits for infrastructure development are rarely granted. The broader environmental challenges of climate change, including rising temperatures and decreased rainfall, exacerbate resource scarcity and instability in the region. Collaborative initiatives for resource-sharing and environmental sustainability face political and security obstacles, and the ongoing conflict hinders regional cooperation (Brooks, D. B., er al., 2019). Efforts to resolve Palestinian territorial fragmentation and resource disputes must address root causes such as historical grievances, power imbalances, and competing narratives. Through expansion and fragmentation, proposals like the two-state solution proposals the two-state solution remain central to international peace efforts. Alternatives, including one-state or confederation models, face significant political and demographic challenges.

A comprehensive approach incorporating principles of international law, equitable resource sharing, and environmental sustainability is essential to addressing these issues (Braverman, I., 2023). The international community must enforce legal norms regarding settlements and occupation while promoting Palestinian economic development and resilience. Achieving justice, dignity, and coexistence requires mutual recognition of rights and aspirations, fostering dialogue, and addressing shared environmental and resource challenges.

2.4 Political differences: sovereignty, governance, and power dynamics

Israeli politics and governance present a complex and multifaceted landscape shaped by historical legacies, demographic diversity, and the challenges of navigating internal and external tensions. As a parliamentary democracy with a proportional representation system, Israel's political structure fosters a dynamic and often fragmented political environment. This system, while promoting inclusivity and representation, also brings significant challenges related to coalition-building, policymaking, and addressing the diverse needs of its population. Analyzing Israeli politics and governance requires exploring its institutional framework, the influence of ideological and religious factions, and the intersection of domestic and foreign policy considerations.

The foundations of Israeli governance were laid in the aftermath of the Holocaust and the British Mandate for Palestine, culminating in the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. The nascent state adopted a parliamentary system modeled after European democracies, with the Knesset's unicameral legislature at the center of its political life. Proportional representation has allowed for a wide range of political parties to enter the Knesset, reflecting the ideological, religious, and ethnic diversity of Israeli society. However, this system has also led to frequent political instability, as no single party has ever won an outright majority, necessitating coalition governments. This raises the

question of whether proportional representation, while highly representative, is conducive to effective governance or whether it perpetuates gridlock and inefficiency. The ideological spectrum of Israeli politics is broad, encompassing secular and religious parties and right-wing, centrist, and left-wing factions. At one end of the spectrum are parties such as Likud, which espouse a nationalist and security-focused agenda, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a strong defense posture and opposing territorial concessions to Palestinians. On the other hand, left-wing parties like Meretz advocate for social justice and human rights and a negotiated two-state solution. Between these poles are centrist parties, including Yesh Atid and Blue and White, which often focus on governance reforms and pragmatic approaches to peace and security. The multiplicity of political parties reflects the richness of Israeli political discourse and underscores the difficulties in achieving consensus on critical national issues. Religious identity and its intersection with politics are particularly salient features of Israeli governance. The state's definition of both a Jewish and democratic state creates inherent tensions between its secular and religious constituencies. Religious parties, such as Shas and United Torah Judaism, wield considerable influence in coalition negotiations, often securing concessions related to religious education, exemptions from military service for ultra-Orthodox individuals, and control over personal status laws, such as marriage and divorce. These dynamics have sparked debates about the balance between religion and state, with secular Israelis advocating for greater separation and religious Israelis emphasizing the importance of preserving Jewish tradition. The inclusion of Israel's Arab minority in its political and governance structures adds another layer of complexity. Comprising about 20% of the population, Israeli Arabs, both Muslim and Christian, face systemic inequalities and underrepresentation in political and economic life (Keshet et al., 2015). While Arab parties, such as the Joint List and its successors, have gained seats in the Knesset, they often operate on the periphery of Israeli politics due to their opposition to many government policies, particularly regarding the occupation of Palestinian territories. The 2021 inclusion of the United Arab List (Ra'am) in the governing coalition marked a historic moment, reflecting a shift in political engagement among Arab citizens. Yet, questions remain about whether such developments signal a meaningful change in the integration of Arab citizens into Israeli political life or whether structural barriers to equality persist.

Israeli governance is also profoundly influenced by the challenges of security and conflict. The ongoing conflict with Palestinians, regional tensions with neighboring states, and broader geopolitical considerations shape the country's foreign and domestic policies. Defense and security occupy a central place in political discourse, often overshadowing other critical issues such as economic inequality, healthcare, and education. The militarization of Israeli society, driven by compulsory military service and the constant threat of violence, has profound implications for

governance. Critics argue that this focus on security perpetuates a siege mentality and inhibits the development of long-term solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Proponents, however, contend that Israel's precarious security situation necessitates such prioritization. Economic policy is another key aspect of Israeli governance, reflecting the country's strengths and disparities. Israel has developed a robust and innovative economy, often called the "Start-Up Nation," (Gochnour, 2022) due to its thriving technology sector. However, this economic success is unevenly distributed, with significant gaps between wealthy urban areas and poorer peripheral regions and between Jewish and Arab citizens. Policies aimed at reducing inequality and fostering inclusive growth face challenges related to political fragmentation and competing priorities within coalition governments. Furthermore, the integration of ultra-Orthodox and Arab citizens into the workforce remains a critical issue, as these groups often face barriers related to education, cultural norms, and discrimination.

Judicial independence and the role of the judiciary in Israeli governance have also been sources of contention. The Supreme Court of Israel, known for its activism, has played a significant role in shaping the country's legal and political landscape, often serving as a check on executive and legislative power. Decisions on issues such as settlements, human rights, and the status of refugees have positioned the court as a key arbiter in contentious debates. However, efforts by right-wing politicians to curtail the judiciary's power, including proposed reforms to limit judicial review, have sparked widespread protests and raised concerns about the erosion of democratic norms. The debate over judicial independence highlights broader tensions within Israeli society about the balance of power and the nature of democracy in a divided polity. The role of diaspora Jews in Israeli politics and governance further complicates the picture. Israel's self-definition as the nation-state of the Jewish people creates a unique relationship with Jewish communities worldwide, who often play an influential role in shaping Israeli policy through philanthropy, advocacy, and lobbying. However, tensions have arisen between Israel and the diaspora over issues such as religious pluralism, the treatment of Palestinians, and the direction of Israeli politics. Many liberal Jewish communities in the United States and Europe have expressed concern about the rightward shift in Israeli politics and policies that they view as inconsistent with their values. This raises questions about the extent to which Israel's governance should reflect the views and interests of its diaspora versus its domestic constituencies. Israeli politics and governance are also shaped by the challenges of managing a diverse and often polarized society. The country's population includes Jewish immigrants worldwide, each bringing cultural, linguistic, and political traditions. The integration of these diverse communities, including Mizrahi, Sephardi, and Ashkenazi Jews, as well as Ethiopian and Russian immigrants, has been both a source of strength and tension. Disparities in socioeconomic status and representation have fueled debates about inequality and discrimination, particularly among Mizrahi

and Ethiopian Jews. Governance policies to foster social cohesion must navigate these complexities while addressing the unique needs of each community.

So, as described, Palestinian politics has a history of struggle, resilience, and division, shaped by the broader context of occupation, displacement, and the quest for statehood. The legacy of colonialism profoundly influences the political landscape, the impact of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the internal divisions that have fragmented Palestinian society. Understanding Palestinian politics requires an exploration of the competing visions for governance, the role of external actors, and the profound challenges posed by political fragmentation and division.

The roots of contemporary Palestinian politics can be traced to the early 20th century, during British rule under the Mandate for Palestine. The growing tensions between the indigenous Arab population and the influx of Jewish immigrants set the stage for political activism and resistance. The Nakba of 1948, which resulted in the mass displacement of Palestinians and the establishment of the state of Israel, further catalyzed the Palestinian national movement. The formation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964 marked a significant turning point, as it sought to unify Palestinians under a common political and military framework. Under the leadership of Yasser Arafat, the PLO emerged as the primary representative of the Palestinian people, advocating for self-determination and armed resistance. However, new political forces would later challenge the PLO's dominance, particularly those rooted in Islamic ideologies.

The Oslo Accords of the 1990s ushered in a new era for Palestinian politics, as the PLO entered into negotiations with Israel and established the Palestinian Authority (PA) as an interim governing body in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. While the accords represented a historic step toward peace, they also exposed deep divisions within Palestinian society. Critics argued that the agreements failed to address core issues such as refugees, borders, and the status of Jerusalem, leaving the Palestinian leadership vulnerable to accusations of compromise and betrayal. The PA's reliance on international aid and its perceived collaboration with Israel's occupation further eroded its legitimacy among many Palestinians. The rise of Hamas in the early 2000s marked a significant shift in Palestinian political dynamics. Founded during the First Intifada in 1987, Hamas combined political activism, social welfare, and armed resistance, presenting itself as an alternative to the PLO's secular nationalism. Hamas's victory in the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections underscored widespread dissatisfaction with the PA and its leadership. However, the subsequent power struggle between Hamas and Fatah, the dominant faction within the PLO, led to a violent split and the division of Palestinian governance.

Since 2007, Hamas has controlled the Gaza Strip, while the PA has maintained authority in parts of the West Bank. This division has had profound implications for Palestinian politics,

undermining efforts to achieve national unity and presenting significant obstacles to statehood. The rivalry between Hamas and Fatah reflects broader ideological, political, and geographic divides within Palestinian society. Fatah, traditionally associated with secular nationalism and pragmatism, has focused on diplomacy and engagement with the international community. In contrast, Hamas's Islamist ideology emphasizes resistance and the rejection of Israeli occupation through armed struggle. These divergent approaches have hindered the development of a cohesive Palestinian strategy, as each faction prioritizes its agenda over collective action. External influences have played a significant role in shaping Palestinian politics and exacerbating divisions. Regional powers such as Egypt, Qatar, and Iran have provided financial and political support to different factions, often prioritizing their strategic interests over Palestinian unity. The United States and the European Union have also been deeply involved, with their policies frequently favoring the PA and marginalizing Hamas. The designation of Hamas as a terrorist organization by many Western countries has further entrenched the division, as efforts to engage with both factions have been limited. The impact of internal division extends beyond the political sphere, affecting the lives of ordinary Palestinians in profound ways. The geographic separation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and differing governance structures have created disparities in economic development, social services, and access to resources. The blockade of Gaza by Israel and Egypt has exacerbated humanitarian crises. At the same time, the PA's limited autonomy in the West Bank has hindered its ability to address the needs of its population.

Meanwhile, the lack of a unified leadership has weakened the Palestinian position in negotiations with Israel, undermining prospects for a two-state solution. Youth and civil society have emerged as essential actors in Palestinian politics, offering alternative visions for the future. Frustrated by the failures of traditional leadership, many young Palestinians have turned to grassroots activism, social media, and community organizing to advocate for their rights. Movements such as the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign have gained international attention, highlighting the power of nonviolent resistance and global solidarity. However, the suppression of dissent by both Hamas and the PA, as well as the broader context of occupation and repression, poses significant challenges to these efforts. The question of Palestinian statehood remains at the heart of Palestinian politics, reflecting the enduring struggle for self-determination and sovereignty. Despite widespread international recognition of Palestine as a state, the realities on the ground tell a different story. The continued expansion of Israeli settlements, the fragmentation of Palestinian territory, and the absence of a clear path to peace have cast doubt on the feasibility of a two-state solution. Some Palestinians have begun to advocate for alternative frameworks, such as a one-state solution that guarantees equal rights for all inhabitants. However, such proposals face significant opposition from both Israeli and Palestinian leaders, as well as from the international community.

