



Israel-Hezbollah Conflict and War Theory

For Prelims: [Israel](#), [Palestine](#), [Middle-East](#), [Arab World](#), Yom-Kippur War, [Zionism](#), [Al-Aqsa](#), [Gaza Strip](#), [Jerusalem](#), [Palestinian Liberation Organisation \(PLO\)](#)

Mains: Impact of [Israel-Palestine Conflict](#), Ethical Basis for War and Peace and Related issues

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Why in News?

Recent conflicts, such as the prolonged **Israel-Hezbollah war**, the [Russia-Ukraine war](#), and unrest in many other parts of the world have revived the debate over whether large-scale violence can ever be justified.

- The **three major schools of thought provide** distinct ethical viewpoints on this matter providing distinct perspectives on the morality of war, making this issue increasingly relevant today.

What are the Reasons of Conflict Between Israel and Hezbollah?

- **Origins of the Conflict (1982):**
 - The establishment of the **State of Israel in 1948** triggered mass displacement of over 750,000 Palestinian Arabs (**during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war**).
 - Many of these refugees sought shelter in **southern Lebanon**, heightening tensions in the region. This situation was further complicated by conflicts among various Lebanese factions, including Christian militias and Palestinian groups.
 - During the 1960s and 1970s, the presence of the **Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)** in southern Lebanon escalated Israeli security concerns.
 - In response to PLO attacks on northern Israeli towns, Israel launched military operations in Lebanon (1978 and 1982), leading to prolonged occupation and the **eventual rise of Hezbollah**.
 - Hezbollah was established in 1982, with Iranian support, **in response to the Israeli invasion** and the **ongoing civil war**, aiming to **resist Israeli occupation and protect Lebanese sovereignty**.
- **Escalation of Violence (1980s - 1990s):** During the 1980s, Hezbollah conducted **guerrilla warfare against Israeli forces** and their allies in Lebanon, notably bombing US and French barracks in 1983, causing significant casualties.
 - By 1985, as Hezbollah's military strength increased, Israel withdrew to a self-declared "**security zone**" in **southern Lebanon**, which it held until 2000.
- **Political Integration and Continued Hostilities (1990s):** Following the Lebanese civil war, **Hezbollah integrated into politics**, securing parliamentary seats and establishing a social support network, which **enhanced its legitimacy among Shia communities**.
 - In 1993, Israel launched "Operation Accountability" in response to Hezbollah attacks, resulting in significant civilian casualties and infrastructure damage in Lebanon known

as **Seven-Day War (1993)**.

- **The July War (2006):** In July 2006, Hezbollah captured two Israeli soldiers, prompting a large-scale Israeli military response. The conflict lasted 34 days and resulted in around 1,200 Lebanese and 158 Israeli fatalities. The war underscored Hezbollah's military capabilities and solidified its position as a key player in Lebanese and regional politics.
- **Recent Developments (2010s - Present):**
 - **Syrian Civil War Involvement:** Since 2012, Hezbollah has intervened in the Syrian civil war **to support the Assad regime**, gaining valuable combat experience despite facing criticism.
 - **Gaza Conflict (2023):** In October 2023, Hezbollah launched a **rocket campaign in solidarity with Gaza** amid escalating Israeli military actions, intensifying cross-border hostilities.
 - **Recent Escalations:** The assassination of key Hezbollah leaders and the [blast of walkie-talkie and pagers](#) in September 2024 have increased tensions, with Hezbollah vowing retaliation, raising the possibility of further conflict.

What is the Ethical Basis for War and Peace?

