



The Israel-Palestine Saga

This editorial is based on [“ISRAEL'S MOMENT OF RECKONING”](#) which was published in The Indian Express on 09/10/2023. It talks about the implications of the recent attacks by Hamas on Israel. The article argues that the attacks have exposed the fragility of Israel's security.

For Prelims: [World War I](#), [Balfour Declaration](#), Important Places Linked to Israel Palestine Conflict, [Oslo Accords](#), [India-Middle East-Europe economic corridor](#), [UN Economic and Social Council \(ECOSOC\)](#), [two-state solution](#)

For Mains: Effect of Policies & Politics of Countries on India's Interests, Israel-Palestine Conflict: History, Demands of both the States, Repercussions on India, India's stand and Solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict

October 7, 2023 was different. At dawn, thousands of rockets were fired into Israel by Hamas from the Gaza strip and hundreds of militants broke through several points in the barrier that separates the strip from Israel to attack, kill and kidnap Israelis, mostly in the communities based along the border. The barrage of rockets was intense enough for some to break through the famed Iron Dome and strikes were reported as far inland as Jerusalem.

Historically, October 7 morning will be recorded as a “failure” in every aspect. The Israeli concept – that Palestinian groups would not mount a war they could not win – (again) collapsed.

What is the History of the Conflict?

▪ Creation of Israel:

- The conflict's origins can be traced back to the **late 19th and early 20th centuries when Jewish immigration to Palestine increased**, leading to tensions between Jewish settlers and the Arab population.
- In 1917, during [World War I](#), the British government issued the [Balfour Declaration](#), expressing support for the **establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people"** in Palestine.
- After [World War II](#), In 1947, the [United Nations](#) **proposed a partition plan that would divide Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states**, with Jerusalem as an international city. The **plan was accepted by Jewish leaders but rejected by Arab leaders**, leading to violence.
- **In 1948, Israel declared its independence**, leading to a war with neighboring Arab states. This conflict resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, laying the groundwork for future tensions.

▪ Early Relations and Rise of Hamas:

- The **Israel-Hamas conflict**, in its current form, **can be traced back to the late 1980s when the First Intifada (Palestinian uprising) erupted.**

- Hamas, an Islamist organization, emerged during this period. It gained popularity as a resistance movement against Israeli occupation and Fatah, the Palestinian political faction.
- Israel initially tolerated Hamas as a counterbalance to Fatah, but this changed as Hamas' influence grew.
- **Oslo Accords and Second Intifada:**
 - In the early 1990s, the [Oslo Accords](#) led to the establishment of the [Palestinian Authority \(PA\)](#) and partial Israeli withdrawal from certain areas in the **West Bank and Gaza Strip**.
 - However, the peace process stalled, leading to frustration and violence, culminating in the Second Intifada (2000-2005).
 - During this period, Hamas intensified its suicide bombings and rocket attacks against Israeli civilians.
- **Gaza Takeover and Blockade:**
 - In 2006, Hamas won Palestinian legislative elections, leading to tensions with the Fatah-dominated PA.
 - In 2007, Hamas forcibly took control of the Gaza Strip, while Fatah retained control of the West Bank.
 - Israel imposed a blockade on Gaza to prevent arms smuggling and attacks. The blockade has led to humanitarian concerns and economic hardship for Gaza's residents.
- **Repeated Conflicts and Ceasefires:**
 - There have been several **major conflicts between Israel and Hamas, including Operation Cast Lead (2008-2009), Operation Pillar of Defense (2012), and Operation Protective Edge (2014)**. These conflicts resulted in significant casualties on both sides.
 - In 2021, tensions rose over Israeli policies in Jerusalem, including the planned eviction of Palestinian families from [Sheikh Jarrah](#) and the restrictions on access to the [Al-Aqsa Mosque](#) compound.
 - Hamas fired rockets at Jerusalem and other Israeli cities, while Israel carried out airstrikes on Gaza. More than 250 Palestinians and 12 Israelis were killed. A ceasefire was brokered by Egypt, with the support of the US and other international actors.
- **The Ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict:**
 - The ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict is a continuation of the long-standing and complex dispute between the two sides over land, sovereignty, and security.
 - The **current escalation began on Saturday, October 7, 2023, when Hamas launched a surprise attack on Israel**, firing thousands of rockets and infiltrating its border with armed militants.
 - Israel responded with intense airstrikes on Gaza and mobilized its troops for a possible ground invasion.
 - The fighting has resulted in hundreds of casualties on both sides and widespread destruction in Gaza.

Important Places Linked to Israel Palestine Conflict

- [Al Aqsa Mosque](#):
 - It is one of the **holiest structures in the Islamic faith known by Muslims as Haram al-Sharif**, or the Noble Sanctuary, and by Jews as the Temple Mount.
 - The site is part of the Old City of Jerusalem, sacred to Christians, Jews and Muslims.
- [Sheikh Jarrah](#):
 - Sheikh Jarrah is a neighborhood located north of the **Old City in East Jerusalem**.
 - Hundreds of thousands of **Palestinians were forced out of their homes** when the **State of Israel was created** in historical Palestine in 1948.
 - Twenty-eight of those Palestinian families moved to Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem to settle there.
- [West Bank](#):
 - West Bank is a **landlocked territory in West Asia**. It also contains a significant section of the **western Dead Sea**.
 - It was captured by Jordan after the [Arab-Israeli War \(1948\)](#) but Israel snatched it back **during the Six-Day War of 1967** and has occupied it ever since.
 - The West Bank is sandwiched between Israel and Jordan.

