

THE ISRAEL–PALESTINE CONFLICT: HISTORICAL ROOTS, GLOBAL
IMPLICATIONS, AND PATHS TOWARD PEACE

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Abstract: This article examines the Israel–Palestine conflict as one of the most enduring and multifaceted crises in contemporary international relations. The study explores the political, historical, religious, and socio-economic dimensions of the conflict, drawing on analytical perspectives from the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) and BBC News. It argues that the conflict cannot be reduced merely to territorial and security disputes, as it involves deeper issues of historical injustice, religious symbolism, national identity, and global geopolitical rivalry. Furthermore, the paper highlights the humanitarian consequences of the ongoing violence and the asymmetrical narratives present in international media. The conclusion emphasizes that sustainable peace in the region depends on continuous diplomatic dialogue, mutual trust, and fair international mediation that prioritizes justice and human dignity over political interests.

Keywords: Israel–Palestine conflict, Middle East crisis, geopolitical analysis, humanitarian impact, peace process, Council on Foreign Relations, BBC News.

Introduction

In the modern international system, armed conflicts remain one of the greatest threats to global security and stability. During the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the number of regional and civil wars increased dramatically, reshaping the balance of power and deepening global divisions. Among these conflicts, the Israel–Palestine dispute stands out as one of the most protracted, emotionally charged, and politically sensitive. It is not merely a clash over territory or borders, but a struggle rooted in religion, history, and identity—making it a defining test for international diplomacy and humanitarian values.

The origins of the conflict date back to the early twentieth century, particularly to the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which supported the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine during the British Mandate period. After the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, the Arab–Israeli wars and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians laid the foundation for decades of hostility and mistrust. Since then, repeated military escalations, failed peace negotiations, and competing national narratives have perpetuated a cycle of violence and retaliation.

What makes this conflict unique is its multi-layered nature. It encompasses political disputes over sovereignty and statehood, religious tensions surrounding the holy city of Jerusalem, and geopolitical rivalries involving regional and global powers such as the United States, Iran, and Arab states. The conflict's persistence has made it not only a regional issue but a symbol of global divisions between competing visions of justice, security, and human rights.



In recent decades, various research institutions and media organizations have analyzed the Israel–Palestine conflict from different perspectives. The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) often frames it within the logic of security and state interests, while BBC News tends to emphasize humanitarian suffering and moral responsibility. These differing analytical lenses reflect broader ideological divides between realism and liberal humanism in international relations. Therefore, a balanced assessment requires synthesizing both approaches — combining strategic understanding with moral awareness.

This paper aims to provide a comprehensive and critical analysis of the Israel–Palestine conflict by examining its historical roots, interpretations by major analytical sources, and factors that perpetuate the crisis. Furthermore, it discusses possible paths toward peace, focusing on the two-state solution and the role of international diplomacy in restoring stability and justice in the Middle East.

Historical and Political Roots of the Israel–Palestine Conflict

The Israel–Palestine conflict has deep historical and political foundations that reach far beyond the modern era. Its origins lie in the late Ottoman period, when nationalist movements emerged both among Arab and Jewish communities in response to the declining power of the empire. The rise of Zionism in the late nineteenth century, advocating for a Jewish homeland in Palestine, clashed with the aspirations of the local Arab population, who sought self-determination and independence. This ideological confrontation was further intensified under British colonial rule, which institutionalized competing claims to the same territory.

A key turning point came with the Balfour Declaration of 1917, in which the British government expressed support for “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.” While it was intended as a diplomatic gesture, the declaration ignored the political aspirations of the Arab majority in the region. During the subsequent British Mandate (1920–1948), waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine increased dramatically, leading to growing tension, sporadic violence, and mutual distrust between Jewish and Arab communities.

The conflict reached a critical stage in 1947, when the United Nations adopted Resolution 181, proposing the partition of Palestine into two independent states — one Jewish and one Arab — with Jerusalem placed under international administration. Jewish leaders accepted the plan, while Arab leaders rejected it, viewing it as a violation of their right to sovereignty. Following Israel’s declaration of independence in May 1948, five Arab states launched a military intervention, leading to the Arab–Israeli War of 1948. The war resulted in Israel’s territorial expansion beyond the UN-proposed borders and the displacement of more than 700,000 Palestinians, an event Palestinians refer to as the Nakba (“catastrophe”).

In the decades that followed, a series of wars and uprisings further entrenched the division. The Six-Day War of 1967 marked another decisive moment, as Israel captured the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza Strip, and Golan Heights, placing millions of Palestinians under military occupation. These territorial gains reshaped regional geopolitics and remain at the heart of today’s dispute. The subsequent Oslo Accords (1993–1995) introduced a framework for Palestinian self-governance and mutual recognition, but the peace process repeatedly stalled due to mutual mistrust, political fragmentation, and continued settlement expansion in the West Bank.

