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**THE UN RESOLUTIONS FOR THE PALESTINIAN
-ISRAELI CONFLICTS AND THE TWO-STATE
SOLUTION AS A CASE STUDY**

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Master's Thesis

Supervisor

Asst. Prof. Dr. Mehmet Turan ÇAĞLAR

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DEDICATION

First and foremost, all praise is due to Allah for guidance to accomplish this work. His presence has given me the strength to overcome obstacles and challenges, and I am genuinely grateful for the blessings He has showered upon me.

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved country, the State of Palestine, a land that has faced immense suffering yet remains strong and resilient, with a long history of struggle and hope at its heart. Every page of this work carries the weight of my ancestors' dreams, echoes of laughter from my childhood, and tears for a country that has endured so many tribulations. This dedication is for every mother who lost her child, for every child raised in fear, and for every soul that longs for peace and justice. I hope this achievement contributes to a brighter future for the people of Palestine.

I dedicate this thesis to my loving family, who have always stood by my side with their endless love and support, which have become the very foundation of my journey. Your sacrifices and commitment to my education have become the driving force behind my endeavors toward perfection and the fulfillment of my dreams. To my dearest Dad (Mazen Abdalaziz), to my Mom (Lina Abdalaziz), and to my brothers (Nader, Mohammed, Alaa, Aaed, Khaled). Thank you for believing in me all along, and your constant encouragement has given me the strength to overcome difficult times.

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved aunt (Mona Abdalaziz), whose memory continues to inspire me every day; though she is no longer with us, her love has left a lasting impact on my life.

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ABSTRACT

THE UN RESOLUTIONS FOR THE PALESTINIAN -ISRAELI CONFLICTS AND THE TWO-STATE SOLUTION AS A CASE STUDY

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This research aims to deal with UN resolutions and recommendations regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict within the framework of a two-state resolution through the lens of neorealism, which focuses on state power, security, and the anarchic international system and provides a framework to analyze the motivation, constraints, and consequences of United Nations (UN) efforts pertaining to the conflict. The research analysis includes the critical United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions, such as Resolution 242 (1967) and Resolution 338 (1973), and the subsequent structures, such as the Oslo Accords, all of which have been evaluated through neorealist assumptions with regard to primary emphasis placed on state sovereignty, balance of power, and the involvement of major powers in determining outcomes. The research investigates UN diplomacy along with the strategic interests of Israel, Palestinian authorities, and global powers, and evaluates the viability of a two-state solution from a neorealist perspective. The study argues that the continued power asymmetries, competing national interests, and the absence of enforceable mechanisms have undermined the UN's capacity to implement a sustainable resolution. These findings clarify the limits of multilateral diplomacy that drives conflict resolution, echoing the wider challenges that face the peace process within the Palestinian-Israeli context.

Keywords: UN Resolution, Neo-realism, Two-state Solution, Palestinian-Israeli Conflict, State- Power, International Anarchy, Balance of Power.



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ABBREVIATIONS

ACLED	:	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project
AI	:	Amnesty International
CPJ	:	Committee to Protect Journalists
EU	:	European Union
ICJ	:	International Court of Justice
IDF	:	Israel Defense Forces
IMF	:	International Monetary Fund
IR	:	International Relations
IRGC	:	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
ISW	:	Institute for the Study of War
NATO	:	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGOs	:	Non-Governmental Organizations
NRC	:	Norwegian Refugee Council
PA	:	Palestinian Authority
PCPSR	:	Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research
PFLP	:	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PIJ	:	Palestinian Islamic Jihad
PLO	:	Palestine Liberation Organization
PM	:	Prime Minister
PNA	:	Palestinian National Authority
UAE	:	United Arab Emirates
UK	:	United Kingdom

UN	:	United Nations
UNCCP	:	United Nations Commission for Conventional Programs
UNEF	:	United Nations Emergency Force
UNGA	:	United Nations General Assembly
UNOCHA	:	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNOHCHR	:	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNRWA	:	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSC	:	United Nations Security Council
UNSCOP	:	United Nations Special Committee on Palestine
US	:	United States of America
WB	:	World Bank

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide an in-depth overview, beginning with the study's background to establish its context and importance. It will clearly state the main objective, emphasizing the goals and purposes that drive the research. It will also outline the research questions and hypotheses that the researcher will address. The methodology will outline the approach, techniques, and processes used to conduct the study. The literature review will then demonstrate how and what relates to the current research while also highlighting existing gaps. Finally, the structure of the entire thesis is presented, providing a roadmap to guide the reader through the subsequent chapters and related sections of the study.

1.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict runs deep, and its roots stretch over a century. Fundamentally, the friction is rooted in the Palestinian people's national desire for statehood and their rightful self-determination, and the Israeli nationhood's existential and historical fears over the land (Pappe, 2006). As both sides look to affirm their identities and claim their rights, numerous solutions have been put forward to quell the long-simmering hostilities. The first peace resolution was United Nations (UN) Resolution 181 (II), with the Assembly recommending the 'partition of Palestine' into independent Arab and Jewish states and the establishment of a special international regime for the city of Jerusalem (UNGA, 181, 1947). The Assembly set up the United Nations Commission for Conventional Programs (UNCCP) by Resolution 194 (III) of 1948 to help both sides in accomplishing a final settlement and reaffirming the rights of displaced Palestinian people to return and compensation following the 1948 war (UNGA 194, 1948). However, it was a failure due to a number of interlinked factors, which demonstrate the shortcomings of the UN for conflict determination (Fischbach, 2003). The impotence of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions and geopolitics also seriously weakened the UN (Morris, 2001). The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process is a sporadic talk organized by different stakeholders and an attempt to present a peace proposal to settle the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Quandt, 2005). At the moment, the proposed solution for this conflict is the two-state solution, which envisions an independent State of Palestine alongside Israel (Gelvin, 2014).

The UN in the chronic Palestinian-Israeli conflict plays a crucial role, as it provides humanitarian assistance and serves as an important platform for international diplomacy and mediation, conflict resolution, monitoring, reporting, and emergency services. However, the UN has faced many obstacles in its mission, as it has adopted and issued many resolutions that, if implemented on the ground, would end the conflict. Even its resolutions that express support for a two-state settlement, which are found throughout the organization's resolutions, are now almost impossible to implement because the UN resolutions are too restrictive, as in the case of settlements, this is an issue with hundreds of UN resolutions against it repeated over time (UN, 2017; Erakat, 2020). The most significant resolution calling for an end to Israeli settlement expansion is UNSC Resolution 2334, which was adopted on December 23, 2016 (UNSC, 2334, 2016).

1.2 MAIN OBJECTIVE AND IMPORTANCE

This research has an essential objective, which is to critically analyze the efficiency of UN resolutions from the view of fundamental International Relations (IR) theory, which is neorealism or structural realism. This study seeks to explain how these theoretical frameworks analyze the implications of the two-state solution by focusing on how power dynamics and the framework of IR influence the feasibility and stability of either approach in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Furthermore, this research will be specifically focused on the challenges faced by the UN in addressing the Palestinian case from the perspective of neorealism, which provides a structure for comprehending the limitations and highlighting the importance of state power and national interests in shaping international cooperation. The research aspires to discover the reasons for the failure of the UN's attempts at Palestine and the factors that prevented it from fully implementing its first UNSC Resolution 181 of 1947, especially in recognition of the state of Palestine. This case study serves as a basis to explore broader questions about the measurement of success and failure of the two-state solution project more broadly from a neorealist perspective. By using document analysis, this thesis will explore how the core principles of IR could potentially be utilized to make the UN Resolutions more efficacious and thereby help in offering a potential resolution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is still currently ongoing.

This research is intended to provide a systematic assessment of the potential solutions that are presently being considered. The intent is to outline not just to remain viable and

accessible, but also areas that may present obstacles to successful implementation. Through these suggested solutions, the research aims to provide a good understanding of the tragedy of conflict. This information will give insights into the roadblocks that each side has and bring some clarity to the situation. The findings will also nurture better-informed debate about the possible pathways to peace, one that promotes talk where concrete, effective, and actionable steps are to the fore of discussion.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THESIS ARGUMENT

This research aims, as mentioned earlier, to critically analyze the two-state solution, along with the efficiency and challenges faced by the UN, by using the neorealist approach. By using a neorealism lens to analyze the UN's role in advocating for the two-state solution and highlighting the importance of power dynamics and international cooperation in addressing the conflict.

1.3.1 Main Research Question

How does the neorealist perspective in International Relations analyze the two-state solution for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict under the structural constraints?

1.3.2 Research Sub-Questions

- a. What role have UN resolutions played in promoting or hindering the two-state solution as a viable framework for peace?
- b. What are the obstacles facing the two-state solution, according to the neorealist perspective?
- c. How did the ineffectiveness of the UN increase the intensity of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict
- d. How do the perspectives of different stakeholders (Israeli government, Palestinian authorities, international society) influence the negotiation process?

1.3.3 Thesis Argument

Neorealism provides a practical examination of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It provides viable and accessible alternative solutions within the framework of the pragmatic approach it proposes in its plan for the balance of power or territorial compromise (a division of

territory). Neorealists focus on solutions that are based on the current power structure and the security needs of both sides (Israeli and Palestinian). As such, the UN should integrate more realistic solutions to efficiently resolve complex conflicts by striving for stability and practical solutions rather than seeking idealistic solutions that may be unachievable.

1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review of this research focused mainly on the neorealist approach to UN resolutions in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the two-state solution. The historical roots of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, to which Morris (2001) refers, are to be found deep in the history of Israeli-Palestinian relations, into the late 19th century, when both the Arab and the Jewish national movements were emerging. Morris also explains the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, which the Palestinians refer to as the Nakba or ‘catastrophe’, as a very important moment, without which the essential demographic and territorial changes and the lasting tensions would not have occurred. He also describes the influences of international actors and the peace processes. As Quandt (2005) notes, numerous attempts regarding mediation to resolve this conflict have been made, such as the 1993 Oslo Accords. However, such attempts have never been extremely successful, mainly because the parties involved do not trust each other and have very divergent objectives. In addition, Quandt paints the engagement of powerful actors like the United States (US) as having determined the conflict dynamics while also contributing to biased perceptions of it.

This literature is also contextualized by the field placement of the UN resolutions about the conflict over the past seven decades, from the first United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 181, which was passed during the Palestinian-Israeli war on November 29, 1947 (UNGA, 1947), to the current resolutions, particularly Resolution 2334, which were passed on December 23, 2016 (UNSC, 2016).

This resolution condemns Israel for building settlements and upholds that such settlements have absolutely no legal validity under international law. It also demands a halt to all Israeli attempts, so far proving the limits of diplomatic pressure from the UN. The continuing conflict exposes the lack of implementation of the UN resolutions in the area and the challenges that face the UN in reaching a lasting solution, and exemplifies the ineffectiveness of UN resolutions. The ongoing violence and disputes acknowledge and

legitimize this theory, while several scholars propound that it is the two-state solution that the UN has adopted, with a lot of resolutions supporting this solution that seems to be the best way towards peace. For instance, Smith (2018) states that international consensus, as reflected in several UN resolutions, has been made for the establishment of a Palestinian state on the borders before 1967, also the view of Dershowitz (2005), who further weighs that the two-state framework could provide the foundation for lasting peace by resolving fundamental issues like borders, security, and the status of Jerusalem. However, a lot of challenges and criticisms face this approach. Critics like Khalidi (2020) argue that the two-state solution becomes progressively impossible because of the disparities of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, making it difficult to achieve the hopes of a contiguous Palestinian state.

This literature strongly suggests the need for neorealism and pragmatism in UN resolutions while balancing the ambitious mandates with the realities on the ground. The neorealists argue that the UNGA's support for the two-state solution presents a more optimistic view, but they also contend that it cannot be achieved due to the complexities of power dynamics and competing national interests (Buzan & Waeber, 2003; Hinnebusch, 2015). They believe that while international support is crucial, the reality on the ground, including entrenched positions and lack of trust between parties, made it hard to achieve the suggested solution (Waltz, 1979).

The historical context of UN resolutions significantly reflects the obstacles to implementation, especially regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For decades, a series of resolutions have been passed, including UNSC Resolution 242 in 1967 and Resolution 2334 in 2016, which articulates the need for a two-state solution and the cessation of settlement activities (UNSC, 22 November 1967; UNSC, 23 December 2016). However, the historical context, marked by ongoing violence, political divisions, and competing narratives, complicates the enforcement of these resolutions (Hinnebusch, 2015)

The varying interests of powerful states often lead to the selective implementation of UN resolutions. For instance, while the UN may call for the cessation of settlements, the actual political will to enforce such resolutions is often lacking, as seen in the continued expansion of Israeli settlements despite international condemnation (Buzan & Waeber, 2003). This illustrates a broader trend where historical grievances and power dynamics overshadow the

resolutions' intended goals, leading to skepticism about the UN's effectiveness in conflict resolution (Waltz, 1979).

1.5 METHODOLOGY AND TECHNIQUES

Qualitative research methodologies are essential in the social scientific field, as they illuminate the complexities of social relationships and the dynamics within institutions (Creswell, 2014). They can be used to explore several areas of human behaviour for the development of organizations, providing insights that quantitative methods may overlook (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Document analysis is particularly notable among these methods due to its capacity to offer comprehensive insights into historical and contemporary phenomena within the field of IR especially in UN resolutions, policy statements, and treaties, offering insights into their implications and the context in which they were created (Bowen, 2009, pp. 27-40). This approach entails a methodical analysis of written materials such as reports, letters, policy documents, and media articles that encompass information about the phenomena under investigation. Document analysis is an essential tool for scholars who aim to improve their comprehension of the nuances of the positions of various stakeholders in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Prior, 2003)

The document analysis method used in the social sciences, generally, and applied specifically to the area of IR and UN resolutions studies, mainly involves a set of structured steps. Most of these steps are necessary and must be carried out to ensure the analysis is accurate and trustworthy. The specific documents for this case study include UNSC resolutions, reports from the UN Secretary-General on the situation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the two-state solution, as well as internal mission reports from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). These documents should also be complemented with the record of communication among the involved parties, mainly from the Israeli state, the Palestinian Authority (PA), and the UN. One needs to look at the circumstances in which these papers were prepared, the issue of their authenticity, and the underlying political, social, and historical factors that influenced their creation and their impact on the effectiveness of the UN's role in the conflict and the feasibility of the two-state solution. Moreover, the documents are categorized by theme:

‘political context,’ ‘effectiveness and implementation,’ ‘humanitarian concerns,’ and ‘legal aspects’. These are important themes as they analyze the complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In addition, the synthesis of the data from those documents illustrates how the theory of IR helps to understand the purposes and workings of the UN resolutions. This also underlines the difficulties of implementing UN resolutions and the challenges faced by the proposed two-state solution. Similarly, through this synthesis, it will be possible to provide clear definitions for the potential patterns that emerged during the analysis, like the consequences of the unimplemented UN resolution.

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

While document analysis is both deep and informative, it poses some challenges. First, the availability of documents is often limited because of issues of confidentiality, especially in the case of confidential diplomatic communications or internal reports of international bodies. Secondly, the interpretations of the documents by the researchers themselves are subjective and may lead to biases in the analysis. Thirdly, the ongoing conflict makes new developments that can quickly change the relevance or interpretation of existing documents. However, document analysis is considered a powerful tool within social science research, especially in the field of IR and UN resolutions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. One can have a fine understanding of the complex dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the challenges faced by the UN in the implementation of its resolutions. In light of the confidentiality limitations, the researcher must seek out various types of documents accessible in different sources. This includes various types of public documents, such as UN resolutions, non-governmental organizations’ (NGOs) reports, and academic publications. To prevent issues of subjectivity and bias in the interpretation of documents, the researcher could apply triangulation, which involves cross-referencing document analysis findings through other research methods which help the researcher to gain significant insights by synthesizing diverse understandings from various sources. The conflict is a constantly changing entity. On this basis, it is therefore imperative that the researcher keep in touch with all such developments, including those that may affect the existing documents.

1.7 ORDER OF THE STUDY

The research will use the neorealism approach concerning the UN resolutions, and in the case study, the thesis questions are addressed through the chapters as follows:

Chapter one (Introduction) will discuss the background information, main objective and importance of the study, research questions and thesis argument, literature review, methodology and techniques, limitations of the study, and order of study. The second chapter (Theoretical Framework) will address the neorealist approach to the UN resolutions in conflict and the solution, while emphasizing the importance of state power and the anarchic structure of the international system.

Chapter three (Historical Background of UN Resolution in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict) will detail the UN Resolution in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through its history and how it has evolved to what it is currently. This chapter will also analyze significant UN resolutions while outlining the obstacles facing the implementation of primary resolutions and their impacts. Chapter four (Case Study: Two-State Solution) is an essential part of the research, which gives background information on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the history of occupation of Palestine, the birth of the state of Israel, the role of the UN, the status quo, the proposed two-state solution, and how its application failed and became difficult to achieve.

Therefore, Chapter five (Analysis and Discussion) will discuss the role of external actors. This chapter will further synthesize the findings and analyze how the theoretical framework has impacted the implementation of the UN resolution. The last chapter is the Conclusion, which will summarize the findings, discuss the contribution of the findings to the field, provide policy recommendations, and draw areas for future research.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter will delve into the theoretical framework for UN resolutions concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from the neorealist approach, giving the view of how power dynamics and state interests shape the implementation and effectiveness of these resolutions. It will examine the role of major powers in influencing the conflict and highlight the community's enforcement deficiencies in abiding by UN mandates. Additionally, the chapter will explore how the structure of world politics, which is anarchic in nature, thereby affects both Israel and Palestine to adhere to resolutions. Moreover, it analyzes the realist perspective of the international organization in detail.

In IR, the choice of theory can greatly influence the understanding of global dynamics. Different theories, such as constructivism, realism, and liberalism, provide distinct frameworks for analysing international phenomena, emphasizing practical mechanisms and processes over abstract theories. This pragmatic orientation allows researchers and policymakers to focus their analyses on specific issues and challenges.

The liberal considers that cooperation, institutions, and shared interests determine international relations, in which the UN would be seen as an organization responsible for facilitating multilateral diplomacy, dialogue, and promoting peace through international law and norms, with resolutions that represent collective attempts to establish a framework for coexistence, whereby the two-state solution is a negotiated outcome supported by international institutions and would suggest that mutual economic interests, common democratic values, and trust-building measures could propel the two parties closer to peace (Russett & Oneal, 2001). While constructivism focuses on ideas, identities, and norms to explain state behavior, it would analyze how Palestinian and Israeli identities are constructed on the basis of competing historical narratives, religion, and nationalism in such a way that their positions tend to be mutually exclusive claims over the same land (Wendt, 1999).

This research will utilize neorealism theory as it provides a better explanation of the power struggles and state-centric nature of the conflict, and it highlights state sovereignty, security dilemmas, and the pursuit of national interests, which align with the zero-sum nature of the conflict, where both sides prioritize territorial control and security above cooperation, while liberalism overvalues the possibility of cooperation, which is insufficient to overcome the

mistrust between both parties and the unequal distribution of power, and constructivism's focus is on norms and identities that are secondary to actual security and territorial concerns in the conflict.