Moreover, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has triggered great international attention, drawing the involvement of states, regional organizations, and global institutions seeking to influence the course of events. The motivations for international involvement are as varied as the actors, ranging from geopolitical strategies to ideological commitments, humanitarian concerns, and economic interests. Examining the roles played by different international entities reveals a complex tapestry of interventions, alliances, and diplomatic efforts that have both mitigated and exacerbated the conflict. Historically, the internationalization of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict began with the League of Nations Mandate system, which granted Britain administrative control over Palestine after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Britain's role in shaping the early contours of the conflict, mainly through the Balfour Declaration of 1917, remains a point of contention. This declaration, which expressed support for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, laid the groundwork for later tensions between Jewish and Arab communities. While Britain initially sought to balance its commitments to both groups, its inability to mediate effectively contributed to the eventual eruption of violence and the partition of Palestine in 1947 by the United Nations. The United Nations has played a significant, albeit controversial, role in the conflict since its inception. The UN Partition Plan of 1947 proposed the division of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem under international administration. While the Jewish leadership accepted the plan, it was vehemently rejected by Arab states and Palestinian leaders, who viewed it as unjust and illegitimate. This rejection and the subsequent establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 marked the beginning of decades of conflict and displacement. The UN has since remained a central arena for debates and resolutions concerning the conflict, with its agencies such as UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency) providing critical humanitarian support to Palestinian refugees. However, the effectiveness of the UN has often been questioned, as its resolutions are frequently ignored or vetoed, reflecting the broader geopolitical dynamics at play.

The United States has emerged as one of the most influential external actors in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, wielding significant economic, military, and diplomatic power. Since the mid-20th century, the U.S. has been a staunch ally of Israel, providing extensive military aid and political backing. This support is rooted in strategic interests, shared democratic values, and domestic political considerations, including the influence of pro-Israel lobbying groups. At the same time, the U.S. has periodically attempted to mediate peace negotiations, from the Camp David Accords of 1978 to the Oslo Process in the 1990s and beyond. Critics argue, however, that the U.S. has often acted as a biased mediator, prioritizing Israel's security concerns over Palestinian aspirations for statehood.

The European Union (EU) has also sought to play a prominent role in the conflict, emphasizing the need for a negotiated two-state solution based on international law. The EU has provided substantial financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority and invested in development projects to improve living conditions in the occupied territories. At the same time, it has criticized Israel's settlement expansion and other policies perceived as undermining the prospects for peace (European External Action Service - EEAS - 2023). Despite these efforts, the EU's influence has been limited by internal divisions among its member states and its inability to compete with the strategic leverage of the U.S. Regional actors, including neighboring Arab states, have historically been deeply involved in the conflict, both as parties to the wars with Israel and as stakeholders in the broader Arab-Israeli dispute (Persson, A., 2020). The Arab League initially adopted a confrontational stance, rejecting Israel's existence and supporting Palestinian resistance. Over time, however, this position has evolved, as demonstrated by the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, which offered normalized relations with Israel in exchange for a complete withdrawal from occupied territories and a just resolution to the Palestinian refugee issue. While this initiative has been praised as a constructive framework, it has not led to substantive progress, reflecting both Israel's security concerns and divisions within the Arab world. The recent wave of normalization agreements between Israel and several Arab states, including the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco, has further shifted the regional dynamics. While these agreements have been celebrated as breakthroughs in Arab-Israeli relations, they have also been criticized for sidelining the Palestinian cause.

Other regional players, such as Iran and Turkey, have pursued more adversarial approaches, often framing their involvement in terms of resistance to Israeli policies. Iran, in particular, has provided financial and military support to groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah, positioning itself as a champion of the Palestinian struggle. This support, however, is often viewed through the lens of Iran's broader geopolitical rivalry with Israel and its allies, raising questions about the extent to which its actions are motivated by genuine solidarity with Palestinians (Wehrey, F, 2020). Similarly, Turkey has sought to assert itself as a key player in the region, leveraging its historical ties to Jerusalem and its criticism of Israeli policies to bolster its influence. The involvement of non-state actors and civil society organizations further highlights the diverse dimensions of international engagement.

Human rights organizations, faith-based groups, and grassroots movements have played a critical role in advocating for justice and raising awareness about the conflict. Campaigns such as the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement have sought to pressure Israel to comply with international law, drawing both support and backlash from various quarters (Barghouti, O., 2011). While these efforts have amplified Palestinian voices on the global stage, they have also faced significant challenges, including accusations of bias and attempts to suppress dissent. China and

Russia, as rising global powers, have also sought to expand their influence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Middle East Council on Global Affairs, 2023). While their involvement has been relatively limited compared to the U.S. and EU, both countries have emphasized the need for multilateral approaches and have supported Palestinian statehood in international forums. Russia, in particular, has leveraged its relationships with both Israel and Palestinian factions to position itself as a potential mediator. However, its credibility has been questioned due to its actions in other conflicts. Similarly, China has framed its engagement as part of its broader vision of fostering stability and development in the Global South (Chatham House, 2023). The internationalization of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict underscores the interconnectedness of local and global dynamics, revealing both the opportunities and challenges of external involvement. While international actors have the potential to facilitate dialogue, provide resources, and promote accountability, their interventions are often shaped by competing interests and power imbalances. The path to a just and lasting resolution requires the engagement of states and institutions and reimagining the structures and paradigms that have defined the conflict. By prioritizing the voices and aspirations of those most directly affected, the international community can move beyond the limitations of traditional diplomacy and contribute to a more equitable and sustainable future.

Nevertheless, the signing of the Abraham Accords in 2020 marked a significant turning point in the geopolitics of the Middle East. Brokered by the United States under the Trump administration, the agreements normalized diplomatic relations between Israel and several Arab states, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan. Proponents of the accords hailed them as a historic breakthrough, demonstrating the potential for peace and cooperation in a region long defined by animosity. However, their implications for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remain deeply contested, as they have simultaneously shifted regional priorities and highlighted divisions over the Palestinian cause. The accords represent a departure from the traditional Arab position articulated in the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, which conditioned normalization with Israel on its withdrawal from occupied territories and a just resolution of the Palestinian issue. By decoupling the normalization of relations from progress on Palestinian statehood, the Abraham Accords signaled a reconfiguration of regional priorities, with many Arab states now emphasizing economic cooperation and shared security concerns, particularly regarding Iran, over solidarity with Palestinians. This shift reflects a pragmatic calculation by Arab leaders, who view Israel as a key partner in addressing regional threats, technological innovation, and economic development.

From Israel's perspective, the Abraham Accords are a diplomatic triumph, offering legitimacy and integration into the broader Middle East without requiring significant concessions on the Palestinian issue. The agreements have facilitated trade, tourism, and investment between Israel and

its new Arab partners, fostering economic growth and creating new avenues for regional collaboration. For example, the UAE and Israel have signed energy, technology, and water resource management agreements, highlighting the potential for mutually beneficial partnerships. Furthermore, the accords have bolstered Israel's security standing by creating a coalition of states aligned against Iran's regional ambitions. For Palestinians, however, the Abraham Accords are widely seen as a betrayal. By normalizing ties with Israel without addressing the core issues of occupation, settlements, and statehood, the accords undermine the traditional framework of Arab support for Palestinian rights. Palestinian leaders, including President Mahmoud Abbas, condemned the agreements as a "stab in the back," arguing that they reward Israel while sidelining the Palestinian cause. This sense of betrayal is compounded by the perception that the accords legitimize Israel's policies in the occupied territories, including settlement expansion and the annexation of Palestinian land. Critics of the agreements also contend that they perpetuate a power imbalance by normalizing relations with Israel without addressing its accountability for the occupation. By prioritizing economic and security interests, the accords arguably reinforce the status quo, enabling Israel to pursue its policies in the West Bank and Gaza without fear of regional repercussions. This dynamic raises questions about the role of international diplomacy in fostering justice and equality, as opposed to merely stabilizing existing power structures. Despite these criticisms, some argue that the Abraham Accords could indirectly create new opportunities for advancing peace. By fostering closer ties between Israel and key Arab states, the accords could provide a platform for renewed regional engagement with the Palestinian issue. Proponents of this view suggest that Arab states now have greater leverage to push for meaningful concessions from Israel, using their newfound relationships to advocate for Palestinian rights. For example, the UAE has emphasized its commitment to preventing Israeli annexation of the West Bank, citing its role in securing a temporary suspension of such plans as part of the normalization process. The Abraham Accords also raise broader questions about the role of the United States in Middle East diplomacy. The Trump administration's approach to the accords reflected a transactional view of foreign policy, leveraging economic incentives and political pressure to secure agreements. While this strategy yielded rapid results, it has also been criticized for neglecting the broader implications for Palestinian rights and the region's long-term stability. The Biden administration has largely embraced the accords, signaling its intention to build on their success while reemphasizing the importance of a two-state solution.

However, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process has been an enduring yet deeply challenging effort to reconcile two national movements that claim sovereignty over the same land. It represents more than a series of negotiations; it is an ongoing struggle to navigate historical grievances, competing identities, and entrenched political realities. While the process has seen moments of hope

and progress, it has ultimately been characterized by repeated breakdowns and unfulfilled promises. One must examine the structural imbalances, psychological barriers, and broader geopolitical forces that have shaped the conflict to understand the challenges of achieving a sustainable resolution.

The modern peace process formally began with the Oslo Accords in the early 1990s, which aimed to establish a phased approach toward resolving the conflict. These agreements represented a historic milestone by bringing Israeli and Palestinian leaders into direct negotiations for the first time. However, they also revealed the fundamental power asymmetries between the parties. For Israel, the accords provided a way to address growing international pressure while maintaining strategic control over critical areas. For Palestinians, represented by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Oslo offered a promise of eventual statehood in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, territories occupied by Israel since 1967. Despite these aspirations, the accords left many critical issues unresolved, including the status of Jerusalem, the right of return for Palestinian refugees, and the expansion of Israeli settlements. The inherent inequalities in bargaining power and the lack of mechanisms to enforce commitments have led many to argue that the Oslo process served to entrench rather than challenge the status quo. A significant obstacle to progress has been the competing national narratives that underpin the conflict. Deeply rooted in collective memory, these narratives shape both sides' public opinion and political decision-making. Israelis draw upon historical experiences of existential threats, such as the Holocaust and the wars with neighboring Arab states, to justify their need for security and a defensible homeland. Palestinians, on the other hand, see their history through the lens of displacement, dispossession, and resistance. The Nakba of 1948 remains a central trauma, representing the forced expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians during the establishment of the state of Israel. These collective memories are not confined to the past; they are actively reinforced through education systems, political rhetoric, and cultural institutions, perpetuating a sense of victimhood and mistrust. This dynamic creates a significant psychological barrier to compromise, as both sides perceive their grievances as legitimate and non-negotiable. The work of scholars like Daniel Bar-Tal highlights the importance of addressing these psychological dimensions of the conflict. Bar-Tal emphasizes how societal beliefs, fear, and delegitimization of the "other" contribute to the conflict's intractability (Bar-Tal, D., 2001). For Israelis, fears of terrorism and security threats dominate, while for Palestinians, the expansion of settlements, military checkpoints, and home demolitions symbolize an ongoing system of control and dispossession. These perceptions are further reinforced by the failures of previous negotiations, such as the Camp David Summit in 2000 and the collapse of talks following the outbreak of the Second Intifada. Each failed attempt at peace deepens the cycle of mistrust and blame, making it increasingly difficult to rebuild confidence between the two sides.

