
ISRAELI- PALESTINIAN CONFLICT: AN ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF REGIONAL ACTORS AND IMPLICATION FOR MIDDLE-EAST STABILITY

LUPER Angel Nguyilan

Department of International Relations,

Nile University, Abuja, Nigeria.

Angeldaniels533@gmail.com

&

Rotimi Olajide Opeyeoluwa

Department of International Relations and Diplomacy,

Afe Babalola University Ado-Ekiti,

Ekiti State.

ropeyeoluwa@abuad.edu.ng/rotbaba@gmail.com

Abstract

Conflict is an inevitable occurrence within the international system considering its Combustible and highly unstable nature which is attributed to a divergence of interest and power ratio among nation-states that make up the system. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been an unresolved issue for more than 70 years with occupation with prospects for more rounds of conflicts per time. It remains one of the most intractable and complex disputes in contemporary geopolitics, characterized by deep-rooted historical grievances, nationalistic fervor and religious connotation which continues to boil at different epochs. The research provides a comprehensive analysis of the role played by regional actors in shaping the trajectory of the conflict and the overall implication for the Middle-East region. The research underscores the importance of regional cooperation and dialogue in addressing the broader implications of the conflict and paving the way for enduring peace in the region. The qualitative method of research was adopted for this purpose and the theoretical framework utilized were the regional conflict and realist theory to explain the role of regional actors in shaping the conflict trajectory and causes of the conflict. The findings indicate that regional actors play a dual role: they can either exacerbate the conflict by fueling tensions and violence or contribute to peace-building efforts through diplomatic and economic cooperation. Understanding their roles and motivations of these actors is crucial for developing effective strategies to mitigate conflict and promote stability in the Middle East.

Keywords; *Conflict, geo-politics, Middle-east, Israel-Palestinian, economic interest, political interest, religious interest, stability.*

Introduction:

The practice of violence, like all action, changes the world, but the most probable change is to a more violent world- Hannah Arendt.

The international system is referred to as a convoluted arena where competing and divergent interests often led to violence, hence violence permeate the global arena (Jabri, 2007). The subject matter of Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to animate and assume a protracted and deeply rooted geo-political struggle, with sundry other actors extraneous to the conflict becoming embroiled in it which has persisted since the end of the second world war, impacting not only the immediate region, the international system as well as on global commerce.

Recent Developments and the Abraham Accords (2015-Present)

In recent years, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been influenced by broader regional dynamics and international interventions. The Trump administration's policies, including moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem and recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, were controversial and impacted the peace process (Beauchamp, 2019). The Abraham Accords, signed in 2020, marked a significant shift in regional dynamics. The United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco normalized relations with Israel, reflecting a strategic realignment focused on countering Iranian influence and fostering economic cooperation. While the accords were seen as a diplomatic breakthrough, they did not directly address the core issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Al-Qasem & Oweis, 2021).

Roles of Key Regional Actors In Shaping The Israeli- Palestinian Conflict

The role played by key regional actors like; Iran, Egypt, Hamas, Jordan, Yemen, Iraq, Lebanon and so on have shaped the trajectory of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict owing to different interest which are religious, political and social driven also some scholars perceive the involvement of this actors as stemming from an ideological stand point as seen with Iran, China (Yemen) and Russia (Communist states) which have formed an alliance and are fighting against the US. Iran has shown unending commitment towards the Palestinians, particularly” Hamas and the Islamic Jihadist. Following Hamas attack on Israel on October 7th,2023, the Iranian minister of Intelligence in person of 'Esameil khatib” made a statement that reflected the triumphalism and confidence of Iranian leaders “in our view, the conditions in Israel after the Al-Aqsa storm are historical and that in his opinion, it is only the starting point of history itself... Operation Al-Aqsa storm he stated, eliminated one of the most strategic and fundamental plans of the United States in the region which is aimed at expanding its influence within the region to counter the US and Israel interest (Ehetshami &Zweiri, 2008. Iran in its support for the Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihadist has continued to provide military and financial as well as political support for the Palestinians, it has even gone as far as forming a network of alliance with Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen and different armed groups in Iraq and Syria establishing what is called “Axis Of Resistance” against Israel and its allies.

This involvement on Iranians part has further complicated efforts to negotiate peace. On the other hand, we have Egypt, Jordan, Saudi-Arabia, UAE, who have relatively made some efforts towards ensuring the promotion of peace and stability within the region in line with their individual interest. Egypt has played the role of a mediator often times in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, through provision of financial support of \$500m to Gaza for reconstruction in 2021 following the offensive attack. Currently the country has formed a blockade around the Gaza Strip alongside Israel, destroying smuggling tunnels through which weapons could be smuggled in, so as to maintain relative peace which if not kept could affect the country (Egypt), it is in control of the Rafah border crossing, the only entry and exit point not controlled by Israel (Al-Jazeera,2022)

Jordan like Egypt has been pushing for ceasefire especially in regards. Israel's war on Gaza, owing to the fact that an intensification in the war or Israeli invasion of Rafah could affect Jordan territory (Spillover of conflict), In 1994, the country formalized its relationship with Israel in addressing issues of water and Palestinian refugees which at the time was of mutual concern to both parties in the Peace Treaty of 1994 (Shlaim,2007). The country has as its strategic interest the maintenance of stability evident in its support of the two-state Solution which reflects its custodianship of the Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem. Saudi-Arabia historically has supported the Palestinian cause financially and diplomatically.