The political dimension of the conflict is shaped by asymmetry in power. Israel, as a sovereign and technologically advanced state, possesses military and diplomatic advantages, while the Palestinians remain divided between the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza. This asymmetry complicates negotiations and perpetuates cycles of violence, particularly in the absence of consistent international pressure or accountability mechanisms.

Another key factor is the status of Jerusalem, a city sacred to Judaism, Islam, and Christianity alike. Both Israelis and Palestinians claim it as their capital, making it one of the most contentious issues in any peace negotiation. The city's spiritual significance transforms a political dispute into a symbolic struggle for identity and legitimacy, giving the conflict both emotional and theological depth.

The historical trajectory of the Israel–Palestine conflict thus reveals that it is not merely a territorial dispute, but the outcome of overlapping national projects, colonial legacies, and contested historical narratives. Every diplomatic initiative — from the Camp David Accords (1978) to the Abraham Accords (2020) — has had to grapple with these deep-rooted contradictions. Therefore, any sustainable peace must address not only borders and security, but also historical grievances, identity recognition, and equitable coexistence.

Comparative Analysis: CFR and BBC Perspectives

The Israel–Palestine conflict has been widely covered by both academic institutions and international media, each providing distinct analytical frameworks and moral narratives. Two of the most influential sources — the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) and BBC News — represent contrasting approaches to understanding the conflict. While CFR tends to interpret the situation through the lens of geopolitical realism and security policy, BBC News emphasizes the humanitarian and moral dimensions of the crisis. This difference reflects a broader divide in how Western discourse frames the notions of “security” and “justice” in the context of international conflicts.

According to the Council on Foreign Relations, the Israel–Palestine conflict is primarily a matter of territorial control and state security. CFR analyses often highlight Israel's right to defend itself against external threats, including rocket attacks and militant incursions from the Gaza Strip. The organization situates the conflict within the framework of *realpolitik*, focusing on national interests, power balance, and regional stability. From this perspective, Israel's military actions and security policies are seen as defensive measures necessary to ensure its survival in a volatile environment. The analytical emphasis lies on state rationality — the idea that Israel's behavior is shaped by strategic calculations rather than ideological motives.

However, this approach has notable limitations. By focusing predominantly on Israel's security concerns, CFR's interpretation tends to understate the humanitarian costs of military operations and the impact of the blockade on Gaza's civilian population. The organization acknowledges the existence of a humanitarian crisis but presents it as a consequence of Hamas's actions, rather than a direct result of Israel's policies. Consequently, CFR's analyses often overlook the power asymmetry between Israel — a technologically advanced state — and Palestine, which remains politically fragmented and economically constrained.

In contrast, BBC News adopts a more human-centered and ethical framework. Its coverage focuses on the consequences of the conflict for ordinary civilians — including displacement, poverty, and violations of human rights. BBC reports highlight the daily realities of life under blockade, the destruction of essential infrastructure, and the psychological trauma experienced by both Israeli and Palestinian populations. By doing so, BBC presents the conflict not only as a political crisis but as a profound human tragedy with far-reaching moral implications.

BBC News also places significant emphasis on historical responsibility. Its analyses often refer to the legacy of colonial borders, the consequences of the 1948 displacement, and the ongoing expansion of Israeli settlements as central factors perpetuating the conflict. While maintaining journalistic balance, BBC tends to frame these issues in a way that underscores inequality and accountability, emphasizing that lasting peace cannot be achieved without addressing systemic injustices and humanitarian law violations.

The contrast between CFR and BBC therefore lies not only in interpretation but in ideological orientation. CFR's perspective aligns with strategic realism, viewing peace as a product of power balance and deterrence. BBC's approach reflects liberal internationalism, advocating for justice, human rights, and the rule of law as prerequisites for stability. Both perspectives contribute valuable insights, yet neither alone provides a complete picture. A comprehensive understanding of the conflict requires integrating these two dimensions — acknowledging the legitimate security concerns of states while giving equal weight to human suffering and ethical accountability.

This divergence in framing also illustrates the role of media and think tanks in shaping global perceptions. Western media often prioritize narratives that align with their governments' foreign policy interests, while humanitarian organizations and independent journalists attempt to highlight the civilian cost of political decisions. Consequently, public opinion in Western societies tends to oscillate between sympathy for Israel's security challenges and empathy for Palestinian suffering. Such polarization demonstrates how information asymmetry can influence not only diplomatic strategies but also the global moral discourse surrounding the conflict.

In conclusion, both CFR and BBC contribute essential, yet partial, perspectives on the Israel–Palestine conflict. CFR offers structural clarity about power politics, while BBC exposes the moral and humanitarian dimensions often neglected in strategic analyses. Synthesizing these viewpoints enables a more holistic approach — one that recognizes the interplay between security, justice, and human dignity as central to understanding and ultimately resolving the conflict.

Key Factors Perpetuating the Conflict

The persistence of the Israel–Palestine conflict is not solely the result of historical grievances or political disagreements. Rather, it is maintained by a complex network of economic disparities, cultural and religious divisions, psychological barriers, and external geopolitical influences. Each of these factors reinforces the others, creating a multidimensional cycle of instability that prevents sustainable peace.