Realists argue that a continuous struggle for dominance and self-interest among states defines world politics, and the political system is anarchic in nature, which means that there is no authority to impose rules and norms that control the interaction between states. This leads states to be unable to trust and to be certain of other states, which creates a security dilemma that leads states to seek to gain more power. As the classical realist Hans Morgenthau argues, "The struggle for power is universal in time and space" (Morgenthau, 1948, p. 29). Moreover, states will engage in competitive actions to increase their own security and safeguard their national interests to ensure their survival, which could lead to disputes and war and create a competitive international system. Additionally, Morgenthau argues, "The lust for power is an inescapable part of human nature" (Morgenthau, 1948, p. 30), which means the consideration of interest and power is based on human nature, and this reflects state behavior.

The significance of national interest, which is typically defined in terms of power and security, is another point of emphasis regarding realism. States are viewed as rational entities that base their actions on their national interest, frequently giving their military power and strategic alliances the highest importance in order to improve security. In his discussion of how states function within the structure of the international system, neorealism's important figure Kenneth Waltz makes the claim that "the security of one state is the concern of all states" (Waltz, 1979, p. 112). A pragmatic approach to foreign policy results from this emphasis on the national interest, where a desire for power often takes precedence over moral considerations.

2.1 NEOREALISM

During the late 1970s, the neorealism or structural realism approach in IR emerged, which was the primary challenge to classical realism. It is concerned with the critical study of the liberal approach. Neorealism considers that there is a constrained potential for cooperation between states due to the importance of power for each state (Waltz, 1979). Kenneth Waltz evolved the neorealism theory in his book "Theory of International Politics" in 1979, with

significant improvements and analysis. He prioritizes the structural analysis of the international system, rather than focusing on the individual characteristics of states, and contends that the nature of this structure is characterized by the anarchic nature of the system's units and by the distribution of capabilities as an autonomous variable, which shapes the states' behavior. This conveyance is measured by the variety of great powers in the international system with any noteworthy alteration over time (Waltz, 1979).

The anarchic nature of the international structure implies the absence of a higher authority, and each paramount state is formally equal within the system and competes with other states. States, at least, need to survive and, at that point, achieve other goals, so states develop military capabilities to defend against any foreign threats. Besides, the dissemination of capabilities limits cooperation with states due to the fear of relative gains made by other states (Waltz, 1979). For neorealists, the competition between states leads them to guarantee their security and survival through the best means possible. Due to the anarchic nature of the international structure and the failure of states to cooperate with other states or organizations, states have to lock into a 'self-help' system, which is a self-directed enhancement of oneself financially and physically (Waltz, 1979).

In a self-help system, states put their security and interests first when threatened, which frequently results in militarization and arms races. To address perceived threats from competing states, for example, states may strengthen their military capabilities or establish alliances; this behavior stems from their realization that they cannot rely on others to keep them safe because allies might not always be trustworthy during emergencies. According to Waltz, "In an anarchic world, states must be prepared to defend themselves against others, as no one else will do it for them." (Waltz, 1979, p. 112). Furthermore, states frequently perceive other states' behaviors as possible and potential dangers due to the absence of a regulating authority, creating a security dilemma. This happens when a state's attempts to improve its security unintentionally put another state in danger, causing it to react in a like. Tensions can rise as a result of the military buildup and cycle of suspicion, increasing the possibility of conflict. As stated by Jervis, "The security dilemma is a situation in which actions taken by a state to increase its own security leads other states to respond with similar measures, creating increased tensions that can lead to conflict." (1978, p. 167). These self-help practices have a significant effect on decision-making during crises, as leaders might

take more forceful positions, put national security above diplomatic solutions, and take preventative measures. Because anarchic systems are inherently unclear, states may misread one another's intentions, which can lead to rapid escalations of conflict (Waltz, 1979, p. 105-112).

Kenneth Waltz underscores the limitations that the international system places on the behavior of states. He posits that "the security of one state is the concern of all states," which underscores the interdependence of state security within an anarchic framework (Waltz, 1979, pp. 112). This viewpoint fosters a pragmatic foreign policy approach grounded more in *realpolitik* than in idealistic principles, wherein states prioritize their national interests and power over ethical considerations. Within this context, the quest for power becomes critical as states aim to secure their survival and bolster their security. Waltz's examination indicates that, due to the competitive nature of the international landscape, states frequently make choices grounded in strategic calculations rather than moral obligations.

The desire of states to maximize their power to ensure their survival constrains other states, resulting in a 'balance of power,' which means that state security is achieved when military capabilities are equally distributed; in this way, no state will have great power over other states. The consideration of power balance influences foreign policy issues. States tend to make strategic computations about whether to develop their military capabilities or join an alliance with others, which usually ends by either bringing peace through deterrence or cranking up tensions among countries (Jervis, 1978).

The conveyance of capabilities includes three basically conceivable systems characterized by extraordinary powers in the universal framework: the unipolar system, which is one powerful state; the bipolar system, which contains two powerful states; and the multipolar system, which contains more than two extraordinary power states. For Waltz, the bipolar framework is steadier due to internal balancing (Waltz, 1979). Other realists argue that there are two other types of polarity: tripolarity and non-polarity. According to the tripolarity, the three powerful states would shape the global dynamics and interaction. The interactions between the three powerful actors in tripolarity can lead to a complicated web of alliances and rivalries as each state desires to strike a balance between the power of the others while maintaining its own influence. On the contrary, non-polarity creates an order in which a single or specific set of states does not dominate. It rather distributes power among different

actors, including states, international agencies, NGOs, and transnational corporations. This decentralization complicates the global scene, marked by cooperation, competition, and conflict among different actors. Furthermore, relations among states will be less predictable, as a non-dominant power cannot ensure stability or impose rules, which gives smaller states and non-state actors significant opportunities to assert their interests. This, in turn, allows regional powers and coalitions to challenge traditional power. (Waltz, 1979, pp. 168-170).

Neorealism dismisses the significance of cultural differences and the variety of regime types among states, asserting that the international system offers equal opportunities to all (Waltz, 1979). The nature of a state's regime has little bearing on its interactions with other states, nor does it significantly influence who shapes the state's foreign policy (Mearsheimer, 2001). Structural realists resemble states analogous to black boxes, which are viewed as fundamentally similar, differing only in their relative power, resulting in a more predictable behavior based on power balancing rather than particular political or cultural settings (Waltz, 1979).

Two sub-theories under neorealism emphasize how much power is enough for states to maintain their security and survival. First, defensive realism by Waltz claims that states aim to preserve their security and survival by avoiding unnecessary conflict, in which states will not seek to maximize their power for hegemony. They contend that an overabundance of power can cause other states to balance out, which would destabilize the system and may lead to conflict between states (Waltz, 1979). Second, Mearsheimer's offensive realism argues that every state desires to increase its power because of the anarchic nature, which compels states to use aggressive strategies to further their influence and secure their survival. States pursue more power even when they are secure due to their desire for influence and hegemony, which allows the state to shape the rules of the international system to its advantage while maintaining a favorable balance of power (Mearsheimer, 2001).

2.2 REALISM'S VIEWS ABOUT INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

International organizations are often perceived as extensions of state power rather than independent entities with substantial influence. According to neorealism, because of the anarchic international system, international organizations frequently fail to advance peace and security. The interactions of power and influence across the international system help to

determine the general behavior of powerful states towards weaker ones in international organizations. For Waltz (1979), the international system's structure favors powerful states by nature, enabling them to control organizations for their interests. Neorealists argue that international organizations are often governed by great powers that exploit them for their purposes, such as the veto power of the UNSC, which can impede collective action, and the US and other great powers shape organizations such as the UN and the World Bank (WB) to set some global policies for their strategic benefits. As Mearsheimer (1994) asserts, the great powers are concerned with maximizing their relative power vis-à-vis others, thus usually interpreting the exerting influence over the weaker states.

Neorealists highlight the important role of power politics in international organizations' effectiveness, as powerful states can always use international organizations to legitimize their foreign policies and military interventions. For instance, a state may pursue military actions under the auspices of an organization like the UN regarding the deployment of troops. This would not only lend legitimacy to such actions but also deploy the support of states, which can increasingly be critical as a justification for military actions toward domestic and international audiences (Finnemore, 2003; Mearsheimer, 2001).

Moreover, neorealism holds that the great powers have the capability to create the rules and norms under which international organizations operate to reflect their interests. The dominant state can successfully influence not only its own policies but also the behavior and expectations within the international community, thus enabling it to pursue its agendas with strength. For example, such international norms around human rights or trade can be set up in favor of stronger constituencies in the international community to achieve their economic or political ends (Ikenberry, 2001). Additionally, strong states may use international organizations as a means of influencing weaker states through coercive diplomacy to avoid threats to the current power structure, in which powerful states may use their leverage in international organizations to introduce sanctions or conditions that would obligate the weaker states to comply with their demands (Lebow, 2010). For example, if a state needs the provision of aid, the powerful states often use international organizations to channel assistance to weaker ones under some conditions where the recipient is made to modify its policies to suit the interests of the source donor, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and WB, which grant countries undergoing economic impediments financial support,

but stringent economic policies conforming to neoliberalism accompany them, so without such adjustments, access would be denied. If this aid dependency has emerged, then the weaker states have succumbed to conforming to the dictated expectations from the more powerful states, which dominate these organizations (Vreeland 2003).

Another form is establishing requirements for membership. Weaker states may be disproportionately impacted by the membership requirements of several international organizations. Organizations such as the European Union (EU) set strict standards for member states in terms of human rights, economic stability, and governance (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005). In order to become members or keep their standing in the organization, weaker states can be compelled to implement laws that fulfill these requirements.

Complying with international conventions, most international organizations established mechanisms to enforce compliance with international agreements or treaties. These mechanisms could be leveraged by the powerful states against the weaker ones to implement agreements beneficial to the former. For instance, the enforcement mechanism of the UNSC, which can impose sanctions against states that violate any of the international norms, can compel weaker states to comply. This situation creates a condition whereby weaker states tend to interest themselves in the agendas of the stronger states to evade negative consequences (Hurd, 2007). As a result, in order to obtain resources or assistance, weaker states could feel under pressure to align their interests with those of more powerful members, which makes weaker states sacrifice their autonomy to seek their own security (Nye, 2008).

Neorealists stress that dominant states' strategic objectives are frequently reflected in international organizations to minimize threats and improve member state security; for example, security alliances such as NATO, which carries two functional activities, act as deterrent power against aggressions from other outside powers and, on the other hand, boost the power of dominant states within the alliance. In these situations, these organizations turn into collective defensive systems that largely benefit their most powerful members (Mearsheimer, 1990). Since international organizations may unintentionally perpetuate the power imbalances among member nations, this dynamic calls into question their legitimacy and efficacy in advancing true collective security. The idea of collective security in international organizations, which holds that states can cooperate against an attack,

neorealists contend that this idea is faulty since states are unlikely to assist others if it puts their own security at risk. This limitation of collective security in practice is exemplified by the League of Nations' inability to stop aggression by states such as Italy and Japan in the 1930s (Jervis, 1978).

Neorealists contend that states are unlikely to give the power and authority to international organizations and stress the importance of state sovereignty, as states may oppose external demands from international organizations due to the concept of non-intervention in domestic affairs (Waltz, 1979). Thus, this resistance restricts organizations' ability to address global issues effectively.

The neorealists also argue that there is no real enforcement facility in international organizations. As a result, states would ignore any resolutions or agreements that do not align with state interests, such as cases in which states flout UN sanctions or resolutions without any serious consequences (Mearsheimer, 1994). From a neorealist perspective, international organizations usually fail to resolve a conflict properly, as the very inability to take action in times of crisis shows how such organizations as the UN are limited in their ability to counter or constrain violent conflict. In addition, the absence of a unified response and military force among member states could render all these organizations impotent in some cases that would have required an urgent response (Weiss, 1999).

Neorealists assert that states strive to achieve their immediate national goals and interests, in which they are more concerned with short-term pragmatism than long-term international collaboration (Waltz, 1979). For neorealists, states will not engage in the acceptance of the majority of the facilitation provided by the international organization they either created or supported. On the other hand, most states participate in a few agreements when they are in a position to benefit but ignore the organization when they are not (Mearsheimer, 1994). This results in varying degrees of support depending on policies and, especially, in situations of crisis.

The influence of international organizations in terms of cooperation is criticized by the realist perspective, as it emphasizes the challenges that face collective action in an anarchic international system. The realists consider the international organizations as arenas controlled by power relations, not facilitators of cooperation. There are two main branches

of neorealism, defensive realism and offensive realism, with different views on the possibilities of international organizations for stimulating cooperation.

Defensive realists like Kenneth Waltz argue that international organizations may, under special conditions, encourage cooperation among states by providing mechanisms for coordination and information sharing (Waltz, 1979). They also believe that states fundamentally seek their own security and survival and tend to maintain the existing state of affairs. International organizations, such as the UN, can facilitate the process of reducing uncertainty through transparency about arms control agreements or peacekeeping activities that help states achieve their interests of avoiding unnecessary conflict. For example, various UN resolutions, such as Resolution 242 (1967), seek to establish frameworks for peace negotiations, which, according to defensive realists, will be stabilizing if there are perceived mutual benefits for the involved states (UNSC, 1967). However, the defensive realist argues that the major obstacles to effective cooperation are the absence of trust among states and high politics. In this perspective, states may fear that other states will not comply fully with agreements, hence undermining their trust, as in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where both parties have accused each other of infringing on the resolutions of the UN. High politics, especially national security and sovereignty, drown out all cooperative, collective action efforts, as states usually prefer survival to collective goals. Thus, the veto power of the UNSC shows that the great powers put their strategic considerations over the UN's ability to enforce violations of its own resolutions, like Resolution 2334 (2016) on Israeli settlements (UNSC, 2016). Thus, defensive realists discuss international organizations as having utility but being constrained by the self-interested behavior of states and a lack of enforcement because of the anarchic system (Glaser, 1994).

On the other hand, according to offensive realists like John Mearsheimer, cooperation between states under any condition is almost impossible because states are constantly searching for ways to increase their power in an anarchic system (Mearsheimer 2001). Offensive realists have a view that states intend to maximize their powers and achieve hegemony later. In this regard, they consider international organizations as tools for the interests of superior states rather than organizations that help promote common interests. Moreover, states' doubts about constancy in their gains and concerns over relative gain, wherein a state must be more certain that it is gaining power vis-à-vis others rather than

absolute gain for all, prevent cooperation. For instance, in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, offensive realists would argue that the US, being a powerful state, uses its influence in the UN to shape resolutions in favor of its ally Israel rather than promote fair cooperation between Israel and Palestine (Mearsheimer, 1994). The failure of UN resolutions to constrain Israeli expansion of settlements, despite international outcry, elucidates how powerful states save their allies from organizational pressure and frustrate cooperation.

According to offensive realism, international organizations cannot use coercion to enforce their agreements, as states will obey rules only when it is at their immediate convenience. This selective compliance is seen in UN sanctions, whereby states, when it serves their strategic goals, will ignore restrictions placed upon them (Hurd, 2007). For offensive realists, international organizations are epiphenomenal, merely reflective of power distributions rather than shapers of such distributions, in which cooperation within the international institutions is nothing more than a passing phase unless it produces a direct increase in a state's relative power.

In conclusion, neorealists posit that with the absence of a central authority in world politics, states will ensure their security and prefer national interest on some occasions to the diminution of the effectiveness of international organizations like the UN. Anarchy constitutes the self-help system and, hence, makes states behave competitively, yielding security dilemmas and narrow cooperation. This perspective gives attention to how the great powers have furthered their strategic objectives through the veto power at the UNSC, often to the detriment of weaker states or even to collective security itself.

2.3 REALISM'S VIEWS ABOUT INTERNATIONAL LAW

International law provides a strong and multifaceted framework for resolving crises and conflicts peacefully, thereby preventing further escalation and global instability. Article 33 of the Charter provides a number of methods (UN Charter, 1945), which begin with negotiation, whereby conflicting parties themselves, through diplomatic discussions, aim at the resolution of a dispute, accruing to this degree of flexibility on the parties' willingness to compromise and work out a solution (Butcher, 2020). It includes mediation that can be suggested by a third party, such as representatives from the UN, states, or international organizations, who work to facilitate communication and de-escalate the conflict

(Bercovitch & Jackson, 2009). In the conciliation process, a commission investigates the dispute, clarifies the issues, and proposes a non-binding solution for the parties (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2009). While the arbitration process provides a legally binding resolution, the parties agree to submit the issue to a tribunal that renders final decisions based on agreed-upon rules, which must be accepted by all parties in advance (Butler, 2009). The judicial settlement process, which is through bodies like the International Court of Justice (ICJ), awards authoritative judgments that are binding on states based on international law. However, its effectiveness largely depends on the state's compliance (Butler, 2009).

Realists believe in state sovereignty and security and see international law as a tool used by powerful states to further their own interests rather than a binding framework that effectively constrains state behavior because states comply with legal norms only when they benefit their strategic or security objectives and resist those laws that constrain their behavior (Morgenthau, 1948; Butler, 2009). They view international law as a weak constraint because competing states strive to maximize their power and security in an anarchic system, and it lack of centralized authority for enforcing international law leads to voluntary compliance based on the power or willingness of states as they could resort to international law in an opportunistic manner to justify their undertakings or to lend a veneer of legitimacy to them (Butcher, 2020; Bercovitch & Jackson, 2009).

2.4 REALISM'S VIEWS ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflict resolution is the processes and strategies that are involved when parties are in discord or conflict, which can be reduced through a mutually acceptable outcome that is agreed upon to prohibit the escalation of conflict, re-establish stability, or ideally build enduring peace by resolving the root causes of a conflict such as territorial disputes, competition for resources, or ideological differences (Butcher, 2020). It comprises the negotiation between conflicting parties themselves to mediation by a third party, and these processes rest upon international law, diplomacy, and normative frameworks for the de-escalation of tension, dispute resolution, or transforming conflict into cooperation (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2009; Butler, 2009; UN, 1945).

According to Butcher (2020), conflict resolution is a proactive approach in dispute management through formal processes to bring a lasting peace (Butcher, 2020). Conflict

resolution involves third parties who facilitate communication, reduce mistrust, and provide expertise or resources that help parties reach agreements (Butcher, 2020). Their involvement will be set in once direct negotiations have failed between parties due to mutual hostility, power imbalances, or strongly entrenched positions (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2009). Third parties play different roles depending on the conflict-resolving method, such as mediation, where a neutral third party, such as a UN representative, a state, or an international organization, facilitates dialogue, proposes solutions, and assists the parties in finding common ground without imposing a legally binding decision (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2009; United Nations, 1945). The mediators shuttle between the parties, clarifying issues and suggesting compromises, but the entire process depends upon the willingness of the parties to negotiate (Butler, 2009).