The 2002 Arab peace Initiative proposed by Saudi –Arabia for instance was aimed at normalizing relations with the two states in exchange for Israel's withdrawal from occupied territories and establishments of a Palestinian state, an initiative which was welcomed by both parties but in the long run wasn't sustainable. In the Current Ongoing Conflict, the country seems to be leading in the humanitarian support for the Gaza people against the inhumane of Israel, the country has contributed over \$6 billion aid for the Palestinians since 2000, however, it also joined forces with Israel, United State, Jordan against Iran in the defensive operation after the offensive attack carried out by Iran. Saudi-Arabia's fear of Iran's expansionism in the regional has shaped its involvement in the conflict/ war.

As recent as the ensuing military operations by the IDF against Hamas in the wake of the assault on Israel on October 7, 2023, Saudi Arabia and other regional actors have continued to call for a ceasefire which in their estimation will pave way for the return of all Israeli hostages and some other auxiliary concessions expected from both actors. Saudia Arabia has withheld opening a diplomatic relation with Israel pending the determination of this round of conflict. The aftermath of this current round of conflict is an echo which commenced at the dawn of the 20th century. The sufferings, starvation, deprivations, mass arrest, killings and wanton destructions cannot solve the challenge on either side, rather except both sides and other regional and even extra-regional actors shift grounds, then the hellish experiences will endure.

Implications Of The Conflict For The Middle-East

It is a truism to note that every war, partial or total, always has a very devastating effects such as displacement of people, internal or international, as well as destruction of monuments, institutional memories, loss of property and lives of internationally-protected people, such as non-combatants, targeting of vulnerable sites such as places of worship, hospitals, etc. These are some of the deleterious impacts of the conflict which will be explained under three subheadings; social, political and economic implications.

Social Implications

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has some profound impact socially within the region, ranging from a relative increase in the number of casualties in the conflict which now could be termed a war due to the massive number of casualties, between October 7th 2023 to June 20th as reported by (Al-Jazeera, Palestinian Ministry of Health, Palestinian Red Crescent Society, Israeli Army, Israel's social security Agency, 2024), about 37,431 people were killed including children, 85,653 injured and more than 10,000 missing in Gaza, in the West Bank, at least 549 including more than 135 children were killed , and more than 5,200 injured and in Israel, 1,139 people have been killed and 8,730 injured.

The infrastructural facilities have been destroyed further affecting the living condition of people in the Gaza region. according to (WHO, OCHA & Government Media Office in Gaza, 2024), 60% of residential buildings have been damaged, 80% of Commercial facilities destroyed, 267 places of worship damaged, 88% of school buildings destroyed, 130% ambulances destroyed, making it difficult to get injured people and casualties from crisis scene to hospitals and hence increase death rate furthermore, only 17 out of 35 hospitals in the region are functioning, not fully but partially

There's also gross violation of human right, where people aren't allowed access to food, people within the Gaza strips have restricted movements attributed to the blockade by Israel and Egypt. The region has also been faced with high level of displacement where we have both Palestinian and Jewish refugees scattered all over and further affecting neighboring countries who now have to bear financial crisis as in the case of Lebanon and Jordan. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics recorded about 1.2 million people being rendered homeless.

Political Implications

The conflict has influenced the political activities in the region, there is some kind of shift in relationship between some actors like the Saudi-Arabia (Sunni group) and the Iran (Shia Group) who seem to be having a clash in ideologies which has further intensified the conflict. Also the involvement of global actors like US, Russia has further intensified the insecurities in the region, both parties desire to influence and promote their political ideologies have led to further segregation of the region where we have the Israel, Jordan, US and UAE on one side and Russia, Iran, Iraq, Hamas and the other Arab states at log head, Iran who was not an ally of Russia became friends owing to its interest to counter the political agendas of US.

Diplomatic initiatives of Egypt, Saudi- Arabia and Jordan has to an extent impacted on the region maintain a bit of peace at some point but due to conflicting interest from Hamas who seem to be dominating in the Palestinian affairs and Iran who claims to be fighting the Us interest in the middle east forming alliances with Hezbollah and Houthis has seemly slowed down peace process.

