



The Arab League The Arab-Israeli Conflict

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INTRODUCTION

The Arab-Israeli Conflict is one of the oldest and most complicated conflicts that exists in the modern world. The creation of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948 sparked the conflict that persists today. Since then, the Arab-Israeli Conflict has continued to be a problem, despite multiple attempts to find common ground and solutions. Although the conflict is, at its heart, a religious one, it also has many economic, political, and geographical implications for the Middle East and for the world.

When Israel was founded in 1948, the Arab world lost possession of Jerusalem, the holiest city for Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. The original State of Israel shared Jerusalem with Jordan, until June of 1967, when Israeli troops occupied the entire city. Jordan had owned the “holy” part of Jerusalem and had not allowed the Jews to pray at the Wailing Wall. To this day, the most controversial parts of Israel are the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and Jerusalem.

Throughout Israel’s existence, various economic embargoes have been imposed on Israel and by Israel. An embargo is an official ban on trade or other commercial activity on a particular country. Currently, Israel and Egypt have an economic embargo on the Gaza Strip. These embargoes cause an enormous amount of international political tension and economic stress. In May of 2010, Israel’s embargo caused worldwide protest. The Arab-Israeli Conflict is a multifaceted one, one of the most complex global political issues today. The Arab League, however, by taking into account both economic and ideological factors, can offer some solutions that could contribute to more peaceful relations in the Middle East.

embargo—*economic sanctions or a physical blockade*

EXPLANATION OF THE PROBLEM =

Creation of Israel

The founding of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948 sparked the Arab-Israeli Conflict, an international political crisis that has continued until today. During the Holocaust of World War II, Jews escaped and relocated to England, South America, and British-controlled Palestine. After World War II, the British Labour Party wanted to create a Jewish National Home in Palestine and allowed unlimited immigration of Jews into the area. Unfortunately, the demographic changes brought about a series of issues.

In 1947, the United Nations (UN) took control of the land that was Palestine from the British. From April 28 to May 15, 1947 the UN Special Committee on Palestine recommended that Palestine be divided into an Arab State and a Jewish state. Members of the United Nations assigned territory based on where the majority of Jews lived and where the majority of Arabs resided. Jerusalem and other holy places would be located in a neutral international zone. This recommendation obtained a two-thirds majority on November 29, 1947 in the General Assembly. Israel accepted this UN decision, while Palestine rejected the offer.

On May 14, 1948, the State of Israel was created. The Israel Declaration of Independence included an explanation of the necessity of the Jewish State, a justification of the founding of Israel, and the rules of immigration and other such policies. On the same day, Egypt attacked Israel, and on May 15, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan sent forces to attack Israel. Despite these attacks, Harry Truman, then President of the United States, recognized the State of Israel on May 15 and on May 18, the Soviet Union followed suit. On June 11, the UN Security Council issued a ceasefire and prohibited the importation of arms and other weapons, including military personnel, into Palestine or any Arab nations.

This rocky start to the birth of the State of Israel set a standard of economic and political instability that has challenged international diplomacy throughout the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century.

After the Ceasefire

In 1949, Israel signed armistice agreements with many Arab states, including Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria. Israel was surrounded by Arab states that were still opposed to the existence of a Jewish state. Therefore, the Arab nations instituted a



total economic boycott. This boycott forbade trade between Israel and any Arab nations, and instituted that any country that traded with Israel would not be allowed to trade with Arab nations. In addition, border crossings were blocked and Israeli planes could not fly in Arab air space. In order to combat this boycott, Israel developed a four-year plan to develop agricultural self-sufficiency.

However, the plans were thwarted by ruinous inflation which did not cease until 1953, when the United States and Western Europe stepped in to help Israel rebuild its economy. By 1956, Israel's Gross National Product (GNP) had increased 2.5 times its original amount in 1952. The Gross National Product is the total value of goods produced and services provided by a country during one year. The dramatic increase in Israel's GNP meant that Israel had a stronger economic stronghold in the Middle East.

In 1964, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was established. The PLO wanted to facilitate the creation of an independent state of Palestine encompassing the entire State of Israel and the surrounding territories. The goal of the Palestine Liberation Army, a part of PLO, was to eliminate Israel.

The Six-Day War and the Peace Treaty with Egypt

The Six-Day War was fought from June 5, 1967 to June 10, 1967. By the conclusion of the war, Israel had gained control of additional territory, including the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. The UN Security Council declared that Israel had to remove its troops from the territories and granted these regions autonomy. On March 26, 1979, Egypt and Israel signed a peace treaty that was their first agreement in 30 years. Israel returned the vast majority of land, previously used for staging attacks on Israel and seized in the Six Day War to Egypt, in exchange for promises of peace. Also, in this treaty, Egypt and Israel agreed to grant the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which had previously been owned by Egypt, self-rule.