According to realism, the resolution of conflicts is skepticism, and it often fails due to the dominance of power politics (Morgenthau, 1948). Additionally, states prioritize their own security and national interests over cooperative efforts to resolve conflicts, as conflict resolution processes, including negotiation and mediation, succeed when they serve the strategic objectives of powerful states (Butler, 2009). Moreover, realists are suspicious about interventions by third parties, considering them powerless against state sovereignty and power imbalances, especially since the third parties cannot impose any agreements, most of their activities being symbolic or limited (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2009). As Butcher (2020) notes, from the realist perspective, third-party efforts are limited by the anarchic system, wherein state consent is paramount (Butcher, 2020).

3. HISTORICAL ROOTS TO PRESENT ESCALATION

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict refers to the ongoing political and territorial conflict between the Israeli and Palestinian people, a complex and multifaceted struggle that has gone on for decades. The conflict is characterized by escalating tensions and violence. This chapter will provide a summary of the background of the conflict, starting with how it evolved from its deep-rooted origins in the late 19th century in the emergence of Jewish and Arab nationals alongside the anti-colonial movement that was rising at the same time called Zionism, which is a movement that was originally a reaction to anti-Semitism and a response to antagonism toward the Jewish people; it had already begun to rise in both the late 19th and early 20th centuries due to the Zionist movement (Smith, 2010). On the other hand, Arab nationalism is a movement that advocates for Arab self-determination and opposes colonialism (Khalidi, 2006).

This chapter will also address the UN, an essential actor in this struggle, and the resolutions it has issued that attempt to resolve competing claims to sovereignty and territory while promoting peaceful frameworks. The complexity of the situation on the field is reflected in the fact that numerous UN resolutions have not been implemented.

The historical context of these events, several significant wars from 1948 to the present, and the involvement of external actors from regional powers to international organizations in shaping the conflict dynamics will all be covered in this chapter. Through this study, the chapter will highlight the intractable obstacles to a solution and the hard conditions to achieve peaceful cohabitation between Israelis and Palestinians.

3.1 THE ISRAELI-ARAB WAR (1948)

After World War I, the anti-Semitism of Jews in Russia and the destruction of Jewish communities in Europe made the Jews think about finding a safe homeland, which led them to think toward the Zionist idea (Gilbert, 1998). This idea began in the 1880s with Jewish individuals such as Moses Hess, Jehuda Al-Kalai, etc., who were encouraged to immigrate to Palestine under the pretext of the presence of religious places (Laqueur, 2003). The establishment of 'the World Zionist Organization' in 1897, headed by Theodor Herzl, increased the number of Jewish immigrants in Palestine, as the objective of this organization

was to make a state in Palestine (Herzl, 1896). In the midst of the First World War, secret agreements and covenants were made for post-war arrangements, such as the agreement between Britain and the Zionist Organization where, in order to bring American involvement in the war by the Jewish support, Britain would promise a Jewish homeland in Palestine. This arrangement resulted in the Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1916, which provided for Palestine to be allocated under British control (Sykes-Picot Agreement, 1916). Thus, on November 2, 1917, Britain issued the declaration to support the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine (Foreign Office, 1917). The declaration was made prior to Britain officially acquiring Palestine and represented Britain's strategic efforts to garner support from Jewish communities across the globe. The League of Nations mandate for Britain to govern Palestine officially came into effect in 1920. The British had ambitions for the Balfour Declaration to become a reality, but simultaneously they faced many challenges managing the demographics of Jewish immigrants among the Arab majority as the tensions between Jews and Arabs multiplied. The influx of Jewish immigrants in the 1920s to 1930s saw increasing complaints among Arabs that they were going to lose their land and rights as major waves of dispute, such as the Arab riots of 1920 to 1929 and the Arab Revolt from 1936 to 1939, which were all aimed at putting an end to British rule as well as limiting the immigration of Jews in Palestine (Shlaim, 2001). As violence in the region increased, Britain instituted several policy papers limiting Jewish immigration, including the White Paper in 1939, which contained limitations on Jewish immigration and calls for an independent Palestine in ten years (Smith, 2010). However, the end of World War II, as well as the Holocaust, increased Jewish demands for a homeland; the shift was considerable in international opinion, in which countries such as the US and Britain began to support this idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine (Gilbert, 1998). That was what made the growth of calls for a Jewish state possible in the most effective manner.

Under the British Mandate, the Haganah, a Jewish paramilitary group, coordinated with British forces to deter mutually hostile perceptions, such as Arab revolts (Morris, 2001). However, when the drive for a Jewish state grew more intense, the Haganah became more proactive in offensive operations (Shlaim, 2001). Zionist groups like the Haganah, Argon, and Stern increased their attacks on British Mandate soldiers in Palestine to persuade Britain to open the gates for Jewish immigration (Smith, 2010). The Arab nations, in turn, set up the Arab League to pressure Britain into recognition of Palestinian rights and to deal with

tensions in Palestine (Khalidi, 2006). In this regard, the British initiated the referral of the issue of Palestine to the UN, which was founded in October 1945 for the purpose of promoting peace and international cooperation (UN, 1945). The UN created the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) to look into the Palestinian situation for future proposals (UN, 1947). The committee of the 11-member session began on April 28, 1947. It included representatives from different states to collect information on the conditions of Palestine and gain the perspective of both communities. Following extensive deliberations, UNSCOP presented its partition plan in September 1947, suggesting that Palestine be divided into distinct Jewish and Palestinian states, with Jerusalem serving as an international city (UN, 1947). The suggestion was to limit the national ambitions of Palestinians and Jews in the region (Morris, 2001).

The main reason for the Arab-Israeli War in 1948 was the conflict arising because of the UNGA in 1947 when it went for the partition plan (Resolution 181), which allocated approximately 56.4% of the land to the Jewish and 43% to Palestinian peoples, while Jews constituted about one-third of the populace (UNSCOP, 1947). The plan was accepted by Jewish leaders as a legitimate way to statehood, but Arab leaders rejected it because they believed it transgressed the rights of the Arab community in Palestine. Thus, it turned into violence following the UN resolution between Jewish and Palestinian groups. The Haganah, along with other Jewish groups such as the Irgun and Lehi, began military operations to secure land (Pappe, 2006). Arab militias retaliated with their attacks, which perpetuated a cycle of violence. As a result, many incidents happened, such as the 'Deir Yassin massacre' in April 1948, in which dozens of Palestinians were killed, which escalated the fray and caused panic among the Palestinian people (Khalidi, 1992).

David Ben-Gurion, on 14 May 1948, pronounced the state of Israel, which coincided with the termination of the British command and quick military intervention of neighboring Middle Eastern states, including Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon (Gilbert, 1998; Morris, 2001). As a result, the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 broke out with a military conflict (Pappe, 2006). By the conclusion of the war, out of Obligatory Palestine, Israel came to control nearly 78% of the region, throwing well past the 56% it was designated in the UN arrangement, in which they controlled numerous zones such as the Galilee, the coastal plain, and parts of the Negev Desert (Morris, 2001).

This war has caused great damage to the humanitarian area. Roughly 700,000 Palestinians were displaced from their homes, a reason for which they refer to the *Nakba*, or 'catastrophe,' whereby many had to leave their villages and towns or flee as a result of various violent means by the Zionist paramilitaries who carried out dozens of massacres (Pappe, 2006). For instance, in July 1948, Israeli forces captured the towns, and many residents fled under threat of violence; reports indicate that thousands were expelled, with harsh living conditions remaining for the others (Pappe, 2006). Moreover, in Haifa, the advancing forces, bombardment, and violence led the residents to leave (Khalidi, 1992).

Israel entered the UN as the 59th member nation on May 11, 1949. This was the result of diplomatic initiatives aimed at achieving many international bullheads and support (UNGA, 1949). The major proponent was the US, and on May 14, 1948, the day Israel declared its independence, the US was very prompt in recognizing Israel and was the first state to establish formal recognition (Shlaim, 2001). This recognition bore a very important meaning, as it constituted a vital endorsement for the new state amidst the ongoing conflict with Arab nations (Cohen, 2012).

The acceptance into the UN signified that Israel was admitted to the international community and given a stage to calibrate its activities on global issues, which further aggravated the situation with the Arab states that refused recognition of Israel (Morris, 2001). The subsequent debates and disputes in the area were shaped by the dynamics of statehood and recognition in the region. Furthermore, the new state was recognized by the Soviet government as well (Laqueur, 2003).

Both recognitions were very important for Israel to get worldwide legitimacy for its emergence on the international scene (Shlaim, 2001). The backing of the two superpowers emphasized the geopolitical motives that characterized the era, as both nations highlighted their geopolitical goals. Moreover, US recognition of Israel was a support for a Jewish state, as well as the need to offset Soviet influence in the region by making Israel a reliable ally that would help to contain communism and support American interests in the area (Smith, 2010). On the other hand, the acknowledgment of Israel by the Soviet Union can be seen as an attempt to apply impact over the new nations in the postwar period. Besides, the Soviets backed the new Jewish state as a way to counter Western influence and attempt to win the favor of the Middle Eastern states united with the Soviet bloc (Kissinger, 1994). In this way,

the acknowledgment of Israel by both superpowers was essentially spurred by political interface rather than ethical or moral rationale.

Following that, the armistice accords were negotiated and signed in 1949 during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War (United Nations, 1949). Under the sponsorship of the UN, these agreements were made between the State of Israel and its Arab neighbor states, including Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. The ceasefire lines, frequently referred to as the 'Green Line,' were acknowledged as borders by the state of Israel. These borders were meant to operate as temporary lines until a more comprehensive peace agreement could be established; they were not official borders but demarcations (Morris, 2001; Shlaim, 2001). This Green Line borders Israel with the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with Jordan to the east, while the Mediterranean Sea is the coast to the west of the Green Line (Morris, 2001). This line comprises areas that were part of the UN partition plan on the one hand and other areas annexed to Israel after the war on the other (Shlaim, 2001).



Figure 3.1: Palestine Map According to the UNGA Partition Plan in 1947, and the Border of Palestine After the Arab-Israeli War in 1949 (Armistice line).

Source: "Map of the Partition of Israel and Palestine," in World History Commons.

The first map in Figure 1 shows the UN 'partition plan', 55% of the territory was for a Jewish state and 45% for Arab states, while Jerusalem was an international city. The second map in Figure 1 shows the territories after the war of 1948. Israel took over further territory from that allocated in the UN plan, controlling about 78% of the land. The military power of the newly set-up Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) was an important factor in this development. The differences between the two maps explain how military power can shape the outcome of political decisions. The power to defend or to expand territory often provides more gains than a diplomatic agreement.

3.2 SIX DAYS WAR (1967)

One of the most important wars in the Middle East was the Six-Day War in 1967, in which Israel engaged in a conflict with its neighboring Arab states, Jordan, Syria, and Egypt, concerning national identities. The Cold War represents a large geopolitical struggle between the US and the Soviet Union. The 1967 War was heavily influenced by power dynamics (Shlaim, 2001). Both sides sought to increase their respective alliances and influence. The US provided support in different ways to Israel, resulting in a balance of power, while the Soviet Union backed Arab states, especially Egypt and Syria, in order to increase their military power against Israel. The Soviet Union viewed its support for the Arab states as a challenge to the US (Golan, 2013).

Before the war, tension was high in the area for several reasons, including the numerous boundary disputes and growing hostility between Israel and its Arab neighboring countries in the years preceding the fight (Morris, 2001). Particularly, the Suez Crisis was a noteworthy event in the Middle East in 1956, characterized by the three-way armed assault on Egypt by Israel, the United Kingdom (UK), and France, all of whom had fresh interests in carving up Egypt. It was all about the nationalization of the Suez Canal by Egypt's President Gamal Abdel Nasser (Kyle, 2011). The secret alliance came into being in response to Nasser's acts, as Israel, the UK, and France (Shlaim, 2001). Concerning Israel, Nasser had to be weakened in his influence so that the southern border was safe from attack by Palestinian forces; the UK and France, on the other hand, were interested in regaining control of the Suez Canal with the ultimate aim of limiting the power of Egypt in the region (Kyle, 2011). Hence, on 29 October 1956, Israel invaded the Sinai Peninsula and marched toward the canal. An ultimatum was issued by the UK and France, calling for a ceasefire in addition to the departure of equipped forces.

Egypt refused, so British and French troops began bombarding Egyptian positions and landed at Port Said on November 5 (Kyle, 2011). This intervention faced opposition from the US and the Soviet Union, who stood against colonialism and military aggression in the postwar era (Hahn, 2004). The UK and France withdrew in the face of pressure from both superpowers while a UN peacekeeping force was established to monitor the ceasefire (Shlaim, 2001).

The US had doubts about a possible outbreak of hostilities, thus embarking on diplomatic

missions to mediate the states while exerting pressure upon Arab states not to adopt aggressive postures and working towards convincing Israel not to engage in any preemptive strikes (Hahn, 2004). However, the US provided Israel with economic and military assistance during the months preceding the war, including arms sales and military equipment, with the view to enhancing Israel's defense capabilities to ensure its security against any threats from the Arab states (Little, 2015). The Soviet Union fueled tensions between Israel and the Arab states by sharing Israel's military moves with the Arabs, which resulted in Gamal Abdel Nasser demanding the UN peacekeeping forces leave Sinai in an attempt to assert Egyptian sovereignty and demonstrate his authority against foreign meddling in Arab affairs. Moreover, he believed that the UN Emergency Force (UNEF) did not serve Egypt's interests anymore but impeded his military power and goals. (Khalidi, 2006). The departure of the UNEF made it possible for Nasser to seal the Straits of Tiran to Israeli trade in 1967 and station Egyptian troops near the Israeli border. Since the Straits of Tiran were essential for Israeli access to the Red Sea and their blockage was used as justification for military action, Israel considered it a direct danger to its maritime lanes and national security, making it especially significant (Shlaim, 2001). The event was perceived as *casus belli*, which is an act justifying war.

On June 9, Syria also entered the conflict, and Israel launched an attack on the Syrian position. Once the war began, the US embraced a neutral policy, asking both sides to exercise restraint. US President Lyndon B. Johnson touted a peaceful resolution and attempted for the US to stay out of direct engagement in the war, especially while Israel gained more and more ground and inflicted unconscionable defeats on its foes (Little, 2015). The US did not have to use military force to intervene. While the Soviets during that time stood firmly with the Arab countries, considering that it was Israel that had aggressive intentions. Further, an attempt was made to garner international support for the Arab cause against the Western countries and the US for backing Israel. The Soviet Union wanted to increase its domination over the Middle East. However, it was never meant to enter into direct conflict and deploy troops or military forces within the region since it preferred to wage its struggle from the outside through diplomatic channels aimed at drafting a ceasefire agreement between Israel and the Arab states (Golan, 2013). The war ended on June 10, with the expansion of Israeli control (Khalidi, 2006; Morris, 2001). The territories changed after the war, as shown in

Figure 2. Israel took the 'Gaza Strip' and 'Sinai Peninsula' from Egypt, the 'West Bank' (including East Jerusalem) from Jordan, and the 'Golan Heights' from Syria.



Figure 3.2: Israeli Control of Territory After the 1967 War.

Source: Raz, Avi. (2012). *The Bride and the Dowry: Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinians in the aftermath of the June 1967.*

The Palestinian involvement during the 1967 war was very complicated, as it was multifaceted and majorly influenced by the larger Arab-Israeli political conflict. The war was a trigger for a change in the Palestinian political situation, a change that seemed to be gradually awakening the consciousness of identity and altering resistance strategies while placing more international focus on the Palestinian case (Khalidi, 2006). Palestinians began to realize that the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which was created in 1964, would serve to unite the scattered Palestinian factions in a common cause, whereby the PLO

became the representative body of the Palestinians and reflected Palestinian politics as it participated in diplomatic and international forums (Sayigh, 1997). However, the PLO did not constitute a primary military force during the war. They call the 1967 war as the *Naksa* because the defeat of Arab states has served a great transformation in Israel's acquisition of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which were then controlled by Jordan and Egypt, and more Palestinian territory, thus creating a further number of displaced Palestinians. As a result, the Palestinian leaders changed their strategies to acquire Palestinian autonomy and recognition of Palestinian rights, which highlights the need to focus on the establishment of a unique Palestinian identity and political representation (Khalidi, 2006).

The aftermath of the war resulted in a transformation from diplomatic efforts to an armed approach to confronting Israeli occupation, which led to the creation of different Palestinian factions following the tactics of guerrilla warfare, such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and Fatah, which was founded by Yasser Arafat and others in the late 1950s (Sayigh, 1997; Milton-Edwards, 2008). The PLO focused on armed struggle with political action, and it became popular among Palestinians and was known for guerrilla operations against Israeli targets (Sayigh, 1997). The different parties in question assisted the evolution of the grand movement for rights and autonomy of Palestinians by imparting their own agendas and tactics onto the Palestinian resistance movement.

The end of the war was by UNSC Resolution 242, adopted on November 22, 1967, which comprised several important components that together would deal with the consequences of the Six-Day War and establish the framework that would maintain peace in the Middle East (UNSC, 1967). The resolution demands the departure of Israeli armed forces from areas acquired during the conflict and underscores the imperative for all regional states to acknowledge one another's integrity of land, sovereignty, and political independence as a foundation for mutual recognition and peaceful coexistence. The resolution relates to the question of the displaced Palestinian people, as it calls for an equitable solution for the Palestinian people who were displaced during the 1948 War and other disputes. This recognition of the refugee crisis emphasizes the necessity for a solution that puts Palestinian refugees' needs and rights into account.

Resolution 242 indeed upholds the peaceful settlement of conflicts through compelling negotiations between states to ensure long-lasting peace and calls upon all parties to engage in a dialogue that aims to settle their disagreements (Smith, 2010). The resolution asserts that nations worldwide will be involved in the diplomatic efforts for reaching peace and guarantee that the rights of all parties are upheld with the commitment of the UN towards promoting cooperation and dialogue between conflicting parties. The UNSC has demonstrated resolve in enforcing the resolution's fulfillment. However, the resolution mentions 'from territories' but does not specify which territories. Hence, there has been an argument between Israel and Arab states. Where Israel understood that this meant withdrawal from some territories but not necessarily all because it held that it had the right to negotiate around the final lines of separation (Smith, 2010; Quandt, 2005). In fact, it cited the reason that a total withdrawal was not required by the resolution, by which safe and recognized boundaries for Israel could be allowed. In contrast, Arab states, including the Palestinians, considered this resolution as mandating the conditional evacuation of Israeli forces from all lands. (Smith, 2010). Under this argument, they stated that it is vague, which means that Israel should revert to pre-war borders thus defined before the war.

The basic disagreement on the meaning of 'territories' created serious difficulties in future peace negotiations and kept on causing strife in the area (Quandt, 2005). Each side's view shaped its strategies and positions with respect to diplomacy and kept a long-lasting presence of unresolved conflict until this day.

The US was instrumental in forming its post-war diplomatic setting. It stood for the principles embodied in Resolution 242 and attempted to facilitate the peace negotiations in the subsequent years (Quandt, 2005). Additionally, the war fundamentally changed the geopolitical setting in the Middle East and strengthened US-Israeli relations, which continue to be a vital influence on US foreign policy today (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007). The Soviet Union, however, was opposed to the Israeli territorial gains because of their effects on Arab states after the war and aimed to reassert its strength in the region by active armed and political backing for Arab nations. (Quandt, 2005).