Economic Implication

The conflict also has far and wide economic implications both regionally and globally. The conflict has led to a decline in the GDP of many countries who have to bear more burden than they can as in the case of Jordan and Lebanon, owing to the refugee crisis which has left these countries in financial crisis. The economic activities in the region has been hampered by the incessant conflict destroying major facilities of production and supply and halting industrial activities and foreign direct investment projects that could boost economic growth, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS, 2024) recorded an 80% decline in the GDP of Gaza in the fourth quarter of 2023 and about 82% of the private sector establishments within the region as at 26th January, 2024 were recorded to have either been partially or fully damaged and 42.1 % in the West Bank. There exist high level of poverty and unemployment of people especially the youths. According to the preliminary UN estimates, an estimated 80% equivalent to 192,000 workers and 170,000 workers from Gaza and West bank respectively can't access or have lost their Jobs due to the Blockades.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, as seen that over the years, especially since 1948, the role of the regional actors in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict can't be underestimated, seeing how their actions have shaped the conflicts trajectory reflecting a blend of historical ties, geo-political ambitions and strategic interests which seems to vary per time, only constant in the fact that both dominant actors, that is the Arabs and Israelis are most unwilling to shift their ground. However, in addressing this conflict or war, policy makers ought to understand the root causes of the conflict which is tied to historical grievances, and their varying motives and interest to enable a more mutually effective and efficient response to the conflict. Since the conflict or war between both parties has since mutated with on-going interpretative innovations, it behooves that for peaceful co-existence to occur between both parties, it is imperative that there must be some forms of concessions for enduring peace and reversals of pains which has characterized the conflict. A peep through time leaves both parties and even the entire human race with no other option. Ultimately, in addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or war, it is best to suggest a multi-faceted approach owing to the complex and multi-faceted nature of the conflict itself.

There is need to combine both diplomatic initiatives, with regional cooperation and inclusiveness of all parties to the conflict, if a lasting peace solution would be made, understanding the deeply rooted historical grievances of the parties involved especially the Arab states who perceive an injustice being done to them by giving a part of their land or territory to Israel, and also the inhumane treatment dished to them by Israel in the ongoing war in Gaza and the West Bank where there's a blockade not allowing in food, weapons or anything, and also the brutal destruction of lives and properties by Israel. Inverse, Israel regards the continued vow to decimate the country as a fundamental national security threat which will always elicit appropriate military response. At any rate, given the spate of conflicts and wars between both parties, it is evident that military force cannot secure Israel, hence as much as Israel desires peace, then it must shift or change strategy in confronting the Arabs. The Abraham Accord is a right step in the right direction; however, more is still required of the state of Israel to secure itself. The two-touted two state solution will not guarantee peace if other fundamental issues such as military blockaded, the right of return to the displaced Palestinians is not addressed and land grabbed not returned. Both Israel, the Arab and other regional actors should count the cost which series of conflicts and wars since 1948 has wrought to the region and the spate of insecurity occasioned by it and move away from such. The task before all the actors is crystal clear and the needed political will as well as accepting the inevitable that peace is better than war will push the actors in accepting that the way forward is to find a peaceful solution to a crisis which military actions, strikes and counter-strikes has failed to achieved. There should be youth development programs and educational reform to create awareness on these conflicts and its root causes so as to prevent further upsurge, also there should be a form of grass root initiatives to promote dialogue between the conflicting groups which could aid understanding of various cultures and further guide their relationship.

Reference

- Abdullah, A. (2002). Arab Peace Initiative. Arab League Summit, Beiru
- AJ Labs (2023). Israel-Gaza War in maps and chart Live Tracker, Al-Jazeera news. Updated June 2024.
- Ajinde, O. and Opeyeoluwa, R. O. (2023). "Bahrain-Israel-United Arab Emirates Relations (Abraham Peace Accord): Critical Issues and Imperatives" in Journal of Defence and Security Studies.
- Al-Qasem, D& Oweis, K.Y. (2021). The Abraham Accords: A News Era for Middle-East Peace? Middle East Policy,28(1).15-26. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022291421000001>.
- Beauchamp, Z. (2020). What the Abraham Accords mean for the Middle East. Vox. Retrieved from <https://www.vox.com>
- Elgindy, K. (2013). Egypt and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: From Camp David to the Present. Brookings Institution.

- Gause, F. G. (2010). **The International Relations of the Persian Gulf**. Cambridge University Press.
- Gelvin, J. L. (2014). *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War*. Cambridge University Press.
- Jabiri, V. (2007). *War and the Tra*
- Kattan, V. (2009). The Arab Peace Initiative and the Two-State Solution. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 38(3), 58-76.
- Kumaraswamy, P. R. (2006). Egypt's role in the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process. *The Middle-East Journal*, 60(3), 441-459.
- Lynch, M. (2016). *The New Arab Wars: Uprisings and Anarchy in the Middle East*. PublicAffairs.
- Morris, B. (2008). *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War*, Yale: Yale University Press.
- Quandt, W. B. (2005). *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967*. University of California Press.
- Sina, T.
- Smith, C. D. (2017). *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*. Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Tal, D. (2004). *War in Palestine: Strategy and Diplomacy*, London: Routledge.
- Tessler, M. (2009). *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*. Indiana University Press.
- World Bank Group, (2024). *World Bank Economic Monitoring Report: Impacts of the Conflict on the Palestinian Economy*. nsformation of Global Politics, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillian.