

ISRAEL AND PALESTINE DISPUTE

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RECENT REFERENCES

The Israeli army is counted among the most powerful armies in the world and it has the world's most powerful intelligence agency, Mossad. But even after this, the terrorist organization Hamas succeeded launched an offensive against Israel. Exactly 50 years and 1 day after the Yom Kippur War, this attack was carried out on the same lines, reminiscent of the age old conflict between Arab and Israel; further demonstrated by a strong Israeli counteroffensive.

Some political commentators believe that Hamas carried out these attacks to roadblock the thaw in relations between Arab countries and Israel. Another potent factor being, Western countries including America are preoccupied in the Russia-Ukraine war and are facing shortage of weapons. In a similar vein Hezbollah is also continuously carrying out attacks from Lebanon. In the current situation, amid increasing pressure being faced by Iran and China from the West, their implicit involvement in the attack is also being speculated. The situation is quickly escalating into a full scale war with PM Benjamin Netanyahu warning to "crush and destroy" the militants.

What is the dispute between Israel and Palestine? What are Hamas and Fatah? What is PLO? What are the Oslo Accords? What is the Intifada (Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip)? What is the two-state solution? In this article we will discuss all these issues.



HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

- ❖ In order to understand the territorial claims of Israel, a brief historical snapshot of the origin and evolution of the Jewish religion and community is vital:
- ❖ Hazrat Abraham is considered to be the first prophet. His religious ideas were carried forward by Moses (Prophet of Jews/Book-Torah), Jesus (Prophet of Christians/Book-Bible) and Mohammed (Prophet of Islam/Book-Quran) who gave birth to three Abrahamic sects
- ❖ About 1 thousand years before Christ, King Solomon was born, who is called Suleiman in Islam. Solomon built the first temple of the Jews in Jerusalem, where Lord Jehovah was worshipped.
- ❖ In 931 BC, there was a civil war in Israel and it was divided into two parts. After the division of Israel, it came under the control of the Babylonian Empire. The Jewish temple was demolished, after some time it was rebuilt by the Jews.
- ❖ In 332 BC, Alexander set foot on Israel and remained the ruler there till his death. In 63 BC, Israel came under the control of the Roman Empire, during this period, Jesus Christ was born on the land of Jerusalem where Al-Aqsa Mosque is located today.
- ❖ Jesus Christ was born a Jew but when he preached his religion, both the Roman rulers and the Jews were alienated. Jesus called himself the Son of God and laid the foundation of Christianity. It is alleged that the Jews provoked the Roman governor and complained about Jesus Christ, due to which he was crucified. However, Pope Benedict XVI acquitted the Jews of the charge of crucifixion of Jesus Christ and pardoned them.
- ❖ The Jews rebelled against the Roman Empire ruling Israel, and in response Roman armies overran Jerusalem. The scale of the massacre unleashed was unprecedented.
- ❖ For the next 500 years, only Christians remained enemies of the Jews, but in 570 AD, Hazrat Mohammad Sahib was born in Mecca. In 622 AD he went from Mecca to Medina, which is called 'Hijrat' in Islam. Apart from the Arab tribes, the majority population in Medina was of Jews. Here a treaty was signed with the Jews and it was decided that when Hazrat Mohammad would be attacked from Mecca, Muslims and Jews would fight them together. However, later lack of mutual trust gave rise to deception and from here the foundation of distrust and enmity between Jews and Islam was laid, which continues even today.
- ❖ During the reign of Caliph Omar, Muslims and Jews conquered Spain in the seventh century. By the year 1271, the Christians of Europe started a religious war (Crusades) to snatch the holy land of Jerusalem, where Jesus was born (according to Christians, the Crucifixion, Resurrection and the Last Supper took place in Jerusalem) from the Muslims and Jews. Muslims and Jews had to leave Spain and spread to different parts of the world or returned to Israel in thousands and started establishing settlements.
- ❖ The time between the First World War and the Second World War proved to be the darkest chapter in Jewish history. About 6 million Jews were killed in gas chambers by Hitler, during which Jews from many parts of Europe including Germany, reached America and Israel. Under the leadership of the United Nations, it was decided that now the Jews should be given their sovereign country and thus that land was divided in the year 1948, they still consider Jerusalem as their holiest place, it is here that the Temple Mount and Al-Aqsa Mosque is also located.

WHAT IS THE ROOT CAUSE OF THE CONFLICT?