- **Just War Theory (JWT): A Measured Approach:**
 - **About:**
 - **Just War Theory (JWT)** is a **significant framework in international law**, primarily articulated by philosophers such as **Augustine and Aquinas**.
 - It holds that **war can be morally justified in certain situations**, though it is not commendable merely for its strategic or bold nature.
 - It views war as an acceptable form of mass political violence under specific conditions.
 - **Parts of JWT:**
 - **Jus ad Bellum (Just Cause):** This principle focuses on the **justification for initiating war**. Just causes include **self-defense, preventing future aggression, and stopping ongoing atrocities**.
 - **Example:** Allied forces' intervention in [World War II](#) is often cited as a just war, responding to aggression and atrocities committed by Axis powers.
 - **Jus in Bello (Right Conduct):** This principle **dictates how war is waged**. It emphasises **minimising civilian casualties, avoiding unnecessary suffering, and respecting the rights of non-combatants**.
 - Violations of these principles can lead to **war crimes**, as outlined in **international humanitarian law**.
 - **Jus Post Bellum (Just Peace):** This principle focuses on a **just and lasting peace** following the war. It emphasises **fair treatment of the defeated, reconstruction efforts, and addressing the root causes** of conflict.
- **Realism: Power Politics Prevail**
 - **Thought:**
 - Realism asserts that **moral considerations have no place in international relations**.
 - According to realists, states operate in an **anarchic international system** where **power and national security are paramount**.
 - **They believe that national security, national interest, and the pursuit of power** are the **driving forces** in international politics, and **war becomes a tool** to achieve these goals.
 - It was articulated by philosophers like **Thucydides** and **Machiavelli**.
 - They **criticise Just War Theory** for being impractical and idealistic, arguing that focusing on morality weakens a state's ability to defend itself and pursue its interests.
 - **Criticism of Realism: Critics of realism** point out that a **complete disregard for ethics** can lead to brutal and unnecessary wars.
 - **Examples:** Historical events like the lead-up to [World Wars I](#) and [World Wars II](#) show that **states prioritise strategic calculations over ethics**.
 - The **Cuban Missile Crisis** highlights this realist view, with national security outweighing moral concerns.

- **Pacifism: Abhorring All Violence**

- **Thought:**

- Pacifists **reject all forms of violence, including war**, and **promote nonviolent resistance and diplomacy** to resolve conflicts, **aligning with the ideals of leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.**
 - Pacifists **critique Just War Theory** by arguing that **any justification for war leads to more violence** and suffering.
 - They believe that **creative and persistent nonviolent methods** can achieve more lasting peace than armed conflict.

- **Criticism of Pacifism:**

- Critics argue that **pacifism can be unrealistic** when **confronting aggression and evil**, suggesting that military force may sometimes be necessary to prevent or stop atrocities.

What is Hezbollah?

- Hezbollah, which translates to "Party of God," is a **Shia militia and political party based in Lebanon**.
- **Origin of Hezbollah:**
 - Hezbollah was **founded in 1982** as a **resistance movement against the Israeli invasion of Lebanon** during the **Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990)**.
 - It received **support from Lebanon's Shia community, Iran and its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Palestinian groups**, influenced by **Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution**.
- It is recognized as one of the **most heavily armed non-state actors** globally, according to the **Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)**.
- Several countries, including the United States and Israel, have designated Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation.



What are the Principles of India's Foreign Policy?

- **Panchsheel (Five Principles):** It was first formalised in the **1954 Agreement on Trade** between **India and the Tibet** region of China, forming the foundation of India's international relations. These principles are:
 - Mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty
 - Mutual non-aggression
 - Non-interference in internal affairs
 - Equality and mutual benefit
 - Peaceful co-existence
- **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (The World is One Family):** India sees the world as a global family, promoting harmony, collective growth, and trust among nations, aligned with **Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas**.
 - The **Gujral Doctrine** is a set of **5 principles** to **guide India's foreign relations with its immediate neighbours**, recognizing the supreme importance of friendly, cordial relations. These **5 principles** are:
 - India extends support to neighbours like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka **without expecting reciprocity**, acting in good faith and trust.
 - No South Asian country should allow its territory to be **used against the interests of another** in the region.
 - Countries should **refrain from interfering in the internal affairs** of one another.
 - All South Asian nations must **respect each other's territorial integrity** and sovereignty.
 - Disputes should be **resolved peacefully through bilateral negotiations**.
- **Proactive and Impartial Assistance:** India promotes **democracy and development** through proactive assistance, but always with the **consent of the concerned government**.
 - This emphasises **capacity building and institutional strengthening** in partner nations, as seen in **India's efforts in Afghanistan**.
- **Support for the United Nations:** India is a founding member of the **United Nations (UN)** and supports the purposes and principles of the UN.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** It emphasises **independent decision-making** and **India favours partnerships** but **avoids formal military alliances**, maintaining flexibility in its international engagements.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q 1. Which one of the following countries of South-West Asia does not open out to the Mediterranean Sea? (2015)

- (a) Syria
- (b) Jordan
- (c) Lebanon
- (d) Israel

Ans: (b)

Q2. 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.” Discuss. **(2018)**

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