The Oslo Accords

On January 20, 1993, Israel and the Palestinian Liberty Organization began discussing possible solutions to the conflict. The Oslo Accords were signed on September 13, 1993 in Washington D.C. In the Oslo Accords, the Israelis agreed to withdraw from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and agreed that the PLO could create the Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority. Regarding self-rule and territory agreements, the Oslo Accords were only temporary and would last five years. During these five years, Israel and the PLO were expected to come to an agreement regarding the "permanent status" of the territory. Israel recognized the PLO as the official political party and representative of Palestine, and Palestine acknowledged Israel's right to existence and renounced all destructive acts against Israel.

On May 4, 1994, the Oslo Accords seemed to be further strengthened with the signing of the Cairo Agreement by Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli president, and Yassir Arafat, the Palestinian leader. Yassir Arafat would eventually become the head the Palestinian Authority (PA). The PA would hold legislative, executive, and judicial powers and would be responsible for security, education, health, and welfare in the Gaza Strip and Jericho. However, shortly after this agreement was signed, Arafat said that the Palestinians would not give up their jihad, which he defines as "sacred campaign," until Israel released control over Jerusalem. Following the Cairo Agreement, Israel withdrew from Jericho on May 13 and from the Gaza Strip on May 17, 1994.

Oslo II was signed on September 24, 1995. In this second agreement, Israel pledged to withdraw its troops from the West Bank and allow Palestine to eventually rule the area. Rabin and Arafat signed this agreement. Many Israelis were opposed to this agreement, however, and Rabin was assassinated in October 1995. In 1997, when Benjamin Netanyahu became the new Prime Minister of Israel, Israel stopped the transfer of land that had been agreed upon in the Oslo Accords, partially under the belief that Arafat was not doing enough to keep Hamas from harming Israel. Due to the long tumultuous history in peacemaking efforts in the region, the failure of the Oslo Accords did not come as a large surprise for many.

After the Failure of the Oslo Accords

In October 1998, Netanyahu and Arafat met in Washington D.C. and signed the Wye Agreement. Under the new document, Israel agreed to redeploy its troops from 27.2% of the occupied territory. 14.2% would be under joint Israel-Palestinian Authority control and the remaining 13% would be controlled only by Palestine. This was agreed upon, in part, because Palestine had agreed to help Israel combat terrorist groups like Hamas.

In July 2000, Israel and Palestine engaged in additional talks with the ultimate goal of ending the Arab-Israeli Conflict. However, the talks between Prime Minister

PLO—Palestinian Liberation Organization

of Israel Ehud Barak and Yassir Arafat were eventually inconclusive. These talks took place at Camp David with President Bill Clinton. Barak offered to transfer 88-95% of the West Bank territory to Palestine, evacuate the West Bank settlements, swap land, create a resettlement plan for Palestinian refugees, and allow Palestine to occupy some Jerusalem neighborhoods. Many of these ideas, especially the notion of physically dividing up Jerusalem, had previously been a taboo issue. This was, most likely, the most that Israel would ever consider offering, but Arafat rejected the offer. Control over Jerusalem was the breaking point in their discussions because the PA wanted all of Jerusalem, and Israel refused to give up the whole region. Some consider that the terms of the talks was the best offer Israel will ever offer Palestine.

PA—Palestinian authority

Recent Developments

Hamas and Al Fatah

In order to understand the recent developments in Israel and the problems surrounding the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, it is important to understand the two Palestinian political parties: Hamas and Al Fatah. Al Fatah is the more moderate political party that the United States and other Western countries are more involved with, while Hamas is more extreme and fundamentalist. Hamas, which means Movement of the Islamic Resistance, was founded in the late 1980s, and its goal is to have Islamic rule for all of Palestine. Al Fatah was founded in 1958 and is the political party associated with Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Authority.

Hamas, whose leader now is Mahmoud Abbas, was the governing Palestinian force in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip until January 2006. In the 2006 elections, Hamas won the elections in Gaza. Due to internal divisions and accusations of corruption, Al Fatah became the weaker party and yielded control of Gaza to Hamas in June 2007. Al Fatah maintained control of the West Bank.

Faced with the changes in Palestine, Israel has refused to recognize Hamas as a political power because it is a terrorist group, which has been confirmed by the United States and the European Union, and has instead imposed an embargo on the Gaza Strip in order to weaken Hamas and prevent attacks on Israel. Despite the embargo and pressure from the Western world, Hamas has remained in power in Gaza while Al Fatah continues to control the West Bank. The Middle East is divided on the issue of whether Hamas or Al Fatah should be the ruling political party. Qatar, Syria, and Arab countries, including Iran, support Hamas, whereas Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia support Al Fatah.

The West Bank and The Gaza Strip

Israel and the Palestine Authority jointly control the West Bank. The PA is beginning its second year of consolidating power, which has increased the sense of personal security and economic potential in the West Bank. Israel is slowly giving up its power in the West Bank, and Palestinian soldiers – funded by the United States and the European Union – are working with Israeli defense officials to take over areas that were previously under Israel's jurisdiction.

Currently, Al Fatah is internally torn; on August 4, 2009, Al Fatah re-elected their leadership committee. The leadership committee is now mainly composed of new members who are considered more pragmatic and who are native to the area.