- ❖ This issue concerns the Holy Land, which is claimed by the Jews. The Palestinian people are demanding 'self-determination'. This is a 1000-year-old issue, with its roots in the First World War, in which the Ottoman Empire was defeated by Britain and its allies. Turkey (now Türkiye) was fragmented and the territories of the Ottoman Empire were divided between Britain, France and other allies.



- ❖ Under the Sykes-Picot secret agreement of 1916, Lebanon and Syrian areas were given to France and Palestine and Iraq were given to the British. This was the beginning of a problem that would lead to a 100 year long conflict that remains a festering sore in West Asia to this day.
- ❖ About a year after this mutual secret agreement, in November 1917, the famous 'Balfour Declaration' was issued by Britain, which talked about the commitment of the British government to settle the Jewish people in Palestine. This development would go on to shake West Asian politics. It did not speak to any of the local residents other than to talk about the civil and religious rights of non-Jewish people and did not speak to the people who had lived in Palestine for thousands of years.
- ❖ Palestine had been part of the then Ottoman Empire for almost 400 years. Jews arrived here on a large scale during the 1920s and 1930s.
- ❖ The atrocities committed by the Germans on the Jews resulted in the massacre of millions. The idea of the 'Zionist Homeland' movement was initiated by the Jews in the year 1897, which later resulted in the formation of the World Zionist Organization to popularize the Jewish Homeland Movement in Palestine. The first intifada occurred in 1936 as a result of land being taken away from the Palestinians. The word intifada means an extremist type of rebellion.
- ❖ In the year 1937, PEEL COMMISSION was appointed, which advocated for the partition of Palestine into two states/nations, which was completely rejected by the Palestinians and this rebellion was suppressed by the British in the year 1939. In the year 1947, Britain raised the issue in the UNO, which voted to partition Palestine into 2 countries, with Jerusalem becoming an international city. Israel accepted this and declared its independence in the year 1948.
- ❖ As a result, neighbouring Arab countries together declared war against Israel. Palestinians protested against the announcement of the creation of the state of Israel and declared war. Thousands of Palestinians were exiled in this war, called Al-Nakba or the Catastrophe. By the time a ceasefire was reached the following year, Israel held most of the territory.
- ❖ Jerusalem was divided between Israeli forces in the west and Jordanian forces in the east because a peace agreement was never reached, with each side blaming the other, leading to further wars and clashes in the decades that followed. Israel was victorious and approximately 7 million Palestinians were displaced, resulting in a refugee crisis, settling in various Arab and even Israeli border camps. As a result, in 1964, Palestine Liberation Organization was formed to separate Palestine from Israel.

BALFOUR DECLARATION

- ❖ In 1917, during the First World War, when the Ottoman Empire was on the verge of defeat, Britain's Foreign Minister Sir Arthur Balfour issued a declaration. In this declaration it was indicated that Britain would give the Jews their holy land Palestine and get them resettled there.
- ❖ On the other hand, Britain secretly signed an agreement with France and Russia (Sykes Picot Agreement). Under the provisions of which, the Middle East was notionally partitioned among the major powers.
- ❖ Syria and Jordan were given to France. Some part of Türkiye went to Russia. While Palestine was placed under the British mandate despite the agreement made with the Jews.

ARAB ISRAELI WAR 1948-49

After this decision of the UN, the neighbouring countries of the newly formed Israel (Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Jordan) attacked it. In this war, Israel defended itself and defeated all these countries. After this battle, Jordan gained control of the entire West Bank of Palestine. Whereas Gaza Strip remained with Palestine. Israel had captured fifty percent of Palestine in the war.

ARAB-ISRAELI WAR 1967

- ❖ Another Arab-Israeli war began in 1967. Egypt, Jordan and Syria attacked Israel and Israel won by defeating the Arab powers together in just 6 days. After the war, Israel annexed the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip from Jordan, the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt and the Golan Heights from Syria.
- ❖ According to the UNO Charter, Israel was asked to return the occupied territories but Israel refused to do so, after which another Arab-Israeli war took place in the year 1973, also known as 'Yom Kippur War'. Subsequently, a series of peace agreements were negotiated subsequently:

(A) CAMP DAVID AGREEMENT-1978

The Camp David Accords were a series of agreements signed by Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. USA's President Jimmy Carter brought the two sides together for nearly two weeks of historic secret talks at Camp David and the agreement was signed in September, 1978. This historic agreement stabilized relations between Israel and Egypt. Both Egypt and Israel agreed to the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied territories and Egypt became the first Arab state to recognize Israel. Israel retreated from the Sinai Peninsula.