On October 6, 1973, Egypt and Syria initiated a surprise assault on Israel on the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur to reclaim their territory. (Morris, 2001). The disputes stemmed from Arab frustration about Israeli occupation of those territories and the failure of UN Resolution

242 negotiations, and the Egyptians were keen on restoring national pride following the 1967 debacle (Khalidi, 2020; Rabinovich, 2004).

With intelligence failures, Israel had been mobilizing reserves and halting advances by October 9, executing a counterattack in the Golan by October 11, and crossing the Suez by October 15, thus encircling Egypt's Third Army (Rabinovich, 2004). The Soviet Union and the US commenced supplying armaments to their allies, thus inflaming Cold War tensions. Meanwhile, an Arab oil embargo quadrupled the oil price globally (Morris, 2001; Yergin, 2008). However, the UN called for Resolutions 338 and 339, which caused ceasefires to be implemented, thereby ending important hostilities by October 25 (UNSC, 1973). Israel held on to the Golan and gained a foothold on the Suez Canal but withdrew later in accordance with the disengagement agreements of 1974 (UN, 1974). Thus, the war brought back the feeling of confidence among Arabs, leading Egypt to sign a peace treaty with Israel in 1979 (Herzog, 1975).

3.3 THE FIRST INTIFADA (1987-1993)

The First Intifada, which began on 8 December 1987, was an uprising of Palestinians against Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It lasted until the early 1990s. It is often considered a watershed in the conflict because it marked a turning point in reshaping the dynamics of the struggle for Palestinian self-determination. It marks the transition from weapons to popular resistance in the pursuit of political goals, making civil resistance one of its important elements (Khalidi, 2006).

The causes of the First Intifada were profoundly historical and rooted in the whole context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, such that it resulted from a historical context. Since the Six-Day War of 1967, Israel has maintained military control over both the territories of Gaza and the West Bank, leading to massive resentment from Palestinians since there are restrictions on movement, arbitrary arrests, and daily military presence (Smith, 2010; UNSC, 1979; B'Tselem, 2019). The growth of these settlements enhanced the anger and discontent even further among the Palestinians (Smith, 2010). In addition, the economy of the Palestinians got worse due to the occupation, as the high rates of unemployment and leverage of restricted resources and limited trade access made many Palestinians struggle with unemployment and poverty, which further maximized their grievances (Roy, 2016). The

direct cause of the Intifada was the incident of December 1987, which aggravated the existing tensions and caused impromptu demonstrations among the occupied territories (Pearlman, 2011).

The lack of political representation during the First Intifada is a critical variable, as many Palestinians felt they did not relate to the existing leadership, particularly the PLO under Yasser Arafat, broadly seen as ineffective and out of touch with the realities on the ground (Sayigh, 1997).

Firstly, the PLO was more concentrated on international diplomacy and gaining recognition rather than being concerned with activities to handle the real and emergency needs of Palestinians under occupation (Khalidi, 2006). Therefore, this transition made the leadership of the PLO and their activities located outside of Palestine, specifically in Lebanon and Tunisia, which removed them from the daily realities and struggles that faced the Palestinians.

Secondly, the presence of Israeli military forces in the occupied territories caused several restrictions on the PLO, which prevented it from carrying out activities to help the Palestinian people as the Israeli authorities actively suppressed any organized political movements that could threaten their control and thus made it difficult for the PLO to organize effectively on the ground (Sayigh, 1997). In addition, the PLO had internal political divisions, which hampered its function since different factions had various strategies and visions for the cause of Palestine, which resulted in a lack of unified direction and action (Sayigh, 1997).

Hence, the Intifada was not headed by any organization or political party; rather, it emerged from local communities as various groups, including youth movements and neighborhood committees, played significant roles in organizing protests and mobilizing people (Hiltermann, 1993). This uprising was characterized by widespread protests, civil disobedience, and nonviolent resistance, including strikes that impeded the economy, boycotts of Israeli goods, and peaceful demonstrations. Indeed, a large part of the uprising was nonviolent; however, there were also outright clashes. By the use of stones, which became synonymous with resistance, and strikes organized by Palestinians with the use of

military force by Israel, these clashes led to casualties on both sides. These actions aimed to assert Palestinian rights and identity against the hegemony of Israel (Pearlman, 2011).

The PLO had little control over the uprising as well as over the grassroots-level movements. The emergence of local movements and community organizations during the Intifada drew attention to the necessity of more inclusive political representation, which led to demands for reforms within the PLO, leading the PLO to engage with the Intifada as it recognized its potential to foment Palestinian national aspirations by channeling the protests' energy and momentum into a coherent political strategy (Hiltermann, 1993). Therefore, they began to engage more actively and tried to bring together the various Palestinian factions and movements to participate in the Intifada to make a unified front against the Israeli occupation (Sayigh, 1997).

The PLO influenced the Intifada to garner international acceptance by propagating the Palestinian struggles and aspirations; it sought to promote and ventilate the rights of Palestinians on the world stage (Sayigh, 1997). This uprising has caused even worse living conditions for the Palestinians due to the Israeli reaction, as the Israeli military occupation measures have caused much economic hardship with the closing of several businesses and with the curfews that disrupt the daily lives of Palestinians, such as the movement restrictions that greatly crippled the trade and employment of the Palestinians, which raised poverty and unemployment figures within the population and impeded economic growth, as construction, agricultural, and trading permits were denied to Palestinian applicants, so the resource access was scant (Roy, 2016). The situation got worse, especially since the Israeli military operations destroyed agricultural lands and infrastructure (Hiltermann, 1993). Whereas organizations like UNRWA were providing basic services, the dependency on these aids would rather highlight that there is no sustainable economic development and self-sufficiency among the Palestinian people (UNRWA, 1990).

The UN has backed Palestinians' rights to self-determination and to settle the Israeli-Palestinian strife gently and played a multifaceted part amid the Intifada as it set up distinctive UN bodies to watch the circumstance in the possessed regions, such as the UN Special Committee to explore Israeli activities that influence the human rights of the Palestinian individuals, which detailed on human rights infringement (UNGA, 1989), which led the UNGA and UNSC to issue resolutions denounce the violence that the Palestinians

had faced with the need for a peaceful resolution to the conflict (UNGA, 43/21, 1988), where these resolutions aimed to highlight the plight of Palestinians and call for an end to the occupation. On the other hand, providing aid as humanitarian assistance was part of UNRWA's program towards the Palestinians who suffered immensely during the Intifada (UNRWA, 2000).

The Intifada catalyzed worldwide solidarity movements, demonstrations, and actions for Palestinian rights, which assisted in mobilizing public opinion and pressuring governments to contend with the Palestinian cause. The Intifada increasingly pushed some Western countries to reconsider their foreign policy towards the region and re-evaluate their unconditional support for Israel, and movements that opposed colonialism and imperialism were against US support for Israel (Khalidi, 2006).

The First Intifada stressed the requirement for a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with secret negotiations in the early 1990s between Israel and the PLO that eventually resulted in the Oslo Accords (Ross, 2004). It was signed in Washington in 1993. Moreover, the Accords created a turning point inside the political establishment within Israel to contemplate the potential political settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because Israel itself was worried about changing alliances in the Arab world, such as Iraq backing Palestine. This allowed Israel to engage diplomatically to lower tensions and boost its security (Ross, 2004).

The coming of the agreement was the first time a shared recognition between the two disputants had been achieved, which laid the groundwork to negotiate for a settlement. The agreement provided for the creation of Palestinian self-governance, as Israel accepted and recognized the PA, which was set up in 1994, and requested it to regulate Palestinian regions, which would have constrained powers over it to control respectful issues like instruction, well-being, and social administrations, with the holding of democratic elections to the PA, making elections available for the Palestinian population to elect their representatives and ensure a degree of political autonomy. This agreement aimed to build trust between both sides by a staged arrangement for the military withdrawal of Israel, particularly regions that are populated by Palestinians (Ross, 2004). This accord set the basis for future negotiations, and it set a timetable for these discussions to achieve a final peace agreement within five

years, based on the UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338 (Ross, 2004; UNSC, 242, 1967; UNSC, 338, 1973).

The second Oslo Accord was signed on September 28, 1995. It considerably expanded upon the first accord as it framed Palestinian civil practices and included provisions concerning the security assistance that were also outlined to end violent activities and coordinate security matters to achieve regional stability (UNGA, 1995).

This Accord was based on the two-state solution plan, which was to divide Palestine into an Israeli state and a Palestinian state, where it was agreed in this accord to divide the West Bank into three areas between Palestinian and Israeli control, as seen in Figure 3 (UNSC, 1967). First, Area A assumes cities and populated areas of Palestinians will be under Palestinian control, such as Ramallah, Bethlehem, and Jericho. Second, Area B will be Palestinian civil control under Israeli security; this area includes various towns and villages, all of which are under Palestinian administration regarding other functions such as education, health, and other civil matters, while Israel is responsible for keeping security in the area. Third, Area C has been left entirely under Israeli security and administration, encompassing Israeli settlements, agricultural lands, and open areas, where the PA within Area C will be limited as it sets stiff prohibitions over the development and construction of Palestinian land in this area (Kersel, M. Morag, 2014). The dispute over the status of Area C stands deep-rooted in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where the Palestinians and the international community declare the Israeli settlement in this area as illegal under international law, which further complicates peace negotiations, and political fragmentation makes it difficult to resolve the final status of Area C (NRC, 2023).

Oslo II Map
Outlining Areas A, B, and C

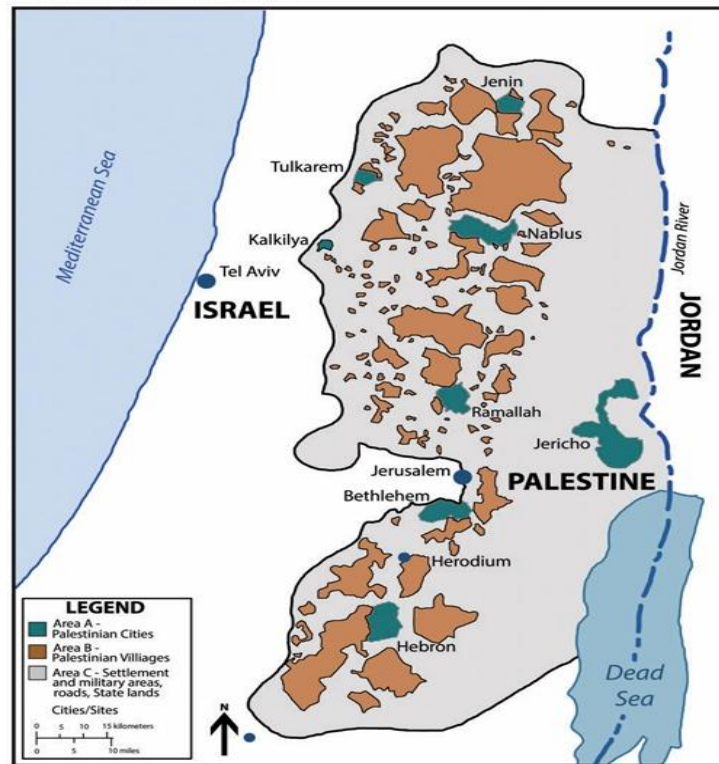


Figure 3.3: The Territorial Division in the West Bank.

Source: Kersel, M. Morag. (2014). The ABCs of cultural heritage in Palestine after the Oslo Accords.

The Oslo II Accord also tackled economic cooperation with the objectives of improving the Palestinian economy through initiatives and projects, where economic stability was viewed as a base for peace and the foundation to build the structures for a future Palestinian state; thus, the accord included provisions for the transportation and goods between different areas to facilitate trade and promote economic development by allowing for market and resource access, which could improve the Palestinian economy. This accord provided a framework for the creation of a Palestinian police force, which could be able to manage civil affairs and ensure the rule of law within areas that are controlled by the Palestinian Authority (Ross, 2004).

The Oslo II Accord attempted to address various aspects involved with governance and economic cooperation between both sides. However, in the time following the signing of the agreement, specifically after radicals against the peace process killed Israeli Prime Minister (PM) Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, the violent activities in the area expanded (Quandt, 2005). The

Israeli right-wing considered the accords an extreme compromise that would put Israel's security and territorial integrity at risk, and granting concessions to the Palestinians would lead to more violence and terrorism (Shlaim, 2001).

The right-wing politicians declared that the agreement would lead to the foundation of a Palestinian state, which would be a direct threat to Israel. Moreover, Palestinian militant organizations, including Hamas and Islamic Jihad, opposed the peace process and launched assaults against Israel, as they perceived the agreements as betrayals of Palestinian rights and sovereignty (Hroub, 2000; Milton-Edwards, 2008). In spite of the fact that the Oslo Accords were respected as a critical step towards peace, they underscored the impact of control elements on maintainable arrangements for the struggle, particularly the development of Israeli settlements, and the need for certainty between the Palestinian and Israeli individuals, with the impact of the distinctive political parties inside the Israeli and Palestinian governments making it exceptionally difficult to accomplish peace forms (Shlaim, 2001; B'Tselem, 2019; UNSC, 446, 1979).

3.4 THE SECOND INTIFADA (2000-2005)

The Second Intifada, referred to as the Al-Aqsa Intifada, made demonstrations and protests in the Palestinian territories against Israeli occupation, following the major challenges of peace process implementation in the Oslo Accords, especially in the Camp David Summit, hosted by US President Bill Clinton in July 2000, which featured negotiations on the issues of Jerusalem's status, the right of return for Palestinian refugees, and the border demarcation for a future Palestinian state for accomplishing enduring peace (Ross, 2004). The summit efforts failed as both sides, including Israeli PM Ehud Barak and PA Chairman Yasser Arafat, could not reach any agreement on the outstanding issues in a win-win solution. Thus, the Palestinians were frustrated as Israel extended settlement exercises in the challenged domains of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Ross, 2004). The visit of Ariel Sharon, who was an Israeli political and military leader, to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem on September 28, 2000, angered the Palestinians and resulted in a mass protest of violent, while the PA was challenged to control the uprising to maintain authority over the Palestinian territories and press for commitments to peace negotiations with Israel (Ross, 2004; Pearlman, 2011). However, the demands of the Palestinian people for resistance increased,

which furthered the political division in Palestinian society and brought the growth of different groups (Milton-Edwards, 2008).

The Intifada made a significant change in the peace process and caused a cycle of violence as the protests by Palestinians included throwing stones, armed confrontations, and suicide bombings by the Palestinian armed groups, while the Israeli military retaliated by using force via live ammunition, airstrikes, and targeted assassinations of Palestinian leaders, which caused the deaths of thousands of Palestinians. Moreover, the Israeli government called for the IDF to launch 'Operation Defensive Shield' in 2002 in order to reoccupy the West Bank areas that included the Palestinian militant groups to destroy their infrastructure by conducting extensive military operations in Palestinian areas such as Jenin, Nablus, and Bethlehem (Catignani, 2008). However, the Palestinian militants engaged in an intense struggle against the IDF, resulting in substantial losses in lives for both sides. Moreover, the IDF operations targeted the institutions of the PA and imposed a lengthy siege upon Arafat's compound, the Muqata'a, in 2002, which symbolized the PA's power decline and the intense pressure applied to Arafat by the Israelis during the second Intifada (Pearlman, 2011).

The situation during this period raised security concerns. It incited violence that led Israeli PM Ariel Sharon to promote the separation barrier as a security measure to counter terrorist attacks carried out against Israeli citizens. The Israeli separation wall, often called the 'apartheid wall,' has generated a lot of political and legal debate, as it restricts the transportation of Palestinians, separates Palestinian communities, and limits their access to jobs, education, and healthcare, which has important implications for the livelihood and economy of the Palestinian territories (B'Tselem, 2011). The barrier's route veers off the Green Line, entering into Palestinian land and allowing for further expansion of Israeli settlements, which raised fears of land annexation and the long-term viability of the two-state solution (Khalidi, 2006; B'Tselem, 2011).

The US significantly influenced the conflict's dynamics through financial support and military assistance to Israel in order to improve Israel's security and defense capabilities, which gave Israeli military superiority and efficacy in military operations against Palestinian protests and militant groups during the intifada (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007). The continued support for Israel has been regarded as an obstacle to achieving a balanced approach to the peace process, which led several international actors, including Arab states and organizations

advocating for Palestinian rights, to accuse the US of being an un-neutral mediator. On the other side, the US sought to mediate in the conflict, such as the formation of the Mitchell Report, which was formed in 2001 and demanded an immediate end to violence coupled with a cooling-off period and a return to negotiations based on the principles of the Oslo Accords. It emphasized the need for addressing the underlying issues, including security concerns, settlements, and the humanitarian situation (Sharm El-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee, 2001; Quandt, 2005).

The activities of the UN during the Second Intifada were multi-dimensional in nature and reflected attempts to deal with rising violence and humanitarian crises, as the UN had tried to facilitate dialogue and mediation between Israel and the PA as the UNSC passed various resolutions aimed at solving the situation, such as Resolution 1322, which condemned the violence and called for a quick cessation of threats as it pointed to the requirement for a tranquil arrangement in agreement with the standards of the Oslo Accords and the right of the Palestinian individuals to self-determination (UNSC, 1322, 2000). As viciousness expanded, the errand of the UN steadily moved toward the arrangement of help, where UNRWA played an imperative part in the supply of help to Palestinian outcasts and those affected by the strife in terms of nourishment, restorative supplies, and instructive back to meet the urgent needs of the populace in the midst of the turmoil. (UNRWA, 2002). However, the attempts made by the UN were countered with criticism regarding the body's inefficiency in enforcing its resolutions, which showed the conflict's complexities, coupled with geopolitical interests, thwarting the UN's ability to mediate impartially and effectively in the interests of the conflicting parties (Quandt, 2005).

The Arab League meetings were also held three times in 2001, 2002, and 2005 to deliberate the issue, and the Arab governments strongly supported the Palestinian cause by condemning Israeli actions, calling for solidarity with the Palestinians, and calling for international intervention. However, the differences in how to respond to the conflict made divisions among member states, as the moderate states, such as Egypt and Jordan, which had peace treaties with Israel, would advocate for diplomatic approaches and maintaining stability in their relations because of geopolitical factors and their own national interests (Quandt, 2005). On the other hand, states like Syria and Lebanon, with a bunch of other radicals like Hezbollah, would oppose Israel more strongly and support more militant measures along the

Palestinian cause (Norton, 2007). While states such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar provide financial aid to the PA to help fulfill its need for governance and humanitarian support (Khalidi, 2006). These various contradictory views on how to deal with the conflict posed a lot of difficulties for the Arab League in presenting a unified front to address the issue effectively. The absence of a common front among member states was frequently a hindrance to the attempts made by the other members to take collective steps (Quandt, 2005). The international community condemned the violence of the Second Intifada and suggested various peace initiatives, 'with the Roadmap for Peace' proffered by the Quartet in 2003, consisting of the US, the EU, Russia, and the UN, meant to engender a two-state solution and lay out a series of graduated steps toward achieving peace (UN, 2003). These steps were contingent on fulfilling certain obligations by both Israelis and Palestinians, such as ceasing violence, dismantling settlements, and establishing a Palestinian state. However, the implementation underwent difficulties due to the prevailing violence and internal political fragmentation, and disputes raged over such issues as borders and refugees (Ross, 2004). Nevertheless, the road to implementing the reforms had long been proximate to an active resolution for the conflict, as the lack of trust between both sides increasingly complicated negotiations. The Roadmap for Peace indicates the apparent complications of settling the situation (Khalidi, 2006).