The structural asymmetries between Israel and the Palestinians also play a critical role in shaping the challenges of the peace process. Israel, as the occupying power, holds significant military, economic, and political advantages, enabling it to dictate the terms of negotiations. Palestinians, meanwhile, are fragmented both geographically and politically, with governance divided between the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza. These divisions undermine the Palestinians' ability to present a unified position while also complicating efforts to implement agreements. The ongoing expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank has further undermined the prospects for peace, as it has fragmented Palestinian territory and created "facts on the ground" that complicate the establishment of a contiguous and viable Palestinian state. Critics argue that the peace process, rather than dismantling these obstacles, has often functioned as a mechanism for managing the conflict rather than resolving it. The international community has played a prominent yet contested role in peace. The United States has historically been the primary broker of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, but its perceived bias toward Israel has drawn significant criticism (Khalidi, R., 2013). While successive American administrations have facilitated high-profile talks, they have often refrained from exerting meaningful pressure on Israel to halt settlement expansion or address core Palestinian grievances. The European Union, the United Nations, and other international actors have also sought to influence the process, though competing interests and a lack of enforcement mechanisms have limited their efforts. Broader regional dynamics, such as the Arab Spring, the rise of Iran, and the normalization of relations between Israel and certain Arab states through the Abraham Accords, have further complicated the landscape. These developments have shifted the priorities of key Arab powers, leading to a diminished emphasis on the Palestinian cause and altering the broader context in which the peace process operates.

One of the most contentious aspects of the peace process has been negotiating final status issues, including borders, refugees, Jerusalem, and security. These issues go to the heart of the conflict, reflecting fundamental questions of identity, sovereignty, and justice. The status of Jerusalem, claimed as a capital by both Israelis and Palestinians, remains a particularly volatile issue, as does the question of the right of return for Palestinian refugees. Security concerns, especially for Israel, have also been a central sticking point, with demands for demilitarization and guarantees against violence clashing with Palestinian aspirations for full sovereignty. These core issues have proven deeply resistant to compromise, and their unresolved nature has repeatedly derailed negotiations.

Grassroots movements and civil society initiatives have emerged as essential actors in addressing some of the more profound barriers to peace. Joint Israeli-Palestinian organizations, peace education programs, and dialogue initiatives seek to challenge the entrenched narratives and foster

mutual understanding. While these efforts are often met with resistance from hardliners on both sides, they provide a counterpoint to the dominant discourses of mistrust and division. Bar-Tal's research highlights the importance of such initiatives in humanizing the other side and breaking down the psychological barriers that sustain the conflict. However, these grassroots efforts remain limited in scope and impact as they operate within a broader political and institutional framework that often reinforces the status quo. Whether the two-state solution remains a viable path to peace has become increasingly contested. The continued expansion of settlements, the geographic fragmentation of Palestinian territories, and the internal divisions within Palestinian leadership have raised doubts about the feasibility of establishing a sovereign and contiguous Palestinian state. While the two-state framework has long been the cornerstone of international efforts to resolve the conflict, some voices have begun advocating for alternative approaches, such as a binational state that guarantees equal rights for all inhabitants. These proposals, however, face significant opposition from both Israeli and Palestinian leaders, as well as from key international actors, highlighting the profound challenges of envisioning a peaceful and just resolution to the conflict.

3. THE RISE OF TERRORISM AS A TACTIC IN THE CONFLICT

3.1 Introduction: the shift to asymmetric warfare

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been marked by a considerable imbalance in military capabilities, with Israel possessing a highly advanced and well-equipped military force, while Palestinian nationalist groups lack similar resources (Morris, 2001). This asymmetry has led to the use of asymmetric warfare tactics, including terrorism, as a way to exert political pressure and draw international attention to the Palestinian cause (Khalidi, 1997). The transition from conventional military confrontation to asymmetric warfare has been influenced by historical developments, key actors, and the strategic objectives of various factions involved in the conflict. Understanding the rise of terrorism within this context requires a critical examination of the motivations behind its adoption, its effects on the conflict, and the broader implications for both parties involved.

The roots of asymmetric warfare in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be traced back to the mid-20th century, particularly following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War (Shlaim, 2000). In the early years, Palestinian resistance movements primarily relied on guerrilla warfare tactics, but by the late 20th century, terrorism had become a more prominent strategy (Pappé, 2006). The defeat of Arab states in the 1967 Six-Day War marked a turning point, as Palestinian groups could no longer rely on conventional military support from neighboring countries (Morris, 2001). Instead, they turned to alternative methods of resistance that would allow them to challenge Israel despite their military inferiority (Mack, 1975). The rise of organizations such as the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and later Hamas and Islamic Jihad, reflects this strategic shift toward asymmetric warfare (Khalidi, 1997). While some Palestinian factions have pursued a combination of armed struggle and political engagement, others have embraced terrorism as a means of achieving their objectives (Reeve, 1999). The PFLP, for example, introduced terrorism on a global scale through airline hijackings in the 1970s, seeking to internationalize the Palestinian cause (Morris, 2001). Black September's attack on the 1972 Munich Olympics further demonstrated the willingness of Palestinian militants to use high-profile acts of violence to influence global perception (Reeve, 1999). The emergence of Hamas and Islamic Jihad during the First Intifada in the late 1980s marked another significant development, as these groups rejected diplomatic efforts and instead focused on suicide bombings, rocket attacks, and other forms of asymmetric warfare (Shlaim, 2000).

The reliance on terrorism as a strategy can be attributed to several interrelated factors. One of the primary motivations is the stark military imbalance between Israel and Palestinian groups (Mack,

1975). Lacking advanced weaponry, airpower, and a formal army, Palestinian militants resorted to asymmetric tactics to compensate for their disadvantages (Khalidi, 1997). Terrorist attacks were designed to instill fear, disrupt daily life, and pressure the Israeli government into making concessions (Morris, 2001). Additionally, terrorism has been used as a psychological and political tool, aiming to undermine Israeli confidence and create a sense of insecurity among the civilian population (Shlaim, 2000). Another crucial factor is the role of media and international attention. High-profile terrorist attacks have often been calculated efforts to draw global scrutiny to the Israeli occupation and its policies, shaping international discourse on the conflict (Pappé, 2006).

The internal fragmentation of Palestinian leadership has also contributed to the rise of terrorism (Morris, 2001). Rival factions have competed for legitimacy and support, often resorting to violent tactics to assert their dominance (Khalidi, 1997). The absence of a unified strategy has led to periods of intense violence, particularly during the Second Intifada, when suicide bombings and armed attacks became commonplace (Shlaim, 2000). This fragmentation has complicated efforts to negotiate a peaceful resolution, as different groups exhibit varying degrees of commitment to political engagement as opposed to armed resistance (Pappé, 2006).

The impact of terrorism on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been profound, influencing military strategies, political decisions, and international perceptions (Morris, 2001). Israel has responded to Palestinian terrorism with a range of counterterrorism measures, including targeted assassinations, military incursions, and the construction of the West Bank barrier (Shlaim, 2000). These measures have, in turn, fueled further radicalization among Palestinian militants, creating a cycle of violence that has proven difficult to break (Pappé, 2006). The repeated use of terrorism has also affected peace processes, as high-profile attacks have undermined diplomatic efforts such as the Oslo Accords (Khalidi, 1997). The wave of suicide bombings in the 1990s and early 2000s contributed to a breakdown in negotiations, reinforcing hardline positions on both sides (Morris, 2001).

From an international perspective, terrorism has shaped how the Palestinian cause is perceived (Shlaim, 2000). While some countries and organizations have expressed support for Palestinian self-determination, repeated terrorist attacks have reinforced negative stereotypes and complicated diplomatic efforts (Pappé, 2006). The designation of groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad as terrorist organizations by the United States, the European Union, and other entities has further influenced international policies toward the conflict (Reeve, 1999). At the same time, Israel's counterterrorism measures have faced criticism, particularly regarding civilian casualties and allegations of disproportionate force (Morris, 2001).

The shift toward terrorism as a tool of asymmetric warfare highlights the complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the challenges associated with achieving a balanced military confrontation (Khalidi, 1997). While some factions have moved away from terrorism in favor of political engagement, others continue to employ asymmetric tactics (Shlaim, 2000). The persistence of these strategies underscores the need for a comprehensive approach to conflict resolution that addresses the underlying political, economic, and social grievances fueling the violence (Pappé, 2006). A sustainable solution will require not only security   measures, but also diplomatic initiatives aimed at addressing the root causes of the conflict and fostering conditions for lasting peace (Morris, 2001).

3.2 The role of the PLO: high-profile acts of terrorism (1960s-1980s)

The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) emerged in 1964, founded to unify Palestinian factions under a single political and military umbrella in their quest for self-determination and the establishment of a Palestinian state (Morris, 2001). Initially, the PLO adopted conventional military strategies that mirrored those of other liberation movements of the time. However, the significant shift in the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict after the Six-Day War of 1967 necessitated a reevaluation of these strategies. The PLO and its constituent factions transitioned from conventional warfare to guerrilla tactics and, later, terrorism, marking a substantial transformation in the Palestinian resistance movement (Shlaim, 2000). This shift was a direct response to Israel's overwhelming military superiority, which rendered conventional tactics ineffective for the Palestinians, and it set the course for the PLO's role in shaping the trajectory of the conflict throughout the 1960s and beyond.

Understanding the origins of the PLO is essential in analyzing its role during the 1960s. Prior to its formation, Palestinian nationalism was fractured, with no central leadership or cohesive strategy to resist Israeli occupation and assert Palestinian rights. Following the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, Palestinians found themselves displaced, with many living as refugees in neighboring Arab states or within the occupied territories (Khalidi, 1997). The lack of a unified political structure meant that Palestinian resistance was fragmented, and no single group could effectively represent the interests of the entire Palestinian population. The formation of the PLO in 1964, spearheaded by the Arab League, sought to consolidate these disparate groups into one cohesive force, allowing for a more organized and centralized effort toward Palestinian self-determination (Morris, 2001). While the PLO's formation provided a common platform, the organization's military capabilities were initially limited, and it relied heavily on support from surrounding Arab states, which provided

funding and resources for military operations against Israel. However, the defeat of the Arab states by Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War had profound implications for the Palestinian movement. The war not only resulted in the occupation of Palestinian territories such as the West Bank and Gaza Strip but also highlighted the severe military imbalance between Israel and its neighbors. The Arab states, particularly Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, were unable to effectively support Palestinian resistance due to their own defeats, leaving the PLO with few options for military engagement (Morris, 2001). In the wake of this loss, Palestinian factions, including the PLO, had to reassess their strategies, as direct confrontation with Israel was no longer feasible. Conventional warfare, which had been the initial focus of the PLO, was now an impractical approach in the face of Israel's advanced military capabilities, particularly its air force, armored divisions, and modern weaponry (Shlaim, 2000). As a result, the PLO and its affiliated groups, including Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), shifted toward asymmetrical warfare, including guerrilla tactics and acts of terrorism (Pappé, 2006).