(B) OSLO ACCORDS 1993 (TWO-NATION THEORY)

- ❖ Israel exercised complete control over Palestine. The resentment of the Palestinians gave birth to the Palestine Liberation Organisation under the leadership of Yasser Arafat. This organisation attacked Israeli embassies established abroad and even many Israeli planes were hijacked.
- ❖ Oslo Accord agreement was signed in the year 1993 to establish peace between the two countries. Under the terms of the agreement, it was decided that Palestine would accept Israel as a sovereign country. On the other hand, Israel considered the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people. The agreement also decided that the Palestinian government would democratically control the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. For this agreement, Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestine's Yasser Arafat were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.
- ❖ After being pushed out of Jordan and Lebanon in the 1970s and 1980s, the movement underwent a fundamental change, characterised by negotiation and engagement with Israel. The Arabs basically helped Fatah agree to take the diplomatic route. In the 1990s, the PLO officially abandoned armed resistance and supported UN Security Council Resolution 242, which called for the creation of a Palestinian state along the 1967 borders (West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza) with the State of Israel. Talks about the Oslo Accords, further led to the creation of the Palestinian National Authority, or Palestinian Authority, an interim self-governing body meant to lead an independent territory.

(C) TABA SUMMIT 2001:

The Israeli negotiating team presented a new map at the summit in Taba, Egypt in January 2001. The resolution excluded 'temporarily Israeli controlled' areas and the Palestinian side accepted this as a basis for further negotiations. Both sides were very positive but no agreement was signed due to elections in Israel and high-level talks were postponed with Ariel Sharon becoming the new Prime Minister.

(D) ABRAHAM ACCORDS 2020:

A new chapter in the history of the Middle East has begun with the signing of the Abraham Accords. It is a joint agreement signed between Israel, the United States, and the United Arab Emirates on August 2020. It also mentions the agreement to normalize relations between Israel, Bahrain and UAE. These developments

prompted Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates to reevaluate America's commitment and priorities towards the Middle East and to seek peace with Israel, the region's dominant military power. With this, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain recognized Israel, becoming the third and fourth Arab nations to do so after Egypt and Jordan.

HAMAS AND FATAH

Both Hamas and Fatah are amongst the two most prominent parties in Palestinian politics. The dispute between the two began when Hamas defeated Fatah in parliamentary elections in 2007. The two later signed an agreement and started working together in 2017, ending their decade-old rift.

Objective:

- ❖ **HAMAS** – does not recognize Israel, but accepts a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders. (came into existence in 1987 with the aim of liberating Palestine through Islamic Jihad)
- ❖ **FATAH** – Recognizes Israel, wants to create a state on 1967 borders.

Hamas and Fatah rule the occupied Palestinian territories of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, respectively. Both groups work towards the common goal of creating a Palestinian state in 1967 on the territories consisting of East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

CONCLUSION

- ❖ The Israel-Palestine issue is not merely a modern problem, is deeply rooted in Middle Eastern politics dating back to the 20th century. Similarly this is not just an ancient religious battle between Abrahamic faiths, where all three religions claim Jerusalem as a holy city. The conflict is modern, involving nationalism, colonialism and ethnic violence.
- ❖ The two-state solution that was negotiated has become problematic due to high migration. This requires a truly 21st century national solution, which also requires a strong political will.
- ❖ India supports both the countries, hence can play a reconciliatory role between the two. But it rejects terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Hence by condemning the terrorist attacks on Israel, India has expressed its commitment to stand with Israel.

PRELIMINARY EXAM QUESTION

Question - Which of the following statements is true?

- (a) The United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine was adopted in November 1948.
- (b) Balfour Declaration was issued in 1917.
- (c) The Abraham Accords were adopted between Israel, the United States, and the United Arab Emirates in January 2021.
- (d) The summit was held in 2001 in Taba city of Lebanon.

Ans- (b)

Question - Which of the following statements is false?

- (a) Oslo agreement was signed in the year 1993.
- (b) Yom Kippur War took place in the year 1973.
- (c) The year 1978 Camp David Agreement was reached.
- (d) Peel Commission was appointed in the year 1938.

Ans- (d)

MAINS EXAM QUESTIONS

Question- What are the solutions to the permanent problem between Israel and Palestine? Analyze.

Question- What impact does the Israel-Palestine conflict have on India? Discuss

Question- What is the context of America and the West in the Israel-Palestine conflict? Analyze.

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