Economic Inequality and Humanitarian Crisis

One of the most visible and measurable aspects of the conflict is the economic gap between Israel and the Palestinian territories. Israel is a technologically advanced and economically prosperous state, while the Palestinian regions, particularly the Gaza Strip, face chronic poverty, unemployment, and dependence on international aid. According to reports from the United Nations and the World Bank, Gaza's economy has been severely damaged by the ongoing blockade, limited access to markets, and restrictions on the movement of goods and people. These conditions have created what many analysts call a “de-development” process — a state in which normal economic growth becomes impossible.

The economic imbalance has also deepened political radicalization. The lack of employment opportunities and persistent poverty in Gaza and parts of the West Bank provide fertile ground for the recruitment of young people into militant organizations. As a result, the humanitarian crisis becomes both a symptom and a driver of continued violence, feeding into a self-reinforcing loop that undermines efforts toward reconciliation.

Cultural and Religious Dimensions

The Israel–Palestine conflict is unique in that it intertwines political and religious identities in an inseparable way. Jerusalem, a city sacred to Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, stands at the center of this symbolic struggle. For many Israelis, it represents the historical and spiritual heart of the Jewish nation; for Palestinians, it embodies both religious devotion and national aspiration. Disputes over access to and sovereignty of holy sites such as the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Western Wall continue to trigger waves of unrest. The religious symbolism attached to these sites transforms local incidents into global flashpoints, mobilizing supporters and activists worldwide.

Beyond religion, the cultural narratives of both societies contribute to the perpetuation of conflict. In Israeli collective memory, survival and defense are central themes, while in Palestinian consciousness, resistance and displacement define the national identity. These collective memories are reinforced through education, media, and political discourse, making mutual understanding and compromise increasingly difficult.

Psychological Barriers and Generational Trauma

Decades of war, occupation, and displacement have produced profound psychological scars on both sides. Studies conducted by humanitarian organizations reveal widespread post-traumatic stress, anxiety, and intergenerational fear among both Israeli and Palestinian populations. Such trauma has created an entrenched culture of mistrust, where each side perceives the other as a permanent threat. This fear-driven perception often overrides rational political calculation, making even small compromises appear as existential risks.

The absence of trust also weakens the effectiveness of peace initiatives. Agreements such as the Oslo Accords initially inspired optimism but failed to create lasting change partly because the populations themselves were not psychologically ready for reconciliation. Without collective

healing and acknowledgment of mutual suffering, political negotiations remain fragile and short-lived.

External Geopolitical Interests

The Israel–Palestine conflict has long been influenced by external powers whose competing interests have often intensified rather than mitigated the crisis. The United States remains Israel’s strongest ally, providing extensive military and diplomatic support, while Iran and several non-state actors offer varying degrees of assistance to Palestinian movements, including Hamas. Arab states, meanwhile, display ambivalent behavior — publicly endorsing Palestinian statehood while engaging in covert or open cooperation with Israel in the fields of security and trade.

These conflicting external agendas turn the conflict into a proxy arena for regional power struggles. The rivalry between Sunni and Shia blocs, the competition for U.S. favor, and the geopolitical importance of the Middle East all contribute to the stalemate. The result is a situation in which local actors have limited autonomy, as their strategies are often shaped or constrained by broader international alignments.

The endurance of the Israel–Palestine conflict is sustained by interrelated structural and psychological factors that transcend mere politics. Economic deprivation, cultural divisions, collective trauma, and geopolitical manipulation intertwine to form a resilient web of instability. Any effort toward lasting peace must therefore go beyond diplomatic negotiations and address these deeper layers — ensuring social justice, psychological healing, and balanced international engagement as integral components of conflict resolution.

Conclusion

The long-running Israel-Palestine conflict is emblematic of how historic grievances, identity politics, religious symbolism and global strategic interests can intertwine to produce a conflict that is exceedingly resistant to resolution. Its roots stretch beyond the immediate territorial disputes to include colonial legacies, competing national narratives and deeply held religious attachments. In the contemporary phase, the conflict continues to manifest patterns of power asymmetry, humanitarian distress, media contestation and proxy involvement by regional and global actors.

A durable and just resolution demands more than cease-fires and border adjustments. It requires acknowledging both the legitimate security concerns of states and the profound human suffering of civilians; reconciling historical injustice with present realities; rebuilding trust across deeply traumatised communities; and engaging international mediation that supports fairness and human dignity rather than perpetuating divisions. In this light, the widely discussed two-state paradigm remains the most plausible framework for a fair outcome — if it is underpinned by credible guarantees of sovereignty, accountability for violations, and meaningful socio-economic development for the Palestinian people.

Ultimately, peace will rest not in the absence of conflict but in the presence of substantive justice: a political order in which both Israelis and Palestinians feel their identity, rights and human



dignity are respected and secured. Without such a transformation — of structures, narratives and relationships — any agreement risks being yet another interlude of fragile calm rather than the foundation for lasting stability.

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