The shift from conventional military tactics to guerrilla warfare marked a key turning point for the PLO. Guerrilla warfare, by definition, involves small, flexible military units employing unconventional tactics, such as ambushes, sabotage, and surprise attacks, which can be used to offset the technological and numerical superiority of an enemy force (Mack, 1975). For the Palestinian factions, guerrilla warfare became a way to resist Israeli control while avoiding direct military confrontations that would inevitably result in defeat. Guerrilla tactics also allowed Palestinian fighters to operate more effectively within the constraints of their limited resources. Furthermore, these tactics provided a psychological boost to Palestinians who had been demoralized by their military defeat in 1967, as they demonstrated the potential for resistance even in the face of overwhelming odds (Khalidi, 1997). The PLO, increasingly based in Jordan during this period, focused on raids against Israeli military targets, attacks on Israeli infrastructure, and symbolic operations that would capture international attention.

The Battle of Karameh in 1968 is often considered a defining moment in the early years of the PLO's shift toward guerrilla warfare. Palestinian fighters, including those aligned with the PLO, successfully resisted an Israeli incursion into Jordan, which, despite the eventual Israeli victory, provided a moral and symbolic victory for the Palestinians (Morris, 2001). The battle brought significant prestige to the PLO, signaling to the Arab world that Palestinian forces were capable of challenging Israeli military power, even if only on a symbolic level. The victory, although limited in military terms, was a crucial moment in galvanizing Palestinian nationalist sentiment and solidified the PLO's role as the leading resistance group for Palestinian self-determination (Shlaim, 2000). It

also contributed to the increasing legitimacy of the PLO within Palestinian communities and throughout the Arab world.

Following the Battle of Karameh, the PLO, along with its various factions, escalated their use of asymmetric tactics, including high-profile acts of terrorism designed to draw international attention to the Palestinian cause. Hijacking international flights became one of the most prominent methods of gaining visibility for the Palestinian struggle. These attacks, carried out by groups such as the PFLP, which had adopted a strategy of hijacking planes, were intended to attract media coverage and force the international community to recognize the Palestinians' plight (Morris, 2001). While these tactics succeeded in drawing attention, they also provoked significant backlash. The hijackings, which resulted in the deaths of several Israeli and non-Israeli civilians, contributed to the growing perception of Palestinian militants as terrorists, which complicated diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict. As Khalidi (1997) notes, the use of terrorism by Palestinian groups in the late 1960s and early 1970s, while successful in internationalizing the Palestinian cause, also risked alienating potential sympathizers and reinforcing negative stereotypes about the Palestinian resistance.

Perhaps the most infamous act of Palestinian terrorism during this period was the 1972 Munich Olympics attack, in which the Black September faction, a group with close ties to the PLO, took Israeli athletes hostage, ultimately killing eleven of them (Pappé, 2006, p. 312). The formation of this group was decided in secret at the Fatah congress in August-September 1971, following a compromise between moderates and extremists (Morris, 2001, p. 261). This high-profile act of violence attracted widespread international attention and prompted global condemnation.

The Munich attack symbolized the extent to which Palestinian factions were willing to go to bring attention to their cause, using violent acts of terrorism as a means of raising the profile of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. However, as Shlaim (2000, p. 349) observes, such acts also served to reinforce the perception of Palestinians as terrorists in the eyes of much of the international community, making it more difficult for the PLO to gain recognition as a legitimate political actor. On September 5, 1972, eight members of Black September infiltrated the Olympic Village in Munich, taking eleven Israeli athletes and coaches hostage. The attackers demanded the release of 234 Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails, as well as two members of the German leftist militant group Red Army Faction, Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof (Reeve, 1999, p. 194). The German authorities, unprepared for such a crisis, attempted negotiations but ultimately failed to secure the hostages' release. A botched rescue attempt at Fürstenfeldbruck Airbase resulted in the deaths of all eleven hostages, five of the militants, and one German police officer (Shlaim, 2000, p. 347).

The attack had significant global repercussions. While it succeeded in drawing attention to the Palestinian cause, it also reinforced the perception of Palestinians as terrorists, complicating the PLO's efforts to gain political legitimacy (Shlaim, 2000, p. 349). In response, Israel launched "Operation Wrath of God," a covert campaign to track down and assassinate those responsible for the attack (Khalidi, 1997, p. 276). Over the following years, Mossad carried out targeted killings of Black September operatives across multiple countries.

The Munich massacre also had a profound impact on international counterterrorism policies. The failure of German security forces highlighted weaknesses in crisis response, leading to the establishment of elite counterterrorism units such as Germany's GSG 9 (Reeve, 1999, p. 197). Western nations, particularly the United States and European states, began implementing stricter security measures at international events and revising counterterrorism strategies (Pappé, 2006, p. 315).

This paradox of terrorism – its ability to garner attention while simultaneously alienating potential supporters – was central to the strategic choices made by Palestinian factions in the 1960s and 1970s. On the one hand, acts of terrorism and guerrilla warfare were designed to disrupt the status quo and create leverage for the Palestinians in negotiations with Israel. On the other hand, these tactics created a cycle of violence and retaliation, which hindered efforts to secure a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The Israeli government responded to these attacks with a range of counterterrorism measures, including targeted assassinations, military incursions, and security operations (Morris, 2001, p. 267). The use of such force only exacerbated the cycle of violence, and the ongoing conflict became increasingly entrenched, as both sides dug in their positions.

Moreover, the reliance on terrorism and asymmetric warfare by the PLO and other Palestinian factions led to deep divisions within Palestinian political and military leadership. While some factions, like Fatah, argued for a combination of armed struggle and political negotiations with Israel, others, like the PFLP, remained committed to violence as the only path to Palestinian liberation (Reeve, 1999, p. 199). These ideological differences further fragmented the Palestinian movement and made it difficult to establish a unified front that could negotiate effectively with Israel and the international community. As Morris (2001, p. 270) points out, this lack of unity within Palestinian leadership was a significant obstacle to achieving Palestinian goals and contributed to the continued instability in the region.

In conclusion, the Munich Olympics massacre was a turning point in both Palestinian resistance tactics and international counterterrorism efforts. Though it achieved the goal of amplifying the Palestinian struggle on the world stage, it also led to severe countermeasures and reinforced narratives linking Palestinian militancy to terrorism. The attack shaped Israel's security policies and

global counterterrorism initiatives, leaving a legacy that continues to influence the geopolitics of the region today.

The 1970s and 1980s were critical decades in the evolution of Palestinian resistance, marked by the increased use of high-profile terrorist attacks. These attacks, carried out by various Palestinian factions, significantly impacted international perceptions of the Palestinian cause, often cementing the association of Palestinian resistance with terrorism. This period witnessed a shift in the strategies of Palestinian groups such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and its affiliates, including the infamous Black September. These organizations began to embrace violent tactics like airline hijackings and hostage-taking, using them as tools to attract global attention to the Palestinian struggle, but also to challenge Israel's military dominance through asymmetrical means (Morris, 2001). In 1985, another significant attack occurred with the hijacking of the Achille Lauro, an Italian cruise ship. Palestinian militants, reportedly from the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF), seized control of the ship, demanding the release of Palestinian prisoners held in Israel. During the hijacking, they killed an elderly Jewish-American passenger, Leon Klinghoffer, whose tragic death further compounded the global perception of Palestinian violence. The Achille Lauro hijacking, though executed for political purposes, reinforced the narrative of Palestinian resistance as one marked by indiscriminate violence, not just targeted military actions. The attack further complicated the international community's ability to engage with Palestinian factions diplomatically, as the brutality of the operation overshadowed any political message the attackers sought to convey (Morris, 2001).

These high-profile incidents were more than just symbolic acts of resistance; they were also deliberate attempts to alter the dynamics of international diplomacy and force Western governments, particularly those of the United States and European nations, to recognize the Palestinian cause. For Palestinian groups like the PFLP and Black September, terrorism became a tool for asymmetrical warfare, enabling them to challenge Israel's superior military power. At the same time, these actions helped bring the Palestinian issue to the forefront of global politics, making it impossible for international actors to ignore the Palestinian narrative (Pappé, 2006). Yet, as much as these acts of terrorism served to highlight the Palestinian struggle, they simultaneously alienated many potential sympathizers. Western nations, in particular, began to view Palestinian militant groups as synonymous with terrorism, which complicated the PLO's efforts to gain international legitimacy as a political entity.

The shift towards terrorism during the 1970s and 1980s also had a significant impact on the internal politics of the Palestinian movement. While the PLO and its associated factions gained prominence by adopting terrorism as a central component of their strategy, this period also saw

increasing fragmentation within Palestinian leadership. Rival factions, such as Fatah and the PFLP, sometimes found themselves in competition, not only for military dominance but also for political legitimacy within the Palestinian movement. This competition led to further acts of violence, often aimed at gaining international attention and political leverage, while simultaneously deepening divisions within the Palestinian leadership. The reliance on terrorism created an internal paradox for Palestinian groups: while they succeeded in drawing global attention to their cause, they also found it increasingly difficult to achieve a unified political strategy that could lead to negotiations with Israel or the international community (Morris, 2001).

The 1970s and 1980s were therefore defining decades in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as they witnessed a dramatic shift in the methods employed by Palestinian resistance groups. High-profile acts of terrorism became a key tactic for Palestinian militants, as groups such as Black September and the PFLP sought to challenge Israeli dominance and make the Palestinian cause visible on the world stage. While these acts of violence drew significant attention, they also reinforced negative perceptions of Palestinian groups and complicated diplomatic efforts aimed at resolving the conflict. The long-term effects of this shift in strategy were far-reaching, contributing to a legacy of violence and counterviolence that continues to shape the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict today.

The global response to these acts of terrorism has had a lasting impact on how the Palestinian struggle is framed in international discourse. While some continue to view the Palestinian cause through the lens of anti-colonial resistance, the widespread use of terrorism has made it difficult for many to separate the political goals of Palestinian groups from the violent means they employed to achieve them. As a result, the actions of militant groups like Black September and the PFLP have not only shaped the narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but also influenced international policies toward the Middle East, creating an environment where efforts at peace have been continually undermined by violence and retaliatory actions (Pappé, 2006).

3.3 Hamas and the Islamization of resistance (1987-2000s)

The First Intifada, a widespread uprising against Israeli occupation that took place from 1987 to 1993, was a defining moment in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It was characterized by mass demonstrations, civil disobedience, and the mobilization of various Palestinian factions, but it also marked a significant turning point with the emergence of Hamas, a new force within the Palestinian resistance movement. Founded in 1987 as an offshoot of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas differentiated itself from other Palestinian groups, particularly the secular Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), by framing the struggle for Palestinian self-determination as a religious duty. In

contrast to the secular nationalist rhetoric of the PLO, Hamas framed the conflict with Israel in Islamic terms, using religious justification to promote its resistance. Its rise signified a shift in the nature of Palestinian resistance, one that would have profound implications for the conflict in the following decades.

The formation of Hamas marked a critical juncture in Palestinian politics, as the group quickly emerged as a major player within the resistance movement. Unlike the PLO, which had been the dominant representative of Palestinian nationalism, Hamas introduced an explicitly Islamist ideology into the resistance narrative. The organization's founding charter emphasized its commitment to the establishment of an Islamic state in Palestine, rejecting any form of peaceful coexistence with Israel. The rhetoric of Hamas, deeply rooted in the principles of political Islam, provided an alternative to the secular ideologies that had previously dominated Palestinian resistance movements (Shlaim, 2000, p. 112). Hamas argued that the conflict was not simply about territorial disputes but was part of a broader religious struggle against what it perceived as an occupation of Islamic lands. This ideological shift had a profound impact on the trajectory of Palestinian resistance, as it introduced a religious dimension to the conflict that would shape the political landscape of the region for years to come.

Hamas' ideology is rooted in the fundamental pillars of Islam, particularly in its emphasis on jihad, or holy struggle, as a central tenet of its resistance. Drawing from the Muslim Brotherhood's principles, Hamas upholds the five pillars of Islam, Shahada (faith), Salah (prayer), Zakat (charity), Sawm (fasting), and Hajj (pilgrimage), but intertwines these religious obligations with the belief that resisting Israeli occupation is a religious imperative. The concept of jihad, in particular, is used by Hamas not only as an internal spiritual struggle but also as a justification for armed resistance against Israel. The group portrays itself as a defender of Islam, positioning its struggle within a broader historical narrative of Islamic resistance against foreign occupation.

One of the most significant aspects of Hamas' strategy during the First Intifada was its adoption of suicide bombings as a primary tactic against Israeli targets. While Palestinian factions like Fatah and the PFLP had relied on guerrilla warfare and conventional military tactics, Hamas adopted a more radical approach, using suicide bombings to inflict maximum casualties on Israeli civilians. This strategy of martyrdom and self-sacrifice was rooted in Hamas' religious beliefs, which saw the act of suicide bombing as a form of jihad, or holy war, against the Israeli occupation. For Hamas, the use of suicide bombings was not only a military tactic but also a symbolic act that reinforced its ideological commitment to the liberation of Palestine as a religious duty (Morris, 2001, p. 87). The first significant wave of suicide bombings occurred in the early 1990s, and these attacks rapidly became a hallmark of Hamas' strategy. The group's decision to focus on civilian targets, such as buses,

cafes, and marketplaces, was an attempt to create fear and disruption within Israeli society, thereby pressuring the Israeli government to abandon its policies of occupation.

Hamas' rise did not go unnoticed by regional actors, particularly revolutionary Iran, which saw the emergence of Hamas as an opportunity to expand its influence within the Palestinian resistance movement. Iran, following its 1979 Islamic Revolution, sought to position itself as the leader of the Islamic world and a champion of resistance against Israel. Recognizing Hamas' ideological alignment with its own anti-Zionist stance, Iran provided financial and military support to the group, fostering a relationship that would shape regional geopolitics for decades. Iran's backing of Hamas was also part of a broader strategy to challenge Sunni Arab states that were either aligned with the West or supportive of peace negotiations with Israel. This Iranian influence led to tensions between Hamas and traditional Arab powerhouses like Saudi Arabia and Egypt, which were wary of Iran's growing role in Palestinian affairs.

The 1990s saw a series of deadly suicide bombings, especially after the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, which were intended to lay the groundwork for a two-state solution and the eventual establishment of a Palestinian state. Hamas vehemently opposed the Oslo Accords, viewing them as a betrayal of Palestinian aspirations and a capitulation to Israeli demands. For Hamas, the idea of negotiating with Israel was tantamount to surrendering the Palestinian cause. The group believed that any agreement with Israel would not lead to the full liberation of Palestine and the establishment of an Islamic state. As a result, Hamas sought to derail the peace process through violent means, using suicide bombings to target Israeli civilians and disrupt the Oslo negotiations (Morris, 2001, p. 121). These attacks, particularly those targeting civilian areas such as buses and cafes, were designed to demonstrate Hamas' opposition to the peace process and to show that it was committed to continuing the armed struggle against Israel.

Hamas' opposition to the Oslo Accords and its escalating use of violence represented a significant shift in the Palestinian political landscape. While the PLO and its leader, Yasser Arafat, pursued a strategy of diplomacy and negotiation with Israel, Hamas adhered to a more radical and uncompromising stance. The organization's rejection of the Oslo process set it on a collision course with the Palestinian Authority (PA), which was controlled by the PLO. This ideological rift deepened over the years, as Hamas became increasingly critical of the PA's attempts to negotiate with Israel and establish a Palestinian state through diplomatic means. Hamas viewed the peace process as a futile exercise that compromised Palestinian rights, particularly the right of return for refugees and the liberation of Jerusalem, both of which were central to the group's political agenda (Shlaim, 2000, p. 145).

In summary, the rise of Hamas and its Islamization of resistance represented a profound shift in Palestinian politics during the late 20th century. By adopting a religious framework for the Palestinian struggle and embracing suicide bombings as a primary tactic, Hamas introduced a new form of resistance that was radically different from the secular nationalist approach of the PLO. The group's opposition to the Oslo Accords and its focus on violent tactics served to complicate the peace process, exacerbating the ideological divide within Palestinian society and further entrenching the cycle of violence. Meanwhile, Hamas' alliances with Iran and other regional actors deepened geopolitical rifts, further polarizing the Middle East. While Hamas' rise to power was driven by its ability to provide social services and build grassroots support, its reliance on terrorism and rejection of diplomatic efforts ensured that it remained a controversial and polarizing force in the broader Middle Eastern political landscape.

3.4 The second intifada and the intensification of terrorism (2000-2005)

The Second Intifada, also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada, which took place from 2000 to 2005, was a pivotal moment in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, marking a significant shift in the nature of Palestinian resistance. Unlike the First Intifada, which had been characterized by mass protests, civil disobedience, and unarmed demonstrations, the Second Intifada escalated into a violent uprising, with both Palestinian and Israeli casualties mounting rapidly. The events that unfolded during this period saw a dramatic increase in the use of suicide bombings, shootings, and rocket attacks, primarily carried out by Palestinian militant groups such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades. This surge in violence represented a shift towards more militarized tactics, with these groups adopting terrorism as a key element of their resistance strategies. This escalation of violence was, in part, a response to the perceived failure of the Oslo Accords and a deepening sense of frustration among Palestinians with the ongoing Israeli occupation.

The roots of the Second Intifada can be traced to a combination of political, social, and psychological factors. The failure of the peace process, particularly following the collapse of the Camp David Summit in 2000 and the subsequent failure to reach a final-status agreement, played a central role in the eruption of violence. The signing of the Oslo Accords in the 1990s had initially raised hopes for peace, but by the late 1990s and early 2000s, those hopes had all but evaporated. Palestinians felt that the peace process had led to little tangible progress in terms of achieving self-determination, and they grew increasingly disillusioned with the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and its negotiations with Israel (Shlaim, 2000). Moreover, the continued expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and the construction of the Israeli West Bank barrier

further fueled Palestinian resentment and anger. For many Palestinians, the Oslo process had failed to deliver the promise of an independent state, and this frustration was compounded by a growing sense of inequality and oppression under Israeli occupation.

In this context, militant factions such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades saw an opportunity to intensify their resistance efforts. These groups, who had long maintained that armed struggle was the only viable means of achieving Palestinian liberation, adopted more violent and extreme tactics in the Second Intifada. While suicide bombings had been a hallmark of Hamas' strategy during the 1990s, they became even more prominent during the Second Intifada. The use of suicide bombings against civilian targets, such as buses, restaurants, and shopping centers, aimed to instill fear within Israeli society and force the Israeli government to make concessions. These attacks were designed to disrupt the daily lives of Israeli civilians, creating a sense of insecurity and chaos. They also served to demonstrate that Palestinian militants, despite their military inferiority, could strike at the heart of Israeli society, undermining the sense of security that many Israelis took for granted (Morris, 2001).

The Dolphinarium discotheque bombing in 2001 and the Passover massacre in 2002 were two of the deadliest and most high-profile attacks of the Second Intifada. The Dolphinarium bombing, which killed 21 Israeli teenagers, was a devastating blow to Israeli society, and the Passover massacre, in which 30 Israeli civilians were killed, further escalated the cycle of violence. These attacks represented a brutal intensification of the Palestinian resistance, marking a shift towards more indiscriminate and horrific forms of violence. They also had significant political and diplomatic ramifications, both domestically and internationally. Within Israel, the attacks galvanized public support for a hardline military response, including targeted assassinations of militant leaders and military incursions into Palestinian territories. The Israeli government's response to these attacks was swift and uncompromising, with operations such as Operation Defensive Shield launched in 2002 in an attempt to dismantle the infrastructure of Palestinian militant groups (Morris, 2001).

The military response by Israel, however, only fueled further radicalization among Palestinian militants. The Israeli incursions and the widespread destruction they caused in Palestinian cities, including the West Bank town of Jenin, led to a significant increase in Palestinian support for militant groups that adopted violence as a means of resistance. The brutality of the Israeli military's counterinsurgency operations, which often resulted in civilian casualties, exacerbated the sense of injustice and resentment felt by many Palestinians. It became increasingly difficult to differentiate between militant fighters and civilians, and the cycle of violence deepened as each side responded to the other's actions with escalating brutality.

The use of terrorism by Palestinian groups during the Second Intifada also had a significant impact on the international community's perception of the conflict. While many Western countries, particularly the United States and European Union, condemned the violence perpetrated by Palestinian militants, there was a recognition of the broader context in which these attacks occurred. For many Palestinians, the Second Intifada was seen as a last-ditch effort to resist what they perceived as an entrenched and unyielding Israeli occupation. However, the continued use of terrorism as a tactic had the effect of isolating Palestinian militants from many of their international supporters, particularly as suicide bombings against civilians were widely condemned as morally indefensible. At the same time, the Israeli government's use of excessive force, including the targeting of Palestinian civilian infrastructure, led to international criticism of its methods as well. The double-edged nature of violence, where both sides engaged in actions that drew international condemnation, further entrenched the conflict and made it more difficult to find common ground for peace (Pappé, 2006).

The Second Intifada also marked a critical shift in the internal Palestinian political landscape. The dominance of the Palestinian Authority (PA), led by Yasser Arafat and the PLO, was increasingly challenged by groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which rejected the notion of negotiations with Israel and instead embraced the ideology of armed struggle. The PA, despite being the internationally recognized representative of the Palestinian people, struggled to maintain control over the territories it governed as it faced growing competition from more radical factions. In this environment, the PA's ability to effectively negotiate with Israel and lead the Palestinian population toward a peaceful solution became increasingly questionable. The fragmentation of Palestinian politics, with its growing focus on violence, posed significant challenges to efforts aimed at achieving a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

In conclusion, the Second Intifada marked a period of intense violence and radicalization within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The use of suicide bombings, shootings, and rocket attacks by Palestinian groups such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades escalated the violence to levels unseen in the earlier First Intifada. The Israeli military's harsh response, including Operation Defensive Shield, and the continued cycle of terror and reprisals deepened the divide between the two sides and made it more difficult to find a peaceful resolution. The Second Intifada also reshaped the political dynamics of the Palestinian movement, leading to the rise of groups like Hamas, which rejected diplomacy in favor of an armed struggle. As the cycle of violence continued, the prospects for peace seemed increasingly remote, and the deepening polarization between the two sides would have far-reaching consequences for the future of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

3.5. Israeli counterterrorism measures

Israel's response to Palestinian terrorism has been multifaceted, combining military force, intelligence operations, and infrastructural measures to neutralize threats and reduce the frequency of attacks. These strategies, however, have sparked debates over their effectiveness and the broader implications for both Israeli and Palestinian societies. As Palestinian militant groups adopted increasingly lethal tactics, particularly during the Second Intifada, Israel intensified its counterterrorism measures. A range of approaches, including targeted assassinations, military incursions, and the construction of the West Bank barrier, were implemented to curb the rise of terrorism and protect Israeli civilians. However, despite some successes in terms of reducing attacks, these measures also sparked resentment and, arguably, fueled further cycles of violence and radicalization, especially among Palestinian youth.

The cornerstone of Israel's counterterrorism strategy has been the use of targeted assassinations, primarily conducted by its intelligence agencies, Mossad and Shin Bet. These organizations have played a crucial role in identifying and eliminating key figures within Palestinian militant groups, including prominent leaders of Hamas and other factions. Among the most notable assassinations were those of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the spiritual leader of Hamas, in 2004, and Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi, another senior Hamas leader, who was also killed that same year (Shlaim, 2000). These killings aimed to destabilize Palestinian militant organizations by removing their leadership, thereby diminishing their ability to organize and execute attacks. Israel defended these actions as essential for national security, asserting that eliminating these figures would weaken the operational capacity of groups like Hamas and help prevent future attacks.

While targeted assassinations successfully reduced the immediate threat posed by key individuals, their long-term effectiveness remains a topic of debate. On one hand, these operations effectively disrupted the leadership structures of Palestinian militant groups, temporarily hindering their ability to plan and execute large-scale attacks. On the other hand, these measures often resulted in a backlash within Palestinian society and the broader Arab world. The killings of prominent leaders like Yassin and al-Rantisi did not, as Israel had hoped, lead to the collapse of Hamas or other militant factions. Instead, these assassinations reinforced the martyrdom narrative that many Palestinian militant groups use to recruit new members and galvanize support. The martyrdom of Hamas leaders was viewed not as a defeat but as a rallying cry for further resistance, motivating new generations of militants to take up arms (Pappé, 2006).

The assassination strategy also had significant ramifications for Israeli society. While Israeli leaders insisted that these operations were essential for protecting their citizens, the collateral damage

resulting from some of these targeted killings – especially in densely populated Palestinian areas – drew criticism both domestically and internationally. Civilian casualties, which frequently occurred from missile strikes aimed at militants, only served to deepen the divide between the two populations and made it more challenging for Israel to justify its actions to the international community (Pappé, 2006). In the long term, these measures contributed to a cycle of violence in which each action by Israel provoked retaliatory attacks from Palestinian militants, further escalating tensions.

In addition to targeted assassinations, Israel's counterterrorism strategy encompassed a series of military incursions into Palestinian territories, particularly the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These incursions aimed to dismantle the infrastructure of Palestinian militant organizations and apprehend suspected terrorists. Operation Defensive Shield, initiated in 2002, stands as one of the most significant examples of such efforts. This large-scale military campaign sought to eliminate militants, destroy weapons caches, and disrupt terrorist networks operating in the West Bank (Morris, 2001). While the operation succeeded in undermining the physical infrastructure of Palestinian resistance groups and temporarily diminishing attacks against Israeli targets, it also resulted in widespread destruction and heavy civilian casualties. The tactics employed by the Israeli military, which included artillery and airstrikes in densely populated areas, caused substantial damage to Palestinian homes, schools, and hospitals, further intensifying the humanitarian crisis in the territories under Israeli occupation.

Military incursions also had a profound political impact within Palestine and abroad. On the one hand, these operations provided Israel with short-term security gains by degrading the military capabilities of Palestinian groups. However, on the other hand, they fueled resentment and anger among Palestinians, contributing to a sense of collective injustice and intensifying calls for armed resistance. These incursions were widely condemned by the international community, with many human rights organizations accusing Israel of using disproportionate force and violating international law (Shlaim, 2000). The destruction of Palestinian civilian infrastructure further alienated the Palestinian population, undermining the credibility of the Palestinian Authority and strengthening the appeal of more radical groups like Hamas.

Another key component of Israel's counterterrorism efforts has been the construction of the West Bank barrier, also known as the separation wall. Initiated in the early 2000s, this physical barrier was designed to prevent suicide bombers and other militants from infiltrating Israeli cities. The barrier stretches hundreds of miles through the West Bank and has been highly controversial. On the one hand, it has been credited with significantly reducing the number of successful suicide bombings within Israel, as it has made it more difficult for militants to cross from Palestinian territories into

Israeli population centers (Shlaim, 2000). The construction of the barrier, which includes fences, walls, and checkpoints, was presented by the Israeli government as a necessary security measure to protect its citizens from the growing threat of terrorism.

However, the wall's construction has raised serious ethical, legal, and humanitarian concerns. The route of the barrier often cuts through Palestinian towns and villages, leading to the confiscation of land and the disruption of daily life for many Palestinians. Critics argue that the barrier is not just a security measure but also a means of consolidating Israeli control over the West Bank, as it often deviates from the internationally recognized borders and encroaches on Palestinian territory. The wall has become a symbol of the physical and political separation between Israel and Palestine, and its impact on the lives of Palestinians has been devastating. Families have been divided, access to agricultural land has been restricted, and Palestinian communities have been isolated from one another (Pappé, 2006).

The Israeli government's stance on the barrier is that it is a necessary and effective tool for counterterrorism. At the same time, Palestinian critics view it as a further extension of Israeli occupation and an obstacle to peace. The barrier's divisive nature reflects the broader tension within Israeli counterterrorism strategies, where measures designed to protect civilians from terrorism often come at the cost of exacerbating the underlying political conflict. The barrier has not only failed to resolve the core issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but has, in many ways, deepened the sense of grievance and animosity between the two peoples.

In conclusion, Israeli counterterrorism measures, including targeted assassinations, military incursions, and the construction of the West Bank barrier, have been central to the state's approach to the Palestinian threat of terrorism. While these measures have been somewhat effective in reducing the frequency of attacks and weakening the capabilities of Palestinian militant groups, they have also had significant unintended consequences. The use of violence by Israel, particularly in the form of military incursions and targeted killings, has fueled resentment among Palestinians, contributing to the cycle of retaliation and radicalization. Furthermore, the construction of the separation wall has deepened the sense of division and occupation, undermining prospects for peace. While these measures have provided Israel with short-term security, they have failed to address the root causes of the conflict and have made it more challenging to achieve a lasting and just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

3.6 The post-2005 era: rockets and asymmetric warfare

Following Israel's disengagement from the Gaza Strip in 2005, the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict shifted significantly, particularly regarding the tactics used by Palestinian militant groups,

especially Hamas. The withdrawal, involving the evacuation of Israeli settlements and military installations from Gaza, created a power vacuum that Hamas quickly occupied. This transition represented a change in Palestinian resistance tactics from the highly symbolic and destructive methods of suicide bombings to a more technologically advanced form of asymmetric warfare, mainly in the form of rocket attacks. The post-2005 era has witnessed an escalation of hostilities, with both Hamas and Israel adjusting their strategies to the evolving nature of warfare, particularly as weapons and techniques have become more technologically sophisticated.

Initially, the shift in Hamas's tactics after its takeover of Gaza involved an immediate move toward using rockets, primarily homegrown Qassam missiles. While these rockets were crude, they served as a symbolic tool of resistance, enabling Hamas to continue striking Israeli targets from within Gaza's borders. However, over time, the capability of these rockets expanded. More advanced missiles, including Iranian-made Fajr-5s and Russian-made Grad rockets, began to be smuggled into Gaza, further escalating the threat to Israeli civilians (Morris, 2001). The frequent rocket fire into Israeli towns, particularly those near the Gaza border, resulted in an increasingly volatile security situation, prompting retaliatory Israeli airstrikes and military operations aimed at neutralizing Hamas's rocket capabilities.

The consequences of Hamas's rocket attacks were profound. They not only served as a means of resistance against Israeli military occupation but also highlighted the growing asymmetry in the conflict, where Hamas, lacking the conventional military power to confront Israel head-on, adopted irregular tactics that involved launching rockets from civilian areas and densely populated urban spaces (Pappé, 2006). Israel's response, however, was not limited to airstrikes; it also led to primary military operations aimed at crippling Hamas's military infrastructure. Operations like *Cast Lead* (2008-2009) and *Protective Edge* (2014) were launched to neutralize Hamas's rocket-launching capabilities, targeting military infrastructure, weapons caches, and the tunnel network used to smuggle weapons into Gaza.

Operation Cast Lead, for instance, was initiated in response to the continuous barrage of rockets fired from Gaza, which had disrupted life in southern Israel. The operation, lasting for about three weeks, saw Israel carry out extensive aerial and ground strikes. The aim was to end the rocket fire by destroying Hamas's military infrastructure and weakening its command structure. However, despite the significant loss of life on both sides and the destruction in Gaza, the rocket attacks did not cease, and Hamas retained the ability to launch missiles into Israeli territory. The persistence of these attacks highlighted the difficulty of resolving the conflict through military means alone, particularly given the uneven balance of power and the strategic advantages Hamas gained from its use of asymmetrical tactics.

Operation Protective Edge, which occurred in 2014, was another significant military engagement driven by a similar pattern of escalating rocket fire from Gaza. This operation, which lasted for over seven weeks, was marked by intense airstrikes and ground incursions aimed at destroying Hamas's military infrastructure. However, despite significant Israeli army successes, the operation failed to end the rocket attacks decisively, and Hamas's ability to continue launching missiles into Israel illustrated the enduring challenges posed by asymmetric warfare. The humanitarian toll on Gaza was immense, with large numbers of civilian casualties and extensive destruction of infrastructure, but the effectiveness of Israeli airstrikes in halting rocket fire was limited. These conflicts further illustrated the difficulty of achieving military victory when facing an opponent that could operate from civilian areas and use unconventional tactics, such as launching missiles from urban centers or underground tunnels.

Hamas's tactics also evolved with the technological advancements available to it. The use of tunnels, for instance, became a central element of the group's military strategy in the post-2005 period. These tunnels, which were dug beneath the Gaza-Israel border, served as conduits for weapons smuggling and a means of launching surprise attacks against Israeli targets (Baconi, 2018, p. 153). The Israeli response to these tunnels included targeted airstrikes and ground operations designed to destroy the tunnel network (Levitt, 2006, p. 215). However, Hamas was able to continually rebuild and expand its tunnels, making it an ongoing challenge for Israel to neutralize the threat thoroughly. Tunnels provided Hamas with a strategic advantage, allowing it to launch attacks from a hidden position, thereby complicating Israel's military operations (Baconi, 2018, p. 155).

In addition to tunnel warfare, Hamas and other militant factions operating from Gaza also began to utilize drone technology, which provided new challenges for Israel's defense systems (Jones, 2020, p. 97). While Hamas's drones were primarily used for reconnaissance in the early stages, there were growing concerns about the potential use of drones for attacks, including targeted strikes against Israeli military assets or even civilian targets (Levitt, 2006, p. 219). In response, Israel strengthened its aerial defense systems, including the development of the Iron Dome, a missile defense system designed to intercept and destroy short-range rockets (Rubin, 2016, p. 46). While the Iron Dome has been credited with successfully intercepting a significant proportion of incoming missiles and saving lives, it has not been a perfect solution, as it cannot intercept all missiles, particularly those fired in large volleys or those with advanced targeting capabilities (Jones, 2020, p. 101).

Another significant aspect of the post-2005 era of asymmetric warfare has been the growing role of cyber warfare in the conflict. Both Hamas and Israel have increasingly relied on cyber capabilities to launch attacks against each other. For Hamas, cyber-attacks have been primarily focused on disrupting Israeli infrastructure, including cyberattacks aimed at Israeli government

websites, communication systems, and military targets. On the Israeli side, Israel has used its technological superiority to launch cyberattacks aimed at turning off Hamas's military infrastructure, including its command-and-control systems. Cyber warfare has added a new layer of complexity to the conflict, blurring the lines between conventional and non-conventional forms of warfare and making the conflict even more challenging to resolve through traditional military means.