The Second Intifada ended around 2005; it caused significant changes to the political landscape in the region since it left deep scars on both the Palestinian and Israeli sides. For the Palestinians, the PA tried to assert authority by calling a ceasefire and entering into diplomatic negotiations. However, these were seasoned with doubt from the Palestinian populace and the Israeli government alike. This era created the conditions for the subsequent changes in Palestinian leadership and strategy after Arafat's demise in 2004, where Mahmoud Abbas, who was elected to be the president of the PA in January 2005, engaged on a more diplomatic road but faced many difficulties, such as the continued violent activities and the internal divisions in the Palestinian community between Fatah, led by the PA, and Hamas, which gained control over Gaza. This complex landscape that had been established during the Second Intifada is still a cause of the persistent tensions and the evolving dynamics of the Palestinian leadership (Pearlman, 2011; Milton-Edwards, 2008; B'Tselem, 2019).

From the Israeli side, security practices tightened as the government perceived threats to security and responded with military incursions into Palestinian territories and the expansion of settlement policies. This complicated the lives of Palestinians even further and drew international uproar (Catignani, 2008; B'Tselem, 2019). These conflicts largely shattered the hopes that had emerged after the signing of the Oslo Accords. The buildup of distrust and violence had made it difficult to find a consensus for the two parties to permit any further possibility of negotiating for a permanent settlement (Shlaim, 2001).

3.5 THE 7 OCTOBER GAZA WAR

Many wars and tensions occurred in Gaza between Hamas and Israel, such as 'Operation Cast Lead', 'Pillar of Defense', 'Protective Edge', and 'Guardian of the Walls'. Each of these wars had its roots in preceding problems that evolved into the increasingly Israeli-Palestinian conflict and was marked by rocket fire and assassinations, as well as tensions over Jerusalem and the blockade of Gaza.

In 2007, Hamas wrestled control of the Gaza Strip following the Palestinian legislative elections and a bloody fight through which it distanced Fatah, the competing faction supported by the PA. Following that, Israel, with the assistance of Egypt, implemented a blockade in Gaza. The blockade was due to Israel's security concerns regarding Hamas's rocket attacks against southern Israel and Hamas's refusal to recognize Israel or to abide by previous peace agreements. (B'Tselem, 2007).

During 2008-09, the war broke out with Israel launching 'Operation Cast Lead' against Hamas in retaliation for rocket fire. The operation lasted three weeks and ended with over 1,400 Palestinians and 13 Israelis dead. Subsequently, the blockade of Gaza became stricter, causing a humanitarian crisis (UN, 2009). Another round of conflict in November 2012. This one was caused by the killing of the Hamas military commander, Ahmed Jabari. The fighting lasted for eight days. The fighting came to an end when Egypt brokered a ceasefire (Stein, Y, 2013).

In 2014, a war known as 'Operation Protective Edge' broke out. It is considered one of the deadliest conflicts and lasted for 50 days, beginning with the murder of three Israeli teenagers and the subsequent firing of rockets into Israeli territory from the Gaza Strip. The conflict ended with extreme destruction in Gaza (OCHA oPt, 2014). Moreover, violence

erupted once more in May 2021 due to the strife that gripped East Jerusalem and the expulsion of Palestinian families from Sheikh Jarrah. The clashes escalated into an intense round of violence culminating in rocket attacks initiated by Hamas against Israel and airstrikes carried out by Israel over Gaza. The conflict lasted for 11 days and claimed over 250 Palestinian and a total of 13 Israeli lives (B'Tselem, 2021; Human Rights Watch, 2021). In 2023, during the Jewish holidays, Hamas, the militant Islamist group, made a planned military operation against the southern part of Israel, which it calls 'Al-Aqsa Flood', in conjunction with PIJ and other factions. The assault began with over 5,000 rockets fired toward Israeli cities like Sderot, Ashkelon, Be'er Sheva, and Tel Aviv (Al Jazeera, 2023). At the same time, Hamas fighters breached the Gaza-Israel barrier by using explosives, bulldozers, motorcycles, speedboats, and motorized paragliders to attack targets such as kibbutzim, military bases, and several checkpoints, such as Erez and Kerem Shalom (Al Jazeera, 2023). This assault resulted in the death of 1,195 lives (including 815 civilians, 11 children, and 337 security personnel), and 251 hostages, including women, children, and old people, were held inside the tunnel networks in Gaza. The attack caused a city-wide panic, evicted 54 southern localities, and laid bare intelligence failures within Israel, as the IDF was unprepared for the attack and Israel was focusing on the Hezbollah threat in Lebanon (Britannica, 2025). The course of the war was motivated by the historical Israeli-Palestinian conflicts (partially blockaded since 2007), with over 700,000 settlers living in illegal settlements by 2023 (Khalidi, 2020; UN, 2024).

The beleaguered situation in Gaza due to the blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt has negatively limited supplies, energy, and the movement of Gazans, creating a humanitarian disaster. Instances of violence in settler encroachment from the West Bank and restrictions on the use of the Al-Aqsa Mosque were cited by Hamas as contributing factors that led to the attack. Additionally, the attack was meant to impede any process to normalize relations between Saudi Arabia, as it affects the establishment of a Palestinian state (BBC, 2023).

'Operation Swords of Iron' was initiated by the IDF to pursue three missions: to remove the existing capabilities and governance of Hamas, to liberate captives, and to act as a deterrent against the forces that would carry out future attacks (ISW, 2025). The IDF launched airstrike attacks and ground invasions, targeting Hamas's military, rocket launchers, and weapon depots (Diakonia, 2023; Fabian, 2023). A barrage of strikes targeted highly crowded

regions, among them hospitals (for instance, at al-Shifa), schools, and UN facilities, while Israel accused Hamas of utilizing them as human shields (UNOCHA, 2024; Human Rights Watch, 2023). The IDF invaded northern Gaza on October 27, 2023, and reached Khan Younis by December 2023, as shown in Figure 4 (Al Jazeera, 2023; Relief Web, 2023). Moreover, Israel had blocked Gaza from receiving basic supplies of electricity, fuel, food, and water, which human rights group Amnesty dubbed a violation of international humanitarian law (Amnesty International, 2024; UNOCHA, 2023).

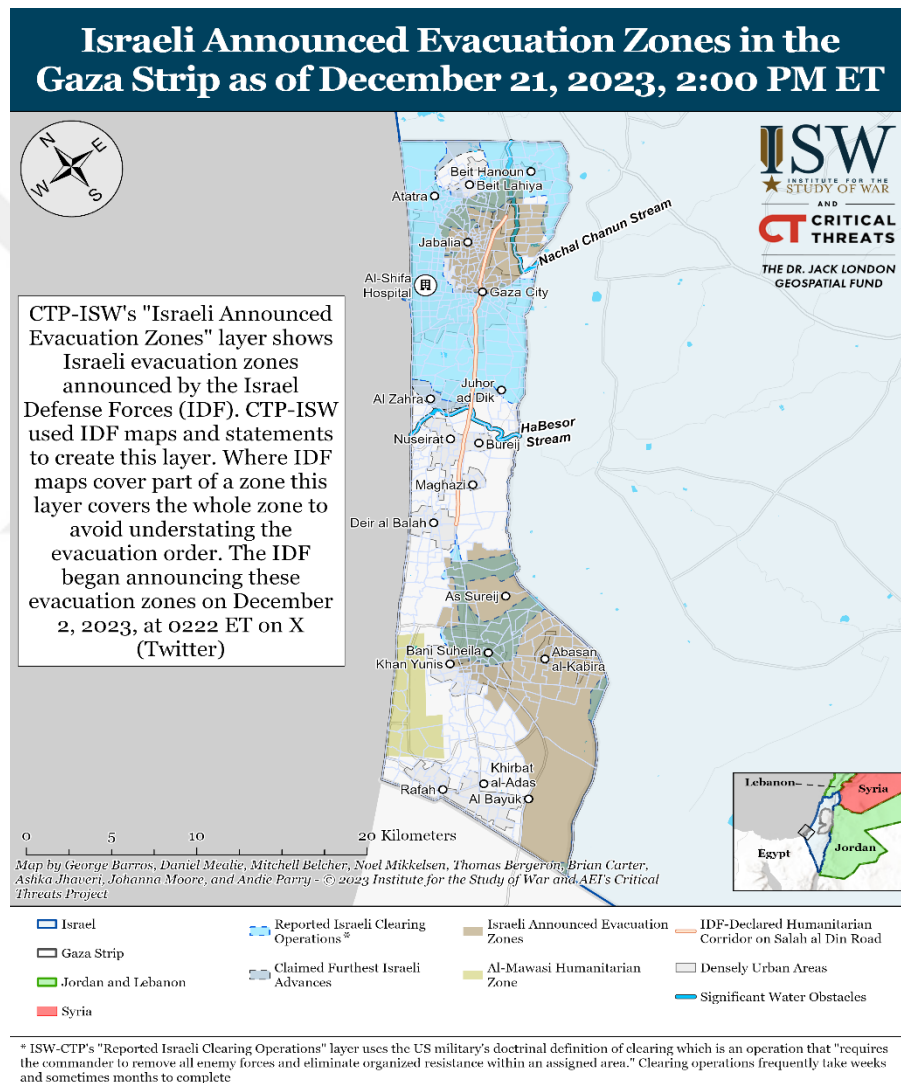


Figure 3.4: Map of Gaza During the 2023 War.

Source: Institute for the Study of War & Critical Threats Project. (2023, December 21). Iran Updates.

The consequences of war were catastrophic in Gaza, since over 1.9 million Gazans (90% of 2.3 million persons) were displaced under the IDF warnings for trapped civilians in battle zones (UNRWA, 2025). In April 2025, Gaza's Health Ministry reported between 51,000 Palestinians killed (70% women and children) and 116,343 injuries, with 14,500 children killed (UN, 2024; UNOCHA, 2024; BBC, 2025). At least 176 journalists, mostly Palestinian, along with 290 UNRWA staff, were killed (UNRWA, 2025; CPJ, 2025). Moreover, roughly over 92% of houses, 88% of commercial buildings, and critical installations like the Gaza power plant and hospitals have been completely or partially demolished, turning the Gaza Strip into an uninhabitable area (UNOCHA, 2024). On the other hand, the Israeli authority reported 1,200 killed and 5,400 wounded, with 59 hostages still held by Hamas in Gaza (UNOCHA, 2024).

Accusations of genocide and war crimes against Israel came from South Africa, Amnesty International, and UN experts; they criticized Israel for using indiscriminate bombing, aggression, and aid blockades. However, Israel continued to deny anything resembling the contents (Amnesty International, 2024; Al Jazeera, 2023; ICJ, 2023; UNOHCHR, 2023).

The ripples of the October 7 attack have had a very significant impact on regional politics, with nations across the Middle East recalibrating strategies and alliances in response to the violence. For example, states that historically supported Palestinians, such as Iran, Lebanon, and Yemen, have hardened their stances even more against Israel and increased their provisions for Hamas in the belief that the attack is a trigger to stoke up resistance against Israeli policies.

3.5.1 Iran's Role During the Gaza War

The Gaza War has further escalated the already tense hostilities between Iran and Israel, building on decades of strained political relations. Israel's longstanding concern has been Iran's nuclear program, suspected of developing weapons for hostile purposes, which heightened fears of Iran's growing influence in the Middle East through its support for militant groups like Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza, particularly during the Gaza War (Byman, 2024; Farooq, Saqib, & Mustafa, 2025). The political rhetoric between the two states has been marked by threats, with Iran's leadership, including Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, repeatedly calling for Israel's destruction, while Israel has vowed

to neutralize Iran's regional influence and military capabilities (Al Jazeera, 2024; House of Commons, 2024). This hostility has manifested in cyberattacks, Israeli airstrikes targeting Iranian and proxy positions in Syria, and intelligence operations, such as the assassination of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) commanders (Kenyon, 2024). Iran's involvement in the Gaza War reflects its broader strategy to enhance political influence by supporting anti-Israel opposition forces, aligning with its foreign policy goal of countering US and Israeli dominance in the region (Hroub, 2010; ISW, 2024). This support, including funding and arming Hamas and Hezbollah, complicates the conflict, destabilizing the region and creating tensions not only between Israel and Hamas but also among other regional states, such as Saudi Arabia and Jordan, wary of Iran's expanding influence (ISW, 2024).

Israel has asserted its right to defend against acts of aggression, particularly from Iranian proxies, as Israeli officials emphasized the threats posed by Iran's nuclear ambitions and its support for militant groups like Hamas and Hezbollah to conduct attacks against Israel, justifying their military operations and seeking global understanding for actions to ensure stability and security (Byman, 2024; ISW, 2024). Israel's operations against Iran have employed both military and diplomatic approaches. Militarily, Israel conducted airstrikes targeting Iranian positions in Syria to disrupt supply lines supporting groups like Hezbollah, notably in Rif Dimashq and near the Lebanon-Syria border, and launched cyberattacks to impair Iranian infrastructure, such as communication networks and logistics systems (ISW, 2024; Kenyon, 2024). The IDF intensified surveillance of Iranian movements and capabilities, using satellite imagery and intelligence to anticipate escalation, as seen in preparations for retaliatory strikes following Iran's October 1, 2024, missile attack (CNN, 2024).

3.5.2 Lebanon's Role During the Gaza War

Lebanon's primary role in the Gaza War, initiated by Hamas's attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, has been through Hezbollah, a Shia militant group that positions itself as an armed resistance against Israel. Hezbollah's involvement is closely tied to Iran's broader regional aspirations, forming a multifaceted alliance driven by ideological, religious, and geopolitical factors, which complicates the dynamics between Iran, Hezbollah, and the Gaza conflict (ReliefWeb, 2024).

Hezbollah expressed strong support for Hamas, condemning Israel's military actions in Gaza, and engaged in limited cross-border attacks, including rocket fire into northern Israel, drone reconnaissance, and demonstrations of military capability along the Israel-Lebanon border, raising fears of escalation into a wider regional war (ISW, 2024; CNN, 2024). These actions aimed to pressure Israel without fully committing to a large-scale conflict, aligning with Iran's strategy to support proxies while avoiding direct confrontation (Middle East Council, 2025). The Lebanese government, weakened by political divisions and economic crisis, struggled to manage Hezbollah's influence, balance internal tensions, and mitigate the risks of intensified hostilities, with PM Najib Mikati advocating for de-escalation to protect Lebanese territory (Al Jazeera, 2024; Anadolu Ajansı, 2024). Israel responded to Hezbollah's actions with a combination of military operations and heightened security measures. The IDF increased its presence along the northern border, conducted drills to prepare for potential escalation, and warned civilians in border areas to remain vigilant (ISW, 2024). Israel carried out airstrikes targeting Hezbollah positions in southern Lebanon, including supply routes and infrastructure used for military operations, and employed intelligence operations to monitor Hezbollah's movements and preempt coordinated attacks (Lonsdorf, 2024). In a sophisticated operation dubbed 'pager explosions,' Israel orchestrated the simultaneous detonation of thousands of Hezbollah's handheld pagers and hundreds of walkie-talkies across Lebanon and Syria on September 17 and 18, 2024, injuring nearly 3,000 people, including civilians, and disrupting Hezbollah's communication networks (House of Commons, 2024).

On September 27, 2024, Israel escalated its campaign by assassinating Hezbollah's Secretary-General, Hassan Nasrallah, in an airstrike on Beirut's southern suburbs, targeting a bunker beneath residential buildings, which killed Nasrallah and other senior leaders, including Ali Karaki, and caused significant civilian casualties (ACLED, 2024). Israel viewed Nasrallah's elimination as a critical blow to Hezbollah's leadership and operational capabilities, signaling severe consequences for its actions against Israel, though the strike also intensified regional tensions and displacement in Lebanon (ACLED, 2024).

3.5.3 Yemen's Role During the Gaza War

During the Gaza War, initiated by Hamas's attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, Yemen's role was primarily one of political and symbolic support for the Palestinian cause. The

Houthi movement, which controls much of Yemen and maintains close ties with Iran, condemned Israel's military operations in Gaza and expressed solidarity with Hamas and the Palestinian people through statements and propaganda aligning with their broader anti-Israel and anti-US narrative (ISW, 2024). The Houthis claimed responsibility for multiple attacks, particularly in the Red Sea, aimed at disrupting maritime traffic and targeting Israel-linked vessels, such as the November 2023 hijacking of the 'Galaxy Leader', a British-owned, Japanese-operated ship with tenuous Israeli connections, and missile strikes on other commercial ships (BBC, 2025). They also launched missile and drone strikes against Israeli cities, including Eilat and Tel Aviv, signaling a willingness to escalate tensions and draw attention to their resistance against Israeli actions in Gaza, with over 200 projectiles fired by December 2024 (Security Council Report, 2024; BBC, 2025). These actions reflect the interconnectedness of regional conflicts, as Iran-backed groups like the Houthis support Palestinian resistance while asserting influence over the maritime domain, disrupting global trade routes through the Bab El-Mandeb Strait (Council on Foreign Relations, 2025).

Israel's response to Houthi actions was less extensive compared to its operations against Iran and Hezbollah, but focused on securing its naval and maritime interests. Israel enhanced security measures in the Red Sea, increasing Israeli Navy patrols and deploying the 'INS Magen' to intercept Houthi drones, such as one shot down near Eilat on April 9, 2024 (Breaking Defense, 2023). The Israeli Air Force conducted retaliatory airstrikes on Houthi infrastructure, including strikes on Hodeidah port in July 2024, targeting facilities allegedly used for Iranian weapons smuggling, though these caused civilian casualties and damaged humanitarian operations (CNN, 2024). Israel warned of further responses to Houthi attacks on its interests and remained vigilant about Iran's support for the Houthis, which includes weapons, training, and intelligence (Anadolu Ajansi, 2025). This process underscores the broader regional challenge of Iran's proxy network and its impact on maritime security and Israeli-Palestinian tensions.

The conflict, defined as it is by dreadful wars, reflects timeworn problems of occupation, blockade, and mutual distrust, proving deepened mismanagement by stalled negotiations and cycles of violence (Khalidi, 2020). The UN resolutions, chief among them being Resolution 242 (1967) and Resolution 2334 (2016), called for land for peace and condemned with great specificity the expansion of settlements, but the lack of UN resolution implementation has

kept the region spiraling deeper into escalation (UNSC, 242, 1967; UNSC, 2334, 2016). These conflicts brought about more regional instability, with thousands dead, and the humanitarian situation of the Palestinians worsened, underlying the urgent need for an effective and viable resolution.

The efforts of the UN to resolve the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis through resolutions starting from the 1947 partition plan have essentially been thwarted by the absence of enforcement mechanisms, competition between national interests, and vetoes in the UNSC. The historical grievances stemmed from displacement, occupation, and the non-recognition of Palestinian statehood, leading to endless cycles of violence. The activities of regional actors, Iran, Lebanon (through Hezbollah), and Yemen (through the Houthis), make resolving the conflict very difficult, turning it into a larger regional dispute. Iran's strategic backing of proxy groups has served to aggravate the conflict. The inability to enforce UN resolutions, neither the historical nor the recent escalations have been resolved and remain in a very dangerous loop of violence, thus undermining all avenues toward a durable solution.

4. CASE STUDY: TWO-STATE- SOLUTION

The two-state solution has been perceived as a way toward the peaceful coexistence of Israel and a Palestinian state. In this chapter, the historical unfolding's in the two-state solution are discussed, focusing on the origin and evolution through major diplomatic efforts. The current standing of Israel and the PA will be analyzed, putting forth their stances, challenges, and requisites to accept this solution. Moreover, this chapter sheds light upon positions of regional and international actors, particularly pivotal nations and organizations, who would determine the possibility and realization with respect to the two-state outcome. By an application of principles to historical attempts and contemporary perspectives, this case study outlines the complex nature and ongoing contestation surrounding this path to peace.

4.1 THE HISTORY OF THE TWO-STATE SOLUTION

The UNGA partition plan had a significant effect on the negotiations between both Palestinians and Israelis, as Jewish leadership accepted the plan, considering it a step ahead in establishing a Jewish state (UNSCOP, 1947). In contrast, Arab leadership rejected the partition plan because it violated the rights of the Arab majority population of Palestine and that the partition could lead to their dislocation from their land (Morris, 2001). Thereafter, the violence between Jewish and Arab communities erupted following the adoption of the plan on November 29, 1947, and continued to escalate into the 1948 Arab-Israeli War after the proclamation of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948 (Gelvin, 2014). Subsequently, that war carved out the territories and displaced large numbers of Palestinians, which ultimately became an everlasting legacy for the region.

The idea of two states developed in later dialogues, especially after the Six-Day War, eliciting more debates on the destiny of these areas and Palestinians' rights (Morris, 2001; Khalidi, 2020). The UN called for the mandated departure of Israeli military forces from territories occupied during the conflict, stressed the importance of dealing with the refugee issue, and asserted that all states should acknowledge each other's right to exist peacefully and securely within defined legitimate borders under the 242 Resolution (UNSC, 242 1967).

Further, the resolution asserts the urgent need to find a solution for the displaced people issue with the recognition of the plight of the Palestinians. This resolution is considered the

foundational document for peace negotiations, as it is cited in discussions aimed at a two-state solution and lays the preliminary foundation for negotiation on core issues for the conflict. Thus, the Palestinian leaders, including the PLO, started talking about their vision of having a Palestinian state along with Israel, which was a radical transformation in Palestinian political thought as it evolved from mere resistance against Israeli occupation to also a demand for statehood with national rights and sovereignty (Khalidi, 2020).

In 1974, Arafat addressed the UNGA, highlighting the suffering of the Palestinians because of the ongoing conflict and displacement. He also called for international support to achieve a peaceful solution to the conflict through the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. Arafat's speech elevated the Palestinian cause in international discourse and augmented awareness of the Palestinian plight; thereby, he advanced the two-state solution as a credible way to peace in the region, which laid the groundwork for future negotiations to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a win-win approach (Khalidi, 2020; Morris, 2001).

The Camp David Accords of 1978 sought to provide the basis for a peace process in the area, as the negotiations were primarily about Egyptian-Israeli relations, and they also demonstrated the need for a settlement of the Palestinian issue within the broader context of peace, paving the way for future negotiations that would involve recognizing the rights of Palestinians and setting forth guidelines for negotiations on issues like borders, the status of Jerusalem, and the rights of Palestinian refugees. In addition, the agreement called for the creation of a self-governance specialist to meet the needs of the Palestinian people within a five-year transitional period (US Department of State, 1978). However, some specifics and the execution of this arrangement's substance were vague, which led to contrasting elucidations and debate in the long term that followed (Quandt, 2001).

The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) held a meeting in 1988 in Algiers aimed at garnering international support for the Palestinian cause and highlighting the legitimacy of their claims over the land. It declared its acceptance of the two-state solution and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state based on the pre-1967 borders, as it referred to the UNGA 181 resolution 'Partition Plan' as an origin of legitimacy for the establishment of a Palestinian state (Khalidi, 2020; UNSCOP, 1947). On the other hand, the PNA recognized Israel's right to exist. This marked a shift in PLO politics toward diplomacy

rather than armed struggle as a way to resolve the conflict, which would allow for future peace negotiations. The PNA resolution also called for negotiations based on UNSC resolutions 242 and 338, which demanded Israel leave the occupied territories and emphasized the right of all states in the region to live in peace (UNSC, 1967, 242; UNSC, 1973, 338).

Israel's government, led by PM Yitzhak Shamir, denied all legitimacy to the Palestinian state proclaimed by the PLO, as Israeli officials stated that the declaration was contrary to the tenets of the peace, and they emphasized that the statehood should be through negotiations, not by unilateral actions (Tessler, 2009). They also worked to rally international support against the PLO's declaration by stating Israel's own peace initiatives and willingness to negotiate, referring to its commitment to peace through historical agreements such as Camp David in 1979 with Egypt (Quandt, 2001). Israeli leaders engaged various states and international organizations in stressing that the PLO activities create obstacles to achieving peace (Morris, 2001; Tessler, 2009). They argued the PLO was not representative of the Palestinian people, and the organization was viewed as a terrorist organization by Israel and its allies since the Israeli government worked actively to inform the international community about PLO engagement in terrorist activities and attacks against Israel to delegitimize the PLO's position. These strategies primarily aimed to influence public opinion, especially in the Western states, and to garner support for Israel's security concerns.

Israel was concerned that the declaration could increase violent activities and disturbances among the Palestinians with the continuation of the first Intifada, which led Israel to raise its military and security measures presence, which included curfews and military patrols, with expanding settlements to consolidate their claim to the territory and counter Palestinian aspirations for statehood (Tessler, 2009). This declaration facilitated the way for further negotiations, particularly the Oslo Accords early in the 1990s (Quandt, 2001).

The first Oslo Accord was signed on September 13, 1993, following secret negotiations in Oslo, and were implemented in 1994. Israel agreed to withdraw its military, transferring the authority of these parts to the PA gradually (US Department of State, 1993). Moreover, the accord provided plans for economic cooperation that included investment in Palestinian infrastructure and economy (Khalidi, 2020).

The Oslo II was signed on 28 September 1995 in Taba, Egypt, to build on the First Accord. The accord included negotiations about the territorial division in the West Bank between Israel and the PA with provisions for security cooperation, which included establishing mechanisms to prevent violence and promote stability in the region, and called for the involvement of international monitors to ensure the accord's implementation by both parties and called for democratic elections of the Palestinian Council, which would be the legislative body for the PA and enhance political representation. This accord set the stage to incorporate more negotiations for the outstanding issues, such as the status of Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, settlements, and borders (US Department of State, 1995).

The Oslo Accords were intended to settle the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, but they faced numerous difficulties, including highly ingrained mutual distrust between both parties due to historical grievances, violence, and political rhetoric, which engendered a lack of faith in each other's intentions, thus making it hard for either party to negotiate and implement the agreements in a duly effective manner (Tessler, 2009).

The political division in Palestinian leadership between the PLO and Hamas weakened the Palestinian position and made it difficult to have a united front in negotiations with Israel because Hamas and Islamic Jihad were opposed to the accords and sought to undermine the peace process through violent activities, which heightened the tension and made it hard to carry on peaceful dialogue (Khalidi, 2020). On the other hand, Israel has taken several measures to frustrate the peace process, including military operations in the West Bank and incursions into Palestinian territories, particularly during periods of escalated violence, with the erection of various checkpoints and barriers, which have hampered the movement of Palestinians in their daily lives and economic activities. These restrictions have been criticized as undermining the very autonomy that has been provided to the PA in the Oslo Accords, and the ongoing expansion of Israeli settlements into the West Bank would preclude the possibility of the establishment of a Palestinian state (B'Tselem, 2017).

The international actors played a critical role in the peace process since each state has different interests and approaches. For instance, the US provided a crucial mediating role to ensure that peace talks continued through diplomatic support and by making substantial financial contributions (Quandt, 2001). Nevertheless, it had its own interests in the region

and eventually manifested in a biased pursuit of supporting Israel, which undermined the PA's trust in the peace process.

The Arab states also had different reactions to the Oslo Accords, as a number of Arab states accepted the peace process, while some denounced the accords as betraying the Palestinian cause, such as Syria, which had territorial concerns with Israel regarding the Golan Heights. Syria considered the Oslo agreement would further legitimize Israel's position and diminish the Syrian claims, which led the Syrian government to utilize its influence in the region to thwart the peace process (Quandt, 2001). This division among Arab states produced a complicated arena as some of the states sought to undermine the accords by impeding negotiations and efforts that aimed to reach a peaceful resolution (Tessler, 2009).

The Israeli and Palestinian public opinion influenced the political landscape and leaders' willingness to make concessions, which had an impact on the implementation of the Oslo Accords. Popular support for the first Oslo Accords came from both parties (Shikaki, 1996). The Israelis saw it as paving the way toward peace and security; the Palestinians saw it as a progressive advancement toward statehood and self-determination, but during the second Intifada, violence escalated, which manifested intense skeptical sentiments within both populations (Shikaki, 2002).

The Israelis were concerned about security implications concerning the accords due to the potential violence from Palestinian groups, while many Palestinians felt that the accords did not adequately tackle core issues such as borders, refugees, and the status of Jerusalem (Tessler, 2009). Moreover, leaders on both sides had to navigate public sentiment carefully; in Israel, Yitzhak Rabin faced opposition from right-wing factions about the concessions to the Palestinians. On the Palestinian side, Yasser Arafat had to contend with factions that rejected the peace process altogether, which created internal divisions that diminished the effectiveness of the accords in general (Tessler, 2009).

After the Oslo Accords, discussions about the two-state solution were taken up again at the 'Camp David Summit' in July 2000 under the auspices of US President Bill Clinton. The primary aim of the summit was to engage in intense negotiations aimed at achieving a peace agreement based on a two-state framework to resolve the longstanding Israeli-Palestinian

conflict, since both Israeli PM Ehud Barak and PA President Yasser Arafat had expressed commitment to finding a peaceful resolution to the conflict (Quandt, 2001).

The meeting aimed to address the final status of issues that had been left unresolved after various rounds of negotiation, including the territorial division, as the summit called for the withdrawal of Israel from parts of the West Bank and suggested the concept of 'land swaps,' where Israel retains settlement areas in exchange for other territories being given up to Palestinians, which would permit the creation of a Palestinian state. However, the Jerusalem issue added complexity to the negotiations due to its religious importance, as both sides claimed it as their capital. Thus, the summit suggested shared sovereignty over parts of Jerusalem, especially religious sites (Ross, 2004).

The summit involved discussions regarding the right of return for the displaced Palestinians, which included discussions for compensation and resettlement as an achievable solution to solve this problem (Khalidi, 2020). The security arrangements for Israelis and Palestinians had been a crucial topic and were to be included in order that any agreement would make both sides safe, as Israel's security was the most important priority for Barak, and he sought assurances that any agreement would adequately address threats to Israel. On the other side, the Palestinians sought their sovereignty and the end of the occupation (Ross, 2004).

After all the intense negotiations conducted by US President Clinton, the summit could not close the huge divide that lay between the two parties, and they could not reach an agreement on several issues, including the border issue, as the Palestinians demand a Palestinian state based on the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital (Quandt, 2001).

However, Barak proposes a plan for a Palestinian state that would cover approximately 90% of the West Bank and Gaza with Israeli retention over important areas in the West Bank, retaining Israeli control over parts of East Jerusalem, which was a matter of contention, as Jerusalem has religious importance and national significance for Israelis and Palestinians. Furthermore, Barak's offer contained a complicated framework for security, specifying the presence of Israeli military forces in certain areas of the West Bank, even after withdrawal, that, according to the Palestinian leadership, infringed upon their sovereign state and independence rights. Moreover, the return of Palestinian refugees was a major hurdle, as Palestinians demanded their right to return to homes that were lost during the Arab-Israeli

War in 1948, while Israelis were concerned that this would endanger the Jewish character of the state (Ross, 2004).

The Barak plan proposed a limited solution, as he suggested that some refugees could go back to the new Palestinian state, while others could be resettled in third countries willing to accept them, such as Jordan and other Arab states. However, the plan raised Palestinian concerns since most refugees have built lives in these host countries and faced hardships of having limited rights and integration problems with the culture and society. Many see this as being further displacement rather than a solution and stated that he would offer compensation to those who could not return, which could mean providing monetary payment or assistance to help the refugees rebuild their lives in another state. However, for Palestinians, no amount of financial compensation could ever replace their right to return to their lands, and they viewed it as an attempt to buy off their rights and obliterate their historical grievances (Khalidi, 2020).

The Palestinian leadership viewed the proposal as inadequate because it denied their historical rights and failed to address the humanitarian implications of the refugee issue, which made Barak's proposal unacceptable, as the proposal did not satisfy their needs for statehood and control over their territory. Moreover, the political landscape was complicated, as Barak's government indeed faced internal political pressure from hardliners who were averse to major concessions to the Palestinians, while Arafat was pressured by Palestinian factions who criticized the peace process (Ross, 2004).

The summit indicates many complexities involved in the conflict and the challenges of securing lasting peace. Even though there were high hopes, the summit failed to produce a final agreement, thereby highlighting the underlying issues at stake (Quandt, 2001).

The UNSC adopted resolution 1397 in 2002 to address the growing violence and tensions that pervaded the region during the Second Intifada. This resolution expressed a need for the establishment of the Palestinian state along with Israel as the only avenue through which peace can be achieved (UNSC, 1397, 2002). However, the Israeli government acknowledged the resolution's call for a two-state solution but objected to the language and the implications of the resolution, in which Israeli officials argued that the resolution failed to address Israeli security concerns and did not blame both sides equally for the violent activities and failed to

condemn Palestinian violence and terrorism that was directed against Israeli citizens. On the other hand, Israel continued its operations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and claimed to be fighting terrorism and guaranteeing security. The Israeli government asserted that, before it could negotiate the two-state solution, there had to be a process for peace involving serious guarantees for security and a complete cessation of attacks against its citizens (Tessler, 2009).

After a year of this resolution, the 'Roadmap for Peace' in 2003 was formulated by the Quartet, which consists of the US, the EU, Russia, and the UN. The plan was in response to the ongoing violence perpetrated during the Second Intifada and the humanitarian situation of Palestinians concerning the living conditions, accessibility to resources, and their rights. The persistent tensions and conflicts affected the Middle East region and produced global threats, which led these entities to become aware of their responsibility to engage in dialogue and negotiations between the conflicting parties toward a peaceful settlement through a two-state solution (UN, 2003).

'The Roadmap for Peace' aims to set the stage for dialogue and cooperation, maintaining the importance of mutual recognition and respect between Israelis and Palestinians and proposing a stepwise approach in which each phase is to be dependent on the successful implementation of the previous one, which means the process through negotiations and peace-building would be seen to be mutual while introducing a scheme for peace that is structured and phased with three major phases (US Department of State, 2003).

'Phase One' was an important step in laying the groundwork for future negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, and the goal during this phase was mainly to stop the violence and terrorism, which had grown since the Second Intifada. The plan called for the Palestinian leadership to affirm the right of Israel to a peaceful and secure existence while calling for the immediate cessation of violence against Israelis, while the Israeli leaders unambiguously affirm that they are committed to a two-state solution (UN, 2003; US Department of State, 2003). The plan called for political reforms within the PA, including dismantling groups that engaged in violent acts against Israel and arresting their members to maintain order by cooperating with Israeli security forces to share intelligence on potential threats (US Department of State, 2003). Moreover, the plan demanded that the PA build Palestinian institutions involving constitutional drafting for Palestinian statehood and hold democratic

elections to build trust and legitimacy among the Palestinian people (US Department of State, 2003). On the other hand, Israel is supposed to withdraw from the Palestinian areas that it occupied during the Second Intifada, put an end to all settlement activity, ease movement restrictions, and dismantle all outposts. Moreover, it takes steps to improve the humanitarian situation in Palestine (UNSC, 2003; US Department of State, 2003).

'Phase Two' laid the groundwork for a provisional Palestinian state based on temporary borders, which would be set by realities on the ground, taking into consideration Israeli settlements and security needs (US Department of State, 2003). This phase was a crucial step toward enhancing the autonomy of the Palestinian people and empowering the PA, providing it with a framework for self-administration whereby it can effectively manage and respond to its citizens' needs. Additionally, the Quartet would hold an international conference after the Palestinian elections, primarily focused on rebuilding and developing the economy for Palestinians, as economic stability is considered a key component of the discussion concerning peace and the reduction of tensions. Topics of multilateral interest about the Middle East would also be discussed, such as water, the environment, economic development, refugees, and arms control issues (US Department of State, 2003).

In 'Phase Three', both sides will conduct negotiations to establish a permanent status agreement and to address all unresolved issues between them, in which the Quartet will convene a second international conference to conclude negotiations on resolutions concerning borders, Jerusalem, refugees, and settlements (US Department of State, 2003). This agreement accepts the sovereignty of both Israel and a newly established Palestinian state and will seek to achieve a comprehensive peace settlement between Israel and Lebanon and Israel and Syria (UN, 2003; US Department of State, 2003).

Both the Israeli and the Palestinian leadership showed no genuine commitment to the provisions of the Road Map. The Israeli PM Sharon's refusal to freeze settlement activities endangered the efficacy of the Road Map by enabling the claim that settlements were significant for Israeli security and historic title to the land, thus rendering it doubly difficult to draw the borders of the future state of Palestine (Gaouette, 2003).

The peace process has also faced several challenges, including the internal political divisions that exist on both sides. For example, in Israel, right-wing parties like the Likud have

frequently called for a hard approach, giving the importance of security and territorial integrity over the engagement of peace negotiations that require making concessions to the PA that could threaten Israel's security. On the other hand, left-wing parties such as Labor were perceived to have a more favorable attitude toward discussion and compromise, with the belief that this would ultimately result in peace (Niu & Zhang, 2017). In the same way, the PA, led by the Fatah party, acted more pragmatically in terms of negotiations and compromises to create a viable state and representation through diplomacy, while the other factions, like Hamas, rejected the peace process and called for armed resistance, thus undermining the position of the PA and making it difficult to present a united negotiating front (Kurz, 2007). Moreover, the plan included progressive stages for both parties to reach a peaceful resolution (Epstein, 2006). However, the non-implementation by the international community to hold parties accountable for their decisions or take action on their noncompliance has also been a mounting obstacle to progress and ultimately brought about the derailment of the whole Roadmap for Peace (Epstein, 2006). The roadmap also could not address the core issues, which remained contentious issues and prevented any way forward toward a final agreement (Epstein, 2006).

Following the collapse of the Roadmap for Peace, the UNSC in 2003 passed Resolution 1515 supporting the 'Quartet's Roadmap for Peace' and called on Israel and the Palestinians to adhere to the plan's principles (UNSC, 2003). Moreover, numerous conferences were held, urging both sides to negotiate toward a solution regarding the ongoing conflict. However, these efforts were in vain and did not result in any significant progress in the peace negotiations (Khalidi, 2020).

In January 2020, US President Donald Trump proposed a peace plan for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the 'Deal of the Century.' The plan proposed a Palestinian state with a lot of restrictions, as it would be formed by fragmented and non-contiguous land, which raises concerns about its viability and that the areas allocated for Palestinians would be virtually cut off from one another by Israeli settlements and military zones, thus furthering the inability of the state to function cohesively and complicating the transportation, communication, and economic development (White House, 2020). The proposal suggests that Israeli control would remain in the major settlement areas in the West Bank, which is

considered illegal by many countries under international law and UNSC Resolution 2334 (White House, 2020; UN, 2016; B'Tselem, 2021).

The city of Jerusalem would serve as the undivided capital of Israel, and the Palestinians would have a capital located in some areas in East Jerusalem, but overall control would remain with Israel, and it entailed provisions concerning security arrangements for the safety of Israel, including requirements for a demilitarized Palestinian state with an ongoing Israeli military presence in certain defined areas. The plan demanded that Arab countries recognize Israel and normalize relations to improve Israel's position in the region (White House, 2020)

The plan was resoundingly condemned by the PA, which utterly rejected it, asserting that the proposal favored Israeli interests over those of Palestinians and did not deal with the major issues, such as the right to return for Palestinian refugees and settlements. The international actors, including the EU and the UN, expressed their doubts towards the plan and insisted on negotiations based on past agreements and international law (Al Jazeera, 2020; Oppenheim, 2020; UN News, 2020).

Despite all the international pressure on both sides to engage in peace negotiations, Israel has increased settlement activities in the West Bank at an accelerated pace (UN, 2024). This involves building new housing units and the legalization of outposts, which are illegal under international law, as they could encroach on land that would be essential for a future Palestinian state, making the prospect of a contiguous and viable Palestinian territory increasingly difficult (UN, 2024). The estimates showed that the number of Israeli settlers in the West Bank from 1967 to 2023 increased to over 500,000 (Peace Now, 2025). Moreover, after the 7th of October 2023, Israel significantly expanded its settlement activities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem under the pretext of security concerns. These settlements present a physical line at the southern periphery of Jerusalem that keeps East Jerusalem and the West Bank apart and prevents any direct access between them, which makes the establishment of a Palestinian state hard to achieve and the two-state solution employing Jerusalem as the capital for both states utterly unviable (UN OCHA, 2024). In the backdrop of the West Bank situation, on May 22, 2023, the Israeli Minister for Defense, Yoav Gallant, announced the cancellation of the 2005 disengagement law, which called for formal Israeli withdrawal from the northern West Bank and Gaza, which led various Israeli

ministers and Knesset members to push for ‘voluntary migration’ with expanding settlements (Sharon & ToI Staff, 2023).

Settlers in Israel also set up 26 outposts and climbed to the highest advancement in a year since 1991, while the government advanced the legality of 15 ‘illegal’ outposts. In parallel with Israel's ramped-up settlement expansion plans, violent acts perpetrated by settlers against Palestinians in the occupied land increased (Anadolu Ajansı, 2024; UNGA, 2024). Moreover, Israel's authority has developed many renewable energy sites in the West Bank, which is considered a dangerous advancement because it eclipses Palestine's development opportunities and strengthens the Israeli presence (Peace Now, 2024).

There have been discussions and proposals in the Israeli government led by PM Benjamin Netanyahu on the annexation of certain parts of the West Bank (Peace Now, 2025). Several Israeli leaders claim this annexation plan is central to the security and territorial integrity of Israel. It also includes the annexation of the Jordan Valley and different settlement blocs under the pretext of protecting Israel's borders (Peace Now, 2025). However, the plan has faced opposition from the international community, including the UN and the EU, as they argue that it would hinder peace efforts and violate the principles of UN resolutions (UNSC, 2016; Oppenheim, 2020). Further, Israel put restrictions, including military checkpoints, roadblocks, and movement restrictions, such as the separation barrier that bisects Palestinian territories and could be an impediment to establishing a contiguous and viable Palestinian state. Moreover, these restrictions put limitations on access to resources, which causes financial instability and affects Palestinian daily life (UNOCHA, 2024).

The Israeli policy significantly contributes to the delegitimization of the PA in its eyes through a policy of denying it recognition as a legitimate negotiating party. On the other hand, Israeli restrictions on the Palestinian economy deny the PA financial resources and make it dependent on foreign aid. This dependency acts on its ability to make independent decisions and to promote its sovereignty (World Bank, 2024; Khalidi, 2020)

4.2 CURRENT TWO-STATE SOLUTION POSITION

The two-state solution, in which independent Israeli and Palestinian states live side by side along the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as the Palestinian capital, is the most central and the most elusive framework for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The situation, as of

April 22, 2025, is such that Israel, the PA, Arab states, and the international community have different priorities when looking at negotiation positions that are influenced by security issues, land aspirations, and diplomatic pressure. The increased tensions, especially after the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023, settlement expansion, and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, have aggravated these circumstances, making the prospects for any negotiated settlement hard to achieve. This part analyzes each party's position to provide a better understanding of the prevailing situation.

4.2.1 Israel's Position

The Israeli perspective on the two-state solution has changed, with the historical setting varying from support to skepticism or opposition over the years. The Israeli government has expressed its formal support for the idea of a two-state solution. However, the parameters and conditions of the solution have remained the cause of unlimited debate and disagreement (Black, 2017).

In the Israeli perspective, some of the key issues have to do with the future borders of a Palestinian state, the status of Jerusalem, the right of return for Palestinian refugees, and security. Some Israelis favor a two-state solution based on pre-1967 borders with land exchanges, while others support retaining control of population centers in these areas for security purposes (Shenhav, 2012). Thus, the Israeli government's response tends to reflect a resolution of competing Israeli interests and the varied impact of political parties and coalition groups, as the right-wing parties show skepticism or would be totally opposed to a Palestinian state, while the left-wing parties would probably be inclined towards it or consider it a good option to live in peace with the Palestinians (PCPSR, 2022). Thus, the current government composition and overall balance in the Knesset significantly affect the government's policies toward a two-state solution.

The Israeli position is also at times determined by the condition of security facing them, the movements of Palestinian leaders, and international pressure. The ongoing Israeli-Palestinian violence and attacks have bred doubt among some Israelis on the viability of a two-state solution (PCPSR, 2022). In addition, the building and expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank have come to serve as an obstacle to peace because they complicate the chances of achieving a two-state solution (B'Tselem, 2017). Moreover, the

Israeli-American relationship shaped the Israeli position. The US has had a history of supporting the two-state solution, and its effect on Israeli policy is immense. However, shifts in the US administration and changing world dynamics changed the Israeli position (Zanotti, 2021).

4.2.2 The PA Position

The PA, in 1988 (Algiers Declaration), had stated that it was in support of the concept of the two-state solution, which was reaffirmed in 2016, 2017, and 2023, demanding a state based on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as capital, and a resolution for 6 million refugees according to UN Resolution 194 (Khalidi, 2020; UN, 2025; UNGA, 194, 1948). It insists on the withdrawal of Israel, according to the ruling of the ICJ, July 2024. (ICJ, 2024; Reuters, 2024). The PA highlights Israel's 695,000 settlers (as of 2023), 600 checkpoints, and 708 km separation barrier (85 percent of the structure is on Palestinian land), which makes it impossible for a contiguous state to exist (UN OCHA, 2024; Peace Now, 2024).

The PA has sought UN membership since being granted observer status in 2012, consisting mostly of International Criminal Court (ICC) cases against Israel, which, however, have been consistently warded off by the US vetoes (UN, 2012; UN, 2024; ICC, 2015; Khalidi, 2020). The situation, however, changed with the passing of resolution ES-10/23 on May 10, 2024, at the UNGA, where 143 states voted in favor while nine states opposed, confirming that the State of Palestine is qualified for UN membership under Article 4 of the UN Charter and suggesting to the UNSC reassessing its admission favorably. Palestine was given additional procedural entitlements effective September 10, 2024, which would permit it to sit along with member states, the power to submit proposals, and participate in committees, but it does not have full membership or voting rights (UN, 2024; UN News, 2024).

The ruling of the UNGA and the recognition of the state of Palestine by 147 states represent overwhelming global support for a Palestinian state, thus verifying the claim of the PA for representation of a viable state. This resolution created procedural upgrades (proposing agenda items, etc.) to augment the PA's capability of improving its diplomacy and would empower the PA to denounce Israel's acts in UN forums (UN, 2024; UN News, 2024; Al Jazeera, 2024). Moreover, the UNGA resolution reaffirms the PA's commitment to a negotiated two-state solution, as it corresponds with the 1967 borders and international law,

such as the ICJ's July 2024 ruling against occupation. According to PA Ambassador Riyad Mansour, a 'yes' vote is "an investment in peace" and the two-state framework, not against Israel (Al Jazeera, 2024; CNN, 2024).

4.2.3 Regional and International Actors' Position

The positions on the two-state solution held by regional states are diverse due to varied interests, historical relations, and political dynamics, as some states, like Egypt and Jordan, are actively involved in efforts to establish peace, supporting the two-state solution as the gateway to regional stability and security, especially as they uphold historical peace agreements with Israel (Black, 2017). This support arises due to the desire for regional stability, Palestinian self-determination, and the cessation of Israel's occupation.

On the other hand, some countries, such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), seem to favor implementing the two-state solution. Their position often works in tandem with the trend toward normalizing relations with Israel. These two positions give precedence to the strategic benefits of unification by opposing competitors in the region and by promoting economic opportunities (Britannica, 2025). However, other regional actors, for example, Iran, remain starkly opposed to the two-state solution, with the argument that it violates Palestinian rights and presents a political concession (Parsi, 2019).

The international community highly favors the two-state solution, as it is viewed as the most functional way to establish a settlement for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This position has been demonstrated in numerous UN resolutions, declarations, and diplomatic efforts. Major international actors, including the UN, EU, and US, recurrently approve of the two-state solution, and they consider it a viable framework for a just and lasting peace, recognizing an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel (EU External Action Service, 2024; Zanolli, 2021). However, the international community's approach is faced with challenges and complexities, including prevailing disagreement regarding more specific issues surrounding a two-state solution, such as the definition of the borders of a potential future Palestinian state, the status of Jerusalem, and the demand for the right of return for Palestinian refugees. Furthermore, the international community's position is influenced by the continuous Israeli-Palestinian clashes, division within Palestinian politics, and a lack of trust between the two sides (Brown, 2005).

In conclusion, the two-state solution has been regarded as the way to peace through the establishment of the separate Israeli and Palestinian states. However, it remains unfulfilled owing to historical setbacks and the clash of priorities. Israel's standpoint on the issue is largely marked by security concerns and settlement expansion, which did not align with the demands of the PA for sovereignty, territorial contiguity, and the resolution of all the final status issues, such as Jerusalem and refugees. The inability to resolve these differences over the years, together with violence and mistrust, has formed an impenetrable wall to a workable two-state solution, thus putting its prospects in jeopardy despite its long stay as an issue in peace discourse.



5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter will explain exactly how the issue has developed from the neorealist perspective, which emphasizes state sovereignty and the anarchic structure of the international system. As discussed in the theoretical chapter, the states secure themselves with their powers and interests in a self-help system. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, neorealists focus on power dynamics and the existing conflict for land while considering that the two-state solution is based on power relations with strategic interests. Their argument lies in the existing balance of power between Israel and Palestine and regional dynamics. Moreover, they emphasize the effect of the polarity system during the Cold War and the post-Cold War on the UNSC dynamics. The chapter sheds light on these perspectives while analyzing the challenges and opportunities confronting a two-state solution amid competing interests.

5.1 THE PLO'S POSITION ON THE TWO-STATE SOLUTION

According to a neorealist perspective, the acceptance by the PLO of the two-state solution, particularly the Palestinian Declaration of Independence in 1988 and the Oslo Accords in 1993, was a rational response to the structural constraints due to the anarchical international system. Following the neorealism line of thought, actors (even non-state entities) prioritize their survival and security through the distribution of power, alignment with stronger states, and balancing threats (Waltz, 1979). The PLO shifted from demanding total liberation of historic Palestine to accepting a state alongside Israel due to the compounding influence of global, regional, and internal pressures.

The end of the Cold War changed the strategic environment of the PLO. The Soviet Union during the 1970s and 1980s provided funds for the provision of military aid, training, and diplomatic cover so that the PLO could be fully equipped to oppose Israel and maintain its rejectionist stance (Quandt, 1993). However, the PLO lost support and influence from the Soviet Union, leaving it without a great power ally in a largely unipolar world dominated by the US, an ardent supporter of Israel.

Neorealists argue that weaker states adapt to the preferences of a dominant state to secure their position (Waltz, 1979). In this sense, the US-led Madrid Conference of 1991 and the

Oslo process placed the PLO in a position whereby it was forced to recognize Israel and accept a two-state solution to achieve international legitimacy and to gain access to negotiations (Shlaim, 2001). The PLO's endorsement of UN Resolutions 242 and 338 in 1988, which would imply Israel's right to exist, along with Arafat's 1993 letter to Rabin, in which he explicitly recognized Israel, were therefore seen as pragmatic concessions in deference to US demands and to avoid marginalization of the Palestinian case (Rabinovich, 1998).

The PLO was subjected to increasing isolation in the Arab world, depriving it of bargaining power. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 disrupted PLO military actions, forcing the leadership to leave Beirut for Tunis and thereby decreasing regional influence (Khalidi, 2006). Most importantly, the PLO's support for Saddam Hussein's attack during the Gulf War had clearly put it in a bad position with some of its major financial supporters, such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other Gulf states, all of which had been giving funding of hundreds of millions annually (Sayigh, 1997). This ensuing financial strangulation limited the PLO's ability to sustain its infrastructure and armed struggle. The neorealists emphasize that the actions of the states are directed toward the material constraints (Waltz, 1979). The PLO perceived negotiations as a means of securing its territorial base through the Oslo Accords, which promised to bring establishment of the PA and restore some international and Arab backing to it (Shlaim, 2001). In the post-Oslo period, the PLO regained diplomatic recognition and funding from the West and Arab states, thus further strengthening its own survival (Pappe, 2006).

The Israeli military foundation postured an existential danger to the PLO's equipped battle methodology. The Six-Day War and the Lebanon War in 1982 showed that making the interest of confrontations with Israel would be a zero-sum approach (Morris, 2001). For illustration, the Intifada fairly expanded the worldwide mindfulness of the Palestinian case but could not lift Israeli control on the ground (Khalidi, 2006).

The concept of balancing held by neorealism is that weaker states change over to strategies of diplomacy when military options fail (Walt, 1987). The PLO accepted a two-state solution in order to establish a state in part of Palestine, which the authority would counter Israel through diplomacy and international institutions, not by employing violence. The promise

of limited self-government in the West Bank and Gaza in the Oslo Accords was considered as a part of this vision, despite the compromises made by the PLO (Shlaim, 2001).

The worldwide framework that the Western powers made constrained the PLO to alter its position. The US and European states made the recognition of the PLO as the authentic agent of the Palestinian people contingent on the PLO's dismissal of any violent action toward Israel (Quandt 1993). The Oslo agreements institutionalized these motivations, as the common acknowledgment between the PLO and Israel opened channels for Western help and political relations, which are basic to the PLO's survival (Pappe, 2006). In neorealism, states adapt to the preferences of hegemonic powers to access resources and legitimacy (Waltz, 1979), and the PLO's meeting out with US and Western state conditions is indicative of this rational calculation.

The PLO contended with an intramural schism due to the rise of Islamist groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad, particularly during the First Intifada. They contested the PLO's monopoly over the Palestinian national movement, which demanded a necessary policy pivot. Neorealism emphasizes the necessity of cohesiveness and presence in a competitive landscape (Waltz, 1979). Adopting the two-state solution allowed the PLO to prove itself as a practical actor able to achieve actual results through entities such as the PA and interim self-rule, thus evading rivals (Khalidi, 2006). Moreover, the perspective of neorealism is a way to survive rather than preserve ideological commitments (Waltz, 1979). The leadership of the PLO, particularly Yasser Arafat, realizes that the dream of freeing all of historic Palestine is becoming increasingly impracticable due to Israel's rising power and international backing, and the two-state solution was taken up as an admission of strategic retreat to ensure the survival of the Palestinian national existence. The existence of the PA, even with limited sovereignty, provided a state-like structure, garnered international acknowledgement, and served as a platform to build institutions and maintain the PLO's involvement in world politics (Khalidi, 2006). This complies with neorealism's contention that states pursue the achievable goals over the unachievable ones in the face of systemic constraints.

5.2 ISRAEL'S POSITION ON THE TWO-STATE SOLUTION

According to neorealism, states prioritize their security and relative power, making decisions based on systemic constraints, power asymmetries, and external pressures rather than ideology or domestic politics alone (Waltz, 1979). This is demonstrated in Israel's approach to the two-state solution, which involved diplomatic negotiations like Oslo Accords, Camp David but stopped on the acknowledgment of a Palestinian state, which is a rational approach to maintain military and strategic superiority, balance out regional threats, and navigate the expectations globally, especially those from its primary ally, the US.

Surrounded by historically hostile neighbors and facing Palestinian resistance, Israel sees both the West Bank and Gaza as buffers against potential threats. Giving full control to a sovereign Palestinian state may result in diminished strategic depth for Israel, with the West Bank being so close to the major cities of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv (Mearsheimer, 2001). The military dominance of Israel, coupled with advanced technology, nuclear capability, and US support, facilitates the preservation of the current situation with settlements and checkpoints designed to consolidate control over selected areas (Morris, 2001). Israel's limited involvement in two-state talks (e.g., Oslo's interim autonomy) from a neorealist perspective can be regarded as a way to avoid international pressure without having to give way on some important security issues involving Israeli security (Shlaim, 2001). The regional threat to Israel from Iran and its proxies affects the Israeli approach to accepting a two-state solution (Dvali, 2024). For Israel, the fully independent Palestinian state could enable hostile actors to gain access to it, with Hamas having gained control of Gaza since 2007 and denying the existence of Israel (Dvali, 2024). Demands made by Israel in any two-state deal for demilitarization and security arrangements, as reflected in what they made at Camp David 2000, emphasize the neorealist perspective of nullifying possible threats (Rabinovich, 2004). Moreover, by normalizing relations with Arab countries, Israel reinforces its position in the region and reduces the immediacy of the setting up of Palestinian statehood, as the Arab support for the Palestinian cause flounders (Guzansky & Marshall, 2020).