- [Gaza Strip](#):
 - The Gaza Strip is located **between Israel and Egypt**. Israel occupied the strip after 1967, but **relinquished control of Gaza City** and day-to-day administration in most of the territory during the **Oslo peace process**.
 - In 2005, Israel unilaterally removed **Jewish settlements from the territory**, though it continues to control international access to it.
- [Golan Heights](#):
 - The Golan Heights is a **strategic plateau that Israel captured from Syria** in the 1967 war. Israel effectively **annexed the territory in 1981**.
 - In 2017, the USA officially recognized Jerusalem and Golan Heights as a part of Israel.



What are the Demands of Israel and Palestine?

Israel	Palestine
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- Israel **wants to maintain its Jewish identity and security as a state**, while also expanding its settlements and control over the occupied territories.
- Israel **wants the Palestinians to recognize its right to exist** and renounce violence.
- Israel **wants to keep Jerusalem as its undivided capital** and have access to its holy sites.

- Palestine wants to **establish an independent and sovereign state in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem**, which have been occupied by Israel since 1967.
- Palestine **wants the Israelis to end their military occupation** and blockade, and withdraw from the settlements.
- Palestine also **wants to have Jerusalem as its capital** and have access to its holy sites.

What could be the Repercussions of Israel-Palestine Conflict on India?

- **Trade Relations:** An escalation in the conflict **could impact India's trade with Israel, particularly in critical areas like defense equipment**. Israel is a significant supplier of defense technology to India, and any disruption in this trade relationship could affect India's defense preparedness.
- **Diplomatic Challenges:** India has traditionally maintained a balanced approach in its foreign policy towards Israel and Arab countries. **If the conflict escalates and draws in other Arab nations, it could pose diplomatic challenges for India**. Balancing its ties with Israel and maintaining good relations with Arab nations may become more complex.
- **Economic and Strategic Ties with the Middle East:** India's economic and strategic ties with the Middle East have grown in importance, particularly in the context of initiatives like the [India-Middle East-Europe economic corridor](#). **If the conflict intensifies and involves other regional actors like Hezbollah and Iran, it could destabilize the West Asian region.**
 - **Energy Supply:** The West Asian region is a crucial source of energy imports for India. Any disruption in the stability of the region could potentially impact India's energy supply, leading to economic challenges.
- **Welfare of Indian Expatriates:** India has a significant expatriate population working in various Middle Eastern countries. The welfare and **safety of these Indian nationals could be at risk** if the conflict escalates, and it becomes essential for India to ensure their protection.

What is India's Stand?

- India was one of the few countries to **oppose the UN's partition plan in November 1947, echoing its own experience during independence** a few months earlier. In the decades that followed, the **Indian political leadership actively supported the Palestinian cause and withheld full diplomatic relations with Israel**.
- India **recognised Israel in 1950 but it is also the first non-Arab country to recognise Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)** as the sole representative of the Palestinian. India is also one of the first countries to recognise the statehood of Palestine in 1988.
- In 2014, **India favored UNHRC's resolution to probe Israel's human rights violations in Gaza**. Despite supporting the probe, India abstained from voting against Israel in [UNHRC](#) IN 2015.
- As a part of Link West Policy, India has **de-hyphenated its relationship with Israel and Palestine in 2018** to treat both the countries mutually independent and exclusive.
- In June 2019, India voted in favor of a decision introduced by Israel in the [UN Economic and Social Council \(ECOSOC\)](#) that objected to granting consultative status to a Palestinian non-governmental organization.
- So far India has tried to maintain the image of its historical **moral supporter for Palestinian self-determination**, and at the same time to engage in the military, economic, and other **strategic relations with Israel**.
 - India **advocates dialogue and diplomacy** as the only viable means to resolve the conflict. India supports the role of the Quartet (the US, Russia, the EU, and the UN) and other regional and international actors in facilitating the peace talks between Israel and Palestine.

What could be the Solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict?

- **The Two-State Solution:** The [two-state solution](#) is one of the most widely supported proposals, which **envisages the creation of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state alongside Israel**, within mutually agreed and internationally recognized borders.
 - The two-state solution also aims to address the core issues of the conflict, such as Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security, and water.
 - It has also been **supported by many world leaders** including India, US, China etc.
 - However, the two-state solution faces many challenges and obstacles, such as:
 - The **lack of political will and trust between Israel and Palestine**, as well as among their domestic constituencies, to make the necessary compromises and concessions for peace.
 - The **division and fragmentation of the Palestinian leadership and territory**, between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and between Fatah and Hamas.
 - The **influence and interference of external actors, such as Iran, Turkey, Egypt, and the US**, who have their own interests and agendas in the region.
 - The **escalation of violence and extremism on both sides, which fuel hatred and resentment among the populations** and erode the prospects for dialogue and coexistence.
- **Other Solutions:** The two-state solution is not the only possible solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. There are other alternatives that have been proposed or advocated by different groups or individuals, such as:
 - **The One-State Solution:** This approach envisions **a single, bi-national state where both Israelis and Palestinians** have equal rights and representation.
 - The challenge with this solution lies in addressing the concerns of both communities and ensuring that neither side feels marginalized.
 - **The Confederation Model:** Some propose **a confederation of two separate states with shared institutions and cooperation in areas like security, economy, and resources**. This model allows for some level of autonomy while maintaining cooperation.
 - **International Trusteeship:** Under this option, **an international body or coalition could oversee and govern the region until a more stable and mutually agreeable solution can be reached**. This approach would require the cooperation of the international community.

Drishti Mains Question

Discuss the impact of the Israel-Palestine conflict on India's foreign policy, particularly in its relations with Israel and Arab nations.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. The term “two-state solution” is sometimes mentioned in the news in the context of the affairs of (2018)

- (a) China
- (b) Israel
- (c) Iraq
- (d) Yemen

Ans: (b)

Mains:

Q. “India’s relations with Israel have, of late, acquired a depth and diversity, which cannot be rolled back.”

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