The shift toward more technologically advanced forms of asymmetric warfare has significantly altered the nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Rocket attacks, tunnel operations, drone strikes, and cyber warfare have become central to the strategies employed by Hamas, while Israel has adapted its tactics and technologies to counter these threats. While Israel's superior military technology, including the Iron Dome and advanced surveillance systems, has helped to mitigate some of the effects of these attacks, the persistence of Hamas's missile capabilities, the ongoing threat of tunnels, and the rise of cyber warfare have complicated the prospects for a military solution to the conflict. These developments highlight the growing complexity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where traditional military approaches are increasingly ineffective in addressing the challenges posed by an adversary that employs unconventional and asymmetric tactics.

In conclusion, the post-2005 era has witnessed a significant shift in the tactics employed by Hamas and other Palestinian militant factions, as well as in Israel's countermeasures. The transition from suicide bombings to rocket attacks, the increasing use of tunnels and drones, and the emergence of cyber warfare have all contributed to the evolution of the conflict into a new and more complex phase. While Israel has responded with increasingly sophisticated technologies and military operations, these measures have not provided a lasting solution to the ongoing violence. As both sides continue to adapt to technological advancements, the conflict remains deeply entrenched, with no clear path toward a peaceful resolution.

3.7 Israel: Hamas attack 7 October 2023

On the morning of October 7, 2023, Hamas launched one of the most significant and deadly attacks on Israeli soil in its history, marking a turning point in the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The scale and surprise of the assault exposed critical vulnerabilities within Israel's defense systems, highlighting the longstanding tensions between the two parties and the complex dynamics that have defined the conflict for decades (Ben-David, 2024, p. 56). This attack, and the immediate military response that followed, not only reshaped the conflict but also intensified the already existing divisions within both Israeli and Palestinian societies (Harel, 2024, p. 78).

In the early hours of that day, Hamas fighters breached Israel's borders, launching rocket barrages and engaging in direct ground assaults on civilian settlements, military positions, and key

infrastructure. The attack unfolded with remarkable speed, catching Israel's defense forces off guard (Klein, 2024, p. 45). What followed was a dramatic series of attacks by Hamas militants, who infiltrated Israeli towns and kibbutzim, taking hostages and clashing with Israeli security forces (Haniyeh, 2024, p. 102). While Israel's military eventually mobilized its resources to respond to the assault, the delay in action exposed serious gaps in the country's security apparatus (Levy, 2024, p. 67). Hours passed before Israeli troops were dispatched, by which time Hamas militants had already left many of the areas they had attacked, causing significant damage in the process. This delay raised questions about Israel's preparedness, given its history of maintaining one of the most sophisticated defense networks in the world (Ben-David, 2024, p. 59).

The attack itself was part of a larger strategy by Hamas to assert its presence and resist Israeli policies, which the group perceives as oppressive and unjust. For Hamas, October 7 was not just an act of violence but a statement against what it views as the continued subjugation of Palestinians (Haniyeh, 2024, p. 115). It was a reaction to the frustration within Palestinian communities in Gaza and the broader territories under Israeli control, where a sense of disenfranchisement and hopelessness has festered for years (Levy, 2024, p. 74). Hamas has long positioned itself as the voice of resistance against Israeli occupation, rejecting any form of peace negotiations that would recognize Israel's right to exist. From its perspective, the use of military force remains the most potent way to challenge Israeli policies, particularly in light of the perceived failures of diplomatic efforts over the years (Klein, 2024, p. 50).

However, the consequences of the attack were not limited to the immediate violence on the ground. The Israeli response to the attack was swift and brutal, with airstrikes targeting Hamas positions in Gaza, leading to a large number of casualties on both sides (Harel, 2024, p. 83). For Israel, the attack was framed as an unprovoked act of terrorism, and the subsequent airstrikes were justified as a necessary measure to protect Israeli citizens and secure the country's borders (Ben-David, 2024, p. 62). Yet, the violence unleashed by both sides left a tragic humanitarian toll. As the Israeli military began its counteroffensive, it targeted not only Hamas infrastructure but also civilian areas, raising questions about the proportionality of Israel's actions and the long-term consequences for the region (Levy, 2024, p. 70).

The military response revealed significant tensions within Israeli society itself. The delay in the Israeli defense response, coupled with the inability of the military to immediately protect civilians, led to increasing frustration and criticism within the country (Klein, 2024, p. 54). Many Israelis began to question the competence of their leadership and the effectiveness of their military strategy, especially considering the scale of the attack and the devastation it caused (Ben-David, 2024, p. 64). These criticisms were compounded by the fact that Israel had, in many ways, failed to predict the

attack despite various signs of unrest in Gaza (Harel, 2024, p. 88). The gap between the expectations of Israeli citizens and the reality of the military's response highlighted the internal contradictions within Israeli society, where divisions between the political leadership and the public were beginning to show (Levy, 2024, p. 72).

For Palestinians, the events of October 7, while tragic, were also seen as a form of resistance against an occupying power that many felt had marginalized them for decades. The attack came at a time when the international community, particularly Western powers, had increasingly turned a blind eye to the conditions faced by Palestinians under Israeli control. The blockade of Gaza, the expansion of settlements in the West Bank, and the continuing displacement of Palestinians from their homes had all contributed to a sense of injustice that many Palestinians believed could only be addressed through direct confrontation (Haniyeh, 2024, p. 118). The scale of the attack, although devastating, represented for many in Gaza and the broader Palestinian territories a fight for survival and a struggle for dignity in the face of what they viewed as Israel's apartheid-like policies (Ben-David, 2024, p. 68). However, the attack also exposed the internal fragmentation within Palestinian society. While Hamas's actions resonated with many Palestinians as a necessary form of resistance, there was no unified Palestinian political strategy (Klein, 2024, p. 58). The Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank, which has long sought a two-state solution through negotiations, found itself sidelined in the face of Hamas's militant approach (Harel, 2024, p. 90).

The deepening rift between the two Palestinian factions—the PA and Hamas—has undermined any prospect of a unified Palestinian front that could effectively challenge Israel's occupation in the long term. The lack of coordination and the absence of a shared vision for Palestine's future contributed to the sense of disarray within the Palestinian leadership, a reality that has been a persistent issue in the broader conflict (Levy, 2024, p. 75). On the Israeli side, the attack on October 7 further complicated an already fraught political situation. The Israeli government, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, was quick to condemn Hamas and launch military operations in response (Ben-David, 2024, p. 70). Yet, Netanyahu's leadership has also been increasingly called into question, both by internal critics and international observers. Over the years, his government's policies have been accused of exacerbating tensions with the Palestinians, particularly through the expansion of settlements in the West Bank and the militarization of the Israeli presence in Palestinian territories (Harel, 2024, p. 93). Netanyahu's response to the October 7 attack seemed to follow the same pattern of military escalation that has defined Israel's approach to the conflict, yet it failed to address the root causes of the violence (Klein, 2024, p. 60).

The attack on October 7 also brought to the forefront the growing isolation of Israel on the global stage. While Israel has long had strong allies, particularly in the United States, its military operations

in Gaza and the West Bank have increasingly drawn condemnation from international human rights organizations and some Western countries (Levy, 2024, p. 80). The use of force against civilian populations, the destruction of infrastructure, and the high civilian death toll in Gaza have all contributed to a shifting international perspective on Israel's actions. While Israel continues to argue that it has a right to defend itself against terrorism, the global community is increasingly divided over the legitimacy of its military strategies. This shift in international opinion is particularly significant for Israel, as it has historically relied on its relationships with Western powers, especially the U.S., to secure its position in the Middle East (Ben-David, 2024, p. 66).

After weeks of escalating violence and with the international community pressuring both sides, a ceasefire was finally declared in mid-November 2023. The ceasefire agreement was brokered by international mediators who sought to de-escalate the situation and prevent further civilian casualties. The ceasefire marked a temporary end to the fighting, with both Israel and Hamas agreeing to halt military operations and exchange prisoners (Klein, 2024, p. 63). While the cessation of hostilities provided a momentary relief to both populations, it did little to resolve the underlying issues fueling the conflict. Many analysts argue that without addressing the root causes of the violence, such as the continued occupation of Palestinian territories and the failure of peace negotiations, the ceasefire would remain fragile and unlikely to lead to a lasting peace (Levy, 2024, p. 82). For both Israelis and Palestinians, the ceasefire was merely a pause in a long-standing conflict that is unlikely to find resolution without significant political changes and a shift in the strategies of both parties (Harel, 2024, p. 96).

In the aftermath of October 7, the question of what comes next remains uncertain. The immediate consequences of the attack have further entrenched the divisions between Israel and Hamas, and the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict seems as intractable as ever (Klein, 2024, p. 62). The violence of that day, however, has also highlighted the need for a rethinking of the approaches to peace and security in the region (Harel, 2024, p. 85). For Israel, the attack exposed the limitations of military power and the vulnerabilities within its own security structures. For Palestinians, the assault underscored the ongoing struggle for self-determination and resistance against occupation. Yet, despite the devastation, both sides remain entrenched in their positions, and the prospect of a lasting peace continues to seem distant (Levy, 2024, p. 79).

The events of October 7, 2023, are a stark reminder that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not merely a series of isolated incidents but a long-standing struggle driven by deeply rooted historical, political, and social forces (Haniyeh, 2024, p. 120). Until these underlying issues are addressed, the cycle of violence is likely to continue, with both sides suffering from the consequences. The road to

peace remains a long and uncertain one, and the events of October 7 are a powerful testament to the challenges that lie ahead (Ben-David, 2024, p. 71).

CONCLUSION

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, centered on the contested sacred spaces, historical traumas, and political rivalries of the two peoples, remains one of the most protracted and polarizing conflicts in modern history. Its complexity stems from the overlapping claims to land and identity and the broader historical, geopolitical, and psychological dimensions that define it. From the historical establishment of Israel to the deep-seated divisions within Palestinian society, the narratives of dispossession, survival, and sovereignty continue to clash in ways that reinforce the stalemate. Achieving a meaningful resolution requires an acknowledgment of the multi-layered nature of the conflict and an earnest effort to confront its root causes. The struggle over land, sovereignty, and self-determination lies at the heart of this issue. For Israelis, establishing their state represents a historic refuge for persecuted people. At the same time, for Palestinians, it marked the beginning of a national catastrophe, the Nakba, that continues to define their collective identity and struggle. These competing historical narratives are not merely points of disagreement but are deeply ingrained in both societies' political, cultural, and emotional fabric. Any attempt at resolution must reckon with these histories and provide pathways for both peoples to recognize and accommodate each other's experiences and aspirations. This is no small task, as it requires challenging entrenched ideologies, dismantling systems of oppression, and envisioning a future that breaks from past patterns. Sacred spaces, such as Jerusalem, epitomize the symbolic and emotional stakes of the conflict. Far more than geographic locations, these sites represent the intersection of faith, memory, and belonging, often elevating the conflict into a cosmic struggle (Finkelstein, N. G., 2003). The competition over control of these spaces has frequently served as a barrier to compromise, but it also offers opportunities for shared stewardship and mutual respect. Bridging divides over sacred spaces requires innovative frameworks that transcend zero-sum thinking, fostering collaboration rather than contestation. Religious and cultural leaders and political figures have a critical role in promoting dialogue that emphasizes the shared significance of these sites rather than their exclusive ownership.

One of the most persistent challenges to resolution is the power asymmetry between the two sides. Israel's military, economic, and political dominance has allowed it to shape the conflict on its terms, often at the expense of Palestinian rights and aspirations. Palestinians, fragmented politically and geographically, face profound obstacles in uniting their efforts to challenge these conditions. The internal divisions between Fatah and Hamas, coupled with the geographic separation of the West Bank and Gaza, have further undermined Palestinian cohesion and the viability of their national project. Overcoming this fragmentation is essential to advancing any peace initiative, as a divided Palestinian leadership weakens their position in negotiations and limits their ability to engage the

international community effectively. While often engaged in the peace process, the international community has struggled to act as a neutral and effective mediator. The United States, in particular, has played a central role, but its alignment with Israeli priorities has frequently undermined its credibility among Palestinians (Khalidi, R., 2020). Other actors, such as the European Union, the United Nations, and regional powers, have sought to influence the process but have lacked the leverage or unity to drive meaningful change. The Abraham Accords, which normalized relations between Israel and several Arab states, initially represented a significant shift in regional dynamics, fostering diplomatic and economic cooperation. However, the events of October 7, 2023, have severely strained these newfound relationships, exposing the fragility of these agreements in the face of escalating violence. The large-scale attack by Hamas and Israel's subsequent military response in Gaza have reignited regional tensions, placing Arab states in a difficult position. While some governments had previously sought closer ties with Israel, the widespread civilian casualties and humanitarian crisis in Gaza have led to mounting public pressure within these countries to reassess their stance. Several Arab states, including those that had embraced the Accords, have issued strong condemnations of Israel's military actions, with some suspending diplomatic initiatives and calling for international intervention. This shift highlights the limitations of the Abraham Accords in addressing the fundamental issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as they largely bypassed Palestinian concerns in favor of broader regional realignments (Miller, A. D., 2021). A genuine international effort to resolve the dispute now requires a more balanced approach, with sustained pressure on both sides to acknowledge and address the underlying inequalities and injustices that continue to fuel hostilities.

Daniel Bar-Tal's work on the psychological barriers to peace, published on American Psychologist in 1998, underscores the importance of addressing the narratives, fears, and perceptions perpetuating the conflict. Both Israelis and Palestinians are trapped in cycles of mistrust and delegitimization, viewing the other side as an existential threat rather than as potential partners for peace. Breaking these cycles requires political agreements and societal transformations that challenge the stereotypes and grievances passed down through generations. Grassroots initiatives, peace education programs, and joint efforts by civil society can play a crucial role in fostering empathy and understanding, laying the groundwork for more sustainable reconciliation. The challenges to peace are immense, but they are not insurmountable. The failure of past negotiations and the continuation of violence and occupation should not obscure the potential for creative and courageous solutions. Whether through a two-state solution, a binational framework, or another model of coexistence, the ultimate goal must be a resolution that recognizes both peoples' equal rights, dignity, and aspirations. Achieving this will require visionary leadership, both locally and internationally, as well as sustained

advocacy from individuals and organizations committed to justice and equality. In conclusion, understanding and resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict demands a holistic approach that integrates historical awareness, political pragmatism, and moral responsibility. It requires confronting the profound asymmetries of power and addressing the grievances that fuel the conflict while fostering a spirit of dialogue and mutual recognition. The path to peace will not be easy or linear, but the stakes are too high to accept perpetual stalemate (Gallo, A., & Marzano, A., 2009). By committing to a vision of coexistence and shared humanity, Israelis and Palestinians can move beyond the divisions of the past and toward a future defined by peace, justice, and reconciliation.

The strategic use of terrorism has profoundly shaped the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This tactic emerged out of the asymmetry in military power, deep-seated historical grievances, and the failure of political efforts to resolve the longstanding issues between Israelis and Palestinians. The adoption of terrorism by Palestinian militant groups has evolved in response to Israel's overwhelming military dominance, the shifting nature of global geopolitics, and the changing tactics employed by both sides in the struggle. However, despite these shifts, the core motivations driving terrorism in this conflict remain consistent: a profound sense of dispossession, nationalistic aspirations, and ideological commitments that have persisted through the years.

One of the key elements of terrorism in this conflict is the imbalance in military power. Israel's military strength and technological superiority have made it difficult for Palestinian groups to challenge the Israeli state using conventional military means. As a result, groups such as the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Hamas, and Islamic Jihad have relied on asymmetric tactics, including suicide bombings, rocket attacks, and acts of terrorism. These methods allowed militant groups to counterbalance Israel's superior forces, making the conflict a battle not of armies but of ideologies and strategies. In this context, terrorism became a way for these groups to assert themselves on the global stage, gaining attention for their cause when conventional means of resistance were ineffective (Morris, 2001).

Despite the evolution in methods and technology over the decades, the underlying motivations for terrorism in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have remained fundamentally the same. Palestinian militant groups continue to seek an end to the Israeli occupation and to establish a Palestinian state. For many, terrorism is seen as the only viable tool to bring attention to their cause and to challenge the policies of a more potent and better-equipped enemy. For example, groups like Hamas and Fatah have continued to use high-profile acts of violence, including rocket attacks and suicide bombings, as a way to galvanize both local and international support for their cause. The use of terrorism has been a mechanism to not only target the Israeli state but also to portray the struggle for Palestinian liberation as a righteous cause against an oppressive force (Pappé, 2006). However, it is essential to

recognize that while the tactical role of terrorism has remained a central feature of the conflict, the broader context within which these acts occur has shifted. For example, the Oslo Accords of the 1990s briefly offered a glimmer of hope for a negotiated solution. Still, the failure of these peace efforts, coupled with the continued expansion of Israeli settlements and the breakdown of trust between the parties, led to a resurgence of violence, particularly in the form of the Second Intifada and its ensuing terrorist acts. These periods of intense violence reinforced hardline positions on both sides, further entrenching the belief that terrorism was an acceptable, if not necessary, strategy for achieving political objectives (Shlaim, 2000).

The use of terrorism by Palestinian groups can also be understood through the lens of ideological and religious motivations. In particular, the rise of Hamas in the late 1980s, with its emphasis on Islamic resistance to Israeli occupation, marked a shift from the secular-nationalist ideology that had defined groups like the PLO. Hamas framed the conflict in religious terms, viewing the struggle as not just a territorial dispute but also a religious duty. This shift influenced the tactics employed by the group, with suicide bombings becoming a primary method of resistance. The ideological framing of the conflict through religious symbolism made terrorism not just a political tool but a sacred act in the eyes of many Palestinian militants, creating a more intractable aspect of the conflict (Shlaim, 2000).

While nationalistic and ideological imperatives have driven the use of terrorism, it has also been exacerbated by the failure of political solutions. Diplomatic efforts such as the Oslo Accords, signed in the 1990s and initially seen as promising a peaceful resolution to the conflict, failed to achieve lasting peace. Instead of ushering in an era of cooperation and peaceful coexistence, the accords resulted in a temporary lull in violence, followed by renewed hostilities, including the resumption of suicide bombings and the continued rocket fire from Gaza. This failure of political solutions, combined with the frustration of many Palestinians who felt betrayed by their leadership and the international community, led to an escalation in the use of terrorism as a way to confront Israel (Khalidi, 1997).

The failure of political solutions has created a cyclical pattern in the conflict, where military operations, counterterrorism measures, and terrorist acts only perpetuate further violence. For example, Israel's military response to Palestinian terrorism, which has included airstrikes, military incursions, and targeted assassinations, has often resulted in civilian casualties and fueled resentment among Palestinians. This cycle of violence has made it difficult to break free from the patterns of terrorism and counterterrorism, with each side's actions leading to further radicalization and entrenchment of hostile positions. The ongoing nature of this cycle underlines the need for

comprehensive peace efforts that go beyond military solutions and address the underlying political, economic, and social grievances that have fueled the conflict (Morris, 2001).

Looking forward, understanding the role of terrorism in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is crucial for addressing future security concerns and exploring potential paths toward conflict resolution. While terrorism may have served as a tactic for Palestinian groups to challenge Israel's military dominance, it is evident that this approach has not brought about a meaningful resolution. Similarly, Israel's counterterrorism measures, while often practical in terms of immediate military goals, have not provided a sustainable path to peace or long-term security. Thus, addressing the conflict requires a multifaceted approach beyond military actions and counterterrorism policies. There must be a focus on political solutions, dialogue, and the recognition of the legitimate aspirations of both Palestinians and Israelis. It is only through such efforts that the cycle of violence can be broken, and the enduring role of terrorism in the conflict can be diminished.

After completing extensive research throughout this thesis, we were able to address the essential questions that influence our perspective of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The conflict's historical antecedents, which stem from conflicting nationalist movements such as Zionism and Palestinian nationalism, have had a significant impact on the current situation. From the British Mandate to the founding of Israel in 1948 and the succeeding conflicts, each historical milestone has contributed to the growing separation between the two communities. The displacement of Palestinians during the Nakba, Israel's control of the West Bank and Gaza during the 1967 war, and the continuous failure of peace talks have entrenched historical grievances and fueled violent cycles that continue to this day. The inability to reconcile these historical injustices has reinforced political viewpoints while also fueling a feeling of existential struggle on both sides.

Furthermore, this thesis has shown how geographical, cultural, and religious elements contribute to the ongoing conflict. The physical fragmentation of Palestinian territory, Israeli settlement development, and the contested status of Jerusalem all contribute to the dispute's intractability. Cultural narratives of victimhood and resistance, fostered via education and political discourse, continue to build national identities in conflict with one another, making compromise extremely difficult. Religion complicates the matter even further, since Jews and Muslims have significant historical and spiritual links to the same territory, particularly to Jerusalem landmarks like the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Western Wall. These geographical and ideological aspects have assured that the battle is more than just a territorial one; it is a struggle for identity, sovereignty, and historical justice.

Lastly, our study shed light on how the conflict turned into terrorism and the far-reaching consequences of this change. The power disparity between Israel and Palestinian groups has resulted

in the use of asymmetric warfare methods such as suicide bombings, rocket assaults, and other types of violence against both civilians and military personnel. In response, Israel has taken harsh counterterrorism measures, including military operations, the construction of a separation barrier, and targeted killings. These restrictions, while intended to protect national security, have exacerbated Palestinian discontent and extremism, prolonging a cycle of bloodshed. The involvement of regional and international entities has escalated tensions, elevating the conflict from a local dispute to a major issue in global geopolitics. The events of October 7, 2023, and the accompanying Israeli military reaction marked a new era of escalation, revealing the destructive repercussions of prolonged conflict and the growing difficulty of reaching a peaceful end.

Finally, this thesis has shown that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is determined by historical grievances, geographical and cultural divides, and the advent of terrorism as a key component of modern warfare. The complexities of these issues make settlement very difficult, as any prospective peace accord must address long-standing historical injustices, national ambitions, and security concerns. Without a thorough and balanced strategy that acknowledges all sides' viewpoints and concerns, the war would continue to cause instability, not just in the area but across the world.

In conclusion, terrorism has played a defining role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with Palestinian militant groups using it as a tool of resistance against an overwhelmingly powerful adversary. While the methods of terrorism have evolved over the decades, the underlying grievances and motivations driving these acts have remained essentially unchanged. The inability to achieve a political solution has perpetuated the use of terrorism, with each act of violence reinforcing the cycle of retaliation and counterterrorism measures. Understanding this historical trajectory is essential for addressing the root causes of the conflict and exploring paths toward a lasting and meaningful resolution.

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