Israel enjoys the status of being the leading beneficiary of US affection as the global hegemon, which supports Israel with over \$3 billion annually in military aid along with diplomatic cover (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007). US pressures for a two-state solution, evident through Clinton's use of mediation at Oslo and Camp David, led Israel to conduct

negotiations in order to secure US backing. However, Israel's strong position as a reliable strategic ally in the Middle Eastern region for the US is more important than demanding that Israel make concessions (Quandt, 1993). For example, despite US rhetoric against Israeli settlement expansion, it continues unabated because it faces minimal systemic consequences, which indicates the neorealist logic that power always prevails when vital interests are involved (Pappe, 2006).

From the neorealists' view, states seek legitimacy not to be isolated, but maintaining security remains their primary concern (Waltz, 1979). In response to Israeli ostensible cooperation, international consensus around a two-state solution, as expressed in UN resolutions and EU policies, has weighed heavily in this direction. Joining the Oslo process and later negotiations has been a way to show willingness to negotiate, thereby deflecting criticism and ensuring Western support (Shlaim, 2001). On the neorealist scale, Israel's continued expansion of settlements and control over borders and airspace are actions in clear disregard for international opinion. Israel sees this as the consolidation of its presence in strategically important areas through the settlement project (Khalidi, 2006). This duality illustrates the tension between systemic incentives like legitimacy and power preservation.

Israel's parliamentary system is complicated due to coalition governments comprising a plethora of different parties, such as Labor, Likud, religious or settler-aligned groups, involving left-wing or right-wing ideologies. Every party has a different approach under different conditions toward the two-state solution. PM Rabin, who led the Labor coalition during the Oslo Accords, reflected the interaction between systemic forces and the preference of the coalition as he sought negotiations to synchronize with US mediation in exchange for reducing occupation costs-from intensive policing to the PA, which can be seen as a neorealist adaptation to hegemonic pressure (Shlaim, 2001). On the other hand, Likud under PM Netanyahu pursued a settlement policy augmented by security considerations, viewing the question of Palestinian statehood as a threat to security depth (Pappe, 2006). Neorealism sees these changes as variations within an overarching strategy, as the ideologies and expressions of the coalitions may differ, but their strategic focus is on power and security for Israel, being unwilling to make concessions that might strengthen a Palestinian state or erode their hold on key territories (Mearsheimer, 2001).

5.3 THE ARAB STATES' POSITION ON TWO-STATE SOLUTION

The neorealists emphasize that the Arab states' recognition of Israel and initiation of diplomatic relations are a rationally comprehensible approach in light of a power structure within the anarchic international system that imposes survival, security, and strategic interest as state priorities (Waltz 1979). Neorealism emphasizes that states move to maximize their relative power or align themselves with stronger states to counter threats and to gain benefits within a self-help system. The recognition of Israel by Arab states embodies a sort of compromise between balancing and bandwagoning behaviors, influenced by changes in the global and regional power structure, external incentives, and domestic imperatives.

The failure of the 'Oslo Accords', internal division within the PA, and the emergence of Islamist movements such as Hamas caused a decline in the value of the Palestinian cause in the foreign policy of Arabs (Gause, 2011). Most importantly, after the Cold War, the US was the dominant global power, which made it the main factor influencing Arab states in recognizing Israel, in which, according to neorealists, the weaker states bandwagon or accommodate with hegemonic states to seek economic, military, and diplomatic support (Waltz, 1979). Moreover, the repeated military defeats by Israel, from the 1948 war to 1967 and 1973, have revealed the limits of confrontation, and according to the neorealist suggestion, states adopt strategies in reaction when military balance fails (Walt, 1987). This resulted in the 'Yom Kippur War' in 1973. Egypt restored some of its national pride, but it also realized the enormous costs of war and the resilience of Israel, which led Sadat to pursue diplomatic avenues for the recovery of Sinai and the stabilization of the Egyptian economy (Quandt, 1993). Furthermore, Jordan, which lost the West Bank in 1967, saw the signing of the peace treaty in 1994 as a way to secure its borders and to eliminate further conflicts (Shlaim, 2001).

The recognition of Israel by Arab states aligns with US strategic interests, as it allows giant gains to such countries in consonance with the neorealist view that material concerns predominate over ideological commitments (Waltz, 1979). Thus, Jordan weighed that the recognition of Israel offered more strategic advantages, like economic partnership and security cooperation, than a hardline position with Palestinian solidarity, while Egypt's peace treaty with Israel, brokered through the US, led to substantial American aid of over \$1 billion annually and made it one of the major US allies (Quandt, 1993). Moreover, under the

Abraham Accords in 2020, normalization with the UAE and Bahrain was facilitated by US guarantees of advanced weaponry (such as F-35 jets for the UAE) and economic investments, whereas normalization with Morocco in 2020 was linked to US recognition of its sovereignty over Western Sahara, which is a national interest that trumps pan-Arab obligations (Britannica, 2025). By aligning with US preferences, these states enhanced their security and ensured economic stability, which is a desirable choice to take in a unipolar system. This turn represents a neorealist shift that favored state-specific interests over a collective ideology.

5.4 THE GREAT POWERS' POSITIONS ON THE TWO-STATE SOLUTION

During the Cold War, the global balance of power between the US and the Soviet Union created a bipolar structure with each state vying for maximum influence (Gaddis, 2005; Waltz, 1979). Other permanents in the UNSC-China, France, and the UK aligned at various times with either one of the superpowers or went their own way, but their influence was secondary when compared to the superpowers (Gaddis, 2005; Quandt, 2005; Waltz, 1979).

In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the US was a strong ally of Israel, supplying military, economic, and diplomatic assistance to counter Soviet influence in the Middle East, giving priority to Israel's security rather than Palestinian statehood (Quandt, 2005). Although rhetorically supporting negotiated agreements such as the post-1967 'land for peace', the US did not officially support the Palestinian State for the greater part of the Cold War, rather concentrating on bilateral negotiations such as the Camp David Accords that disregarded Palestinian sovereignty (Quandt, 2005). Moreover, it used the veto powers in the UNSC to rescue Israel from resolutions considered critical to it, as during this period the US had exercised its veto power several times on resolutions related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and resolutions that call for Palestinian statehood or criticize Israeli actions of undermining the two-state solution. For example, in 1976, the US vetoed resolution affirming Palestinian self-determination and statehood, thereby supporting in principle a two-state framework, and in 1988, vetoed resolution arguing rights of Palestinians to statehood following the declaration of independence by the PLO (UN, 1976; UN, 1988; Findley, 1989). Neorealism explains this as securing a regional ally to maintain power projection in a vital geopolitical region (Waltz, 1979).

The Soviet Union supported Palestinian statehood and a two-state solution to align with Arab states against US influence (Allison, 1985; Sayigh, 1997). It had always supported the UNSC resolutions that calls for the self-determination of Palestinians (UN, 1976; UN, 1988). However, the Soviet Union's support for the Palestinians was tarnished by its own vetoes in unrelated matters and its inability to pass resolutions that were vetoed by the US (Allison, 1985; Sayigh, 1997). Neorealism considers the support by the Soviets as a strategy to balance against the US hegemony and accrue influence in the Arab world (Waltz, 1979).

The US-Soviet competition created a zero-sum environment in which vetoes blocked the UNSC actions, as the US attempted to put Israel in a strategic position, whereas the Soviet Union tried to balance it by supporting the Palestinian case (Gaddis, 2005; UN, 1976; UN, 1988). The bipolar system had forced the US to look at Israel to counter the Soviet-backed Arab states, thus sidelining Palestinian statehood while undermining two-state discourse (Quandt, 2005). Therefore, the Palestinians depended on non-binding UNGA resolutions, which would not be implemented without the support of great powers (Sayigh, 1997). Neorealist views this conflict as a means for great powers to maximize relative power, with the US prioritizing its ally over conflict resolution (Waltz, 1979).

The collapse of the Soviet Union after the Cold War led to a unipolar system with the US as the single superpower in the world and enhanced its role within the UNSC and allowed it to protect Israel from different resolutions, which led to accusations of double standards and eroded the UN's credibility on the issue, as it has used the veto power several times since 1991 to block resolutions for ceasefires, condemning Israeli actions, or recognizing the statehood of Palestine (Findley, 1989). For instance, it vetoed in 2024 a resolution that would accept Palestine as a full member of the UN (UN, 2024). On the other hand, in the place of the Soviet Union, Russia has assumed a pragmatic position, supporting Palestinian issues to counter the US influence and keeping relations with the Arab states (Kozhanov, 2018).

In conclusion, this chapter has shown that the neorealist perspective of security and power maximization shapes the positions of the PLO, Arab states, Israel, and the great powers on the two-state solution. The PLO's pragmatic acceptance of a two-state framework stemmed from its need for international recognition and survival in a constrained geopolitical environment. The Arab states balance domestic pressures against alignments, primarily with the great powers, while Israel sees the security itself outweighing the concessions in the

territory and views a fully independent Palestinian state as a threat. The inability to achieve the two-state solution due to vetoes, regional rivalries, and security dilemmas indicates that its resolution depends on an alignment of great power interests or an alteration of the international structure. This accords with neorealism's argument about the security and dominance that have always impeded the peace process.



6. CONCLUSION

6.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The neorealist approach can achieve an analysis of the two-state solution. In this regard, neorealists focus on pragmatic solutions based on current power arrangements rather than idealistic or historical ones, and they emphasize Israel's military power relative to the Palestinians, who lack similar statehood or military capacity. According to neorealists, a possible solution may involve power-sharing arrangements proposed by major actors such as the US, Russia, or the EU to stabilize the region. It may contemplate a two-state solution with determinate borders and demilitarized zones, with security guarantees to Israeli concerns on security and the Palestinian aspiration for independence. The implementation of compliance would be through outside mediators, as neither party trusts the other due to the security dilemma (Mearsheimer, 2001).

The neorealist interpretation could support a regional security pact involving Israel, the PA, and neighboring states like Egypt and Jordan, in which a collective defense mechanism could address security threats to regional states, which is consistent with the neorealist view that alliances are primarily formed for counterbalancing threats (Waltz, 1979). Moreover, neorealists acknowledge the influence exerted by the great powers upon regional outcomes, so they suggest that another possible solution is for the great powers to resolve differences under the UNSC, with peacekeeping forces dispatched to impose the two-state settlement. This would overbear local resistance, as it would align the resolution of the conflict with the great power interests in Middle Eastern stability (Mearsheimer, 2001). In an anarchic system characterized by conflicting interests, in this situation among the weaker actors, the great powers could promote the objective of reducing conflict by enforcing cooperation.

According to neorealism, sustainable peace necessitates finding a resolution to conflicts whose interests would align with those of the conflict parties, including Israel and the PA, as well as external powers involved, and prioritizing stability over ideal solutions.

This research consists of five chapters, each of which has been analyzed one by one. The first chapter introduces the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, aiming to review the viability of the two-state solution, posing the main research question and sub-questions, accompanied by a

literature review on the conflict, using qualitative methodology for the historical and document analysis, and adopting the neorealist theory in IR.

The second chapter discussed the neorealist view of international systems. It views the international system as an anarchic one, where states are primary actors and seek survival through power maximization. They consider international organizations as a tool of the powerful states and emphasize that the continuation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a zero-sum game, while international law is neither binding nor capable of constraining states other than those aligning with the interests of powerful states. Moreover, realism is skeptical about conflict resolution, holding that processes such as negotiation and mediation succeed when they serve the strategic interests of powerful states.

The third chapter analyzes the path of the conflict from the '1948 Israeli-Arab War,' triggered by the establishment of Israel and the rejection of the UNGA partition plan. Then it discusses the Six-Day War, which reflects the proxy of the Cold War, with the powerful states supporting their alignment to impose their influence in the region. Moreover, it shows how the military power of Israel translated into territory control. The First Intifada led to the Oslo Accords, which explain how states prioritize security over cooperation. The Second Intifada reflects Israeli security measures and Palestinian resistance, which align with neorealist principles of the security dilemma and self-interest, while the '7 October 2023 Gaza War' stresses the way that regional power rivalries nurture escalation.

The fourth chapter discusses the history of the two-state solution, starting with UNGA Resolution 181 through Resolutions 242 and 338, and analyzes the Oslo Accords and later attempts to establish the two states, but failed due to an imbalance of power and lack of trust. It analyzes the Israeli position that prioritizes security and territorial retention, while the PA is in favor of implementing the two-state solution but suffers internal divisions that impair its negotiating power. Moreover, it analyzes the position of Arab states and international powers, which is based on strategic interests.

The fifth chapter emphasizes the position of PA, Israel, Arab states, and the great powers on the two-state solution from the neorealist perspective. The PA's support for a two-state solution is driven by the strategic need for international legitimacy and survival, but internal divisions weaken their bargaining power vis-à-vis negotiations with the Israeli side. Israel's

position is framed through the paradigm of the security issue, consonant with the neorealist subjects of power maximization immanent in an anarchic system. Arab states support the two-state solution but put a priority on their security and influence over the region, while great powers consider the two-state solution in the framework of their own geopolitical interests.

The last chapter, 'Conclusion,' analyzes the research findings and answers the research's main question and the sub-questions. According to the research, UN resolutions could not succeed in promoting the two-state solution because of an anarchic international system where powerful states are concerned with security and sovereignty and reject international law. Moreover, the study contributes to the field of IR by applying neorealism to explain the UN resolutions' failure by providing insights into how international institutions are limited in addressing conflicts subject to power politics.

a. The main research question for this study was:

How does the neorealist perspective in International Relations analyze the two-state solution for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict under the structural constraints?

Neorealists maintain that states emphasize survival and security in an anarchic world; thereby, they focus on relative power. Israel possesses supreme military power, due to the US support, while the Palestinians have no power to enforce an acceptable solution. This imbalance in power makes it difficult to achieve a two-state resolution through negotiations unless there is a significant shift in power relations or external enforcement. The combination of systemic arrangements at the international level and the power imbalances in the region makes the road to a two-state solution hard to achieve.

b. The research Sub-questions were as follows:

a. What role have UN resolutions played in promoting or hindering the two-state solution as a viable framework for peace?

The resolutions the UN passed, notably Resolution 242 and Resolution 338, proclaim the right of the Palestinians to self-determination and demand Israel's withdrawal from the territories occupied in the 1967 war. These two resolutions served as a foundation for framing the two-state solution, acknowledging the Palestinian right to establish an

independent state, while other resolutions have called for the termination of occupation and for peace negotiations between both parties. However, these resolutions were ignored by the parties, which undermined peace efforts, since some UN member states, especially the US, have used their veto powers against resolutions that are problematic for Israel, which in turn skews international efforts for the two-state solution into vain support.

- b. How do the perspectives of different stakeholders (Israeli government, PA, international society) influence the negotiation process?

The Israeli government always seeks to maintain its security and territory and usually denies any concession on settlement or Jerusalem-related issues, which delays the negotiation process. On the other hand, the PA demands statehood with East Jerusalem as its capital and demands the right of return of refugees. However, internal divisions like between Fatah and Hamas weaken their bargaining power vis-à-vis negotiations with the Israeli side.

International society, including the UN and great powers, promotes a two-state solution; however, it is sometimes fractured by its own geopolitical interests (e.g., US support for Israel vs. Arab states' backing of Palestinians), thereby complicating mediation and enforcement on the settlement issue.

- c. What are the obstacles facing the implementation of the two-state solution, according to the neorealist perspective?

The power imbalance between the Palestinians and Israelis, with concerns over their security, makes the powerful state, which is Israel, unwilling to compromise. The national interests take precedence over international accords in every state, even those conditioned by several UN resolutions advocating for a two-state solution. Moreover, the absence of a global authority and the anarchic structure of the international system led all states to be within a self-help system, which becomes more convoluted in terms of cooperation, as no state trusts another state.

- d. How did the ineffectiveness of the UN increase the intensity of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict?

The UN has issued many resolutions calling for peace and enumerating steps toward a two-state solution. However, the absence of enforcement mechanisms for the implementation of

these resolutions has given rise to feelings of impotence and hopelessness among Palestinians. Moreover, many Palestinians and Arab states consider the UN resolutions biased toward Israel, which further diminishes its credibility as a mediator. This has increased resentment and distrust, making diplomatic efforts even more difficult.

6.2 CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD

This research primarily focuses on the refinement of the neorealist theoretical frameworks. It presents an analysis of changing state behavior in response to systemic constraints (for example, US policy shifts, Israel's military dominance, or Palestinian fragmentation), thereby offering a strong empirical test of neorealist hypotheses about conflict persistence and the role of international institutions. The research emphasizes the neorealist concepts like security dilemmas and zero-sum dynamics manifest within fundamental issues such as border settlements and refugee rights, which have been addressed in UN resolutions. This provides an analysis and understanding of the persistence of these obstacles, contributing to policy discussion regarding the compatibility of the two-state solution. Moreover, the research criticizes the UN as a neutral mediator in conflicts staged by great powers and discounts the idealistic assumptions about multilateralism. In this respect, it adds to the literature on global governance by portraying what neorealist realities of state self-interest and lack of enforcement mean for collective action, thereby encouraging scholars to rethink institutional design.

The examination of the parties' perspectives (Israeli government, PA, and the international society) through the neorealist lens aims at the theoretical insights in connection to practical scenarios confronting negotiations, which provides a clear understanding among the policymakers that state-centered interests and power differentials obstruct the UN-led peace efforts, hence informing the formulation of more effective diplomatic strategies.

6.3 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The neorealists emphasize power politics within IR. To implement a two-state solution, it is necessary to deal with power imbalances between Israel and Palestine by empowering Palestinian governance structures, ensuring they can negotiate and implement agreements effectively through advocating UN programs to strengthen Palestinian governance,

economic viability, and political unity such as reconciling Hamas and the PA, while inviting the major powers, including the US and EU, as well as regional actors, Egypt and Jordan, as mediators would help balance out the interests of both parties. A multilateral approach may also increase the legitimacy of the process and provide necessary security guarantees for both sides.

International actors should offer economic incentives for both parties to cooperate with each other. For example, Palestine could be provided with investments in infrastructure and development projects, thereby improving its regional standing, while Israel could be provided with economic partnerships for security. Moreover, strengthening the UN's legitimacy through credible actions, such as UN observer missions for monitoring settlement activities or ceasefire compliance, can encourage states to engage in peace negotiations. Further, the UN could broker agreements to limit external interference such as Iran's support for Hamas and unconditional US military aid to Israel through the cooperative oversight of rival powers.

6.4 AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

To achieve the two-state solution in the future, there is a need for, firstly, a comprehensive inquiry to be made into the international power configurations and their impact upon the effectiveness of UN resolutions in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Such a research study reveals how the very interests of the major powers affect the implementation of resolutions pertaining to the entire peace process, especially with regard to the balance of power in the region. It will be important to look at how neighboring states and regional groups influence the peace process, including how they help or hinder these efforts, learning from both the successful and unsuccessful interventions related to the solution. Moreover, a comparative study of various conflict resolution frameworks applied to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict could yield critical lessons. This evaluation would compare bilateral negotiations and multilateral initiatives and examine their strengths and weaknesses, thereby proposing best practices with an evidence-based approach.

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