Israel has continued building settlements in the West Bank, despite its agreement with Palestine to halt settlements. Currently, however, Israel has paused its settlement building, as both Israel and Al Fatah are engaging in proximity talks. Israel has promised to halt the building until September 2010, when the settlements will be discussed again. Despite Israel's voluntary withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, a number of problems remain in Gaza because of Hamas. Hamas retains political and military control over much of the region. In 2007, most of the 1.4 million residents in Gaza were Arabs and 80% were living in poverty. One reason for the poverty level is that Hamas is largely isolated from the international community because most Western nations and Israel have imposed economic embargoes and diplomatic isolation when Hamas conquered the Gaza Strip. This is also part of Israel's goal to turn the Palestinians against Hamas and encourage them to favor Al Fatah. However, the Gaza Strip is increasingly becoming a Hamas state, as Hamas is the main employer and controls the education and justice systems.

Egypt and Israel both have economic embargoes against Hamas that have been in place since 2007. Israel, however, allows daily shipments of rations and other aid to help the residents. After over two years of disputes between Israel and Hamas, Egypt helped the two reach a truce in June 2008. Although this truce was never formally defined, Hamas promised to stop firing rockets at Israel and Israel promised to increase its aid. Hamas did halt most of the rockets, and Israel increased its aid 25-30%, although neither side was satisfied. Israel believed that Hamas had not held up

its side of the agreement because the rockets had not completely stopped, and Hamas had been expecting to receive more aid. Therefore, the truce fell apart on December 19, 2008, and the two sides entered into a three-week war. Hamas began to fire rockets and mortars into border towns of Israel again, and Israel retaliated with an air and ground campaign that demolished some of the region's civil infrastructure and many homes. In a report issued in September 2009, the UN announced that both sides committed war crimes and possibly crimes against humanity.

Egypt is once again talking with Hamas and Israel trying to negotiate some sort of lasting ceasefire. Hamas will agree to a one-year ceasefire if Israel will terminate its economic embargo and open the border crossings, so that regular commerce can occur. Israel is reluctant to agree to this, however, because Israel fears Hamas will use its materials to build military installations and weaponry instead of public infrastructure. The UN and the United States are pressuring Israel to open the border. Israel is considering reducing the embargo, however, only on a temporary basis.

Israel imposed the blockade to keep Gaza at subsistence levels and hoped that the difference between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip would be highlighted. However, this has not occurred because of Al Fatah's internal problems and weakened state. In fact, the Gaza Strip has cleaner streets and a lower crime rate than the West Bank.

The Blockade against Gaza Imposed by Israel

Recently, the international community has become increasingly more critical of the blockade. The shift in international opinion is partially due to the flotilla raid that occurred in May 2010. Two groups – Free Gaza Now and Insani Yardim Vakfi, a Turkish group – sent a flotilla of six ships carrying 10,000 tons of aid to Gaza. Their mission was not only to provide Gaza with aid – in the form of wheelchairs, toys, and used clothes – but also to increase awareness of the blockade. Israel, however, asked the flotilla to dock at the Israeli port of Ashdod, wanting to inspect the contents of the ships. Israel also wished to transport the aid to Gaza by land, rather than by sea. However, the Israeli request was ignored by the flotilla. In reaction, Israeli naval commandos were lowered onto one of the ships. There, they were attacked with clubs, metal rods, and knives. Nine Turks were killed in the skirmish. No one knows how many passengers were injured and whether the Israeli forces opened fire without provocation. An Israeli investigation has recently found that the raid was justified because there were at least 65 Turkish Islamic militants carrying metal knives, clubs, and rods, ready and waiting to attack any Israeli forces that attempted to halt the flotilla. Regardless of the specifics, the “Freedom Flotilla,” as it is called, achieved its mission of bringing awareness to the international community in regards to the blockade.

Israel loosened its blockade after the flotilla incident and now allows construction materials to enter into Gaza. However, the other parts of the blockade are still in place, including restrictions on who is allowed in and out of Gaza and exports and imports of raw material. Israel has maintained these restrictions because of security issues. The attack on the flotilla destroyed Israel's relationship with Turkey, which was once its close regional ally.

The exact effects of the blockade are unclear. Because of the controversial nature of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, and especially in the Gaza Strip, it is difficult to find unbiased reports. Yosuef Munayyer wrote that the UN office of the Coordination of Human Affairs (UN OCHA) has investigated the conditions in the Gaza Strip. Amnesty International found that 90-95% of the drinking water is contaminated and even the bottled water contains contaminants. Because of the blockade, a large portion of the health sector was damaged and has not been rebuilt. This information must be regarded critically, however, because Yousef Munayyer is the Executive Director of the Jerusalem Fund and the Palestine Center, which is an openly anti-Israel and pro-Palestine and pro-Hamas organization. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports, “In the Gaza Strip, private enterprise is practically at a standstill as a consequence of the blockade. Almost all (98%) industrial operations have been shut down.” In 2010, the WHO wrote, “Chronic malnutrition in the Gaza Strip has risen over the past few years and has now reached 10.2%. Micronutrient deficiencies among children and women have reached levels that are of concern.” However, Israel maintains that the blockade is crucial for Israel's security and that Hamas is the cause of the bad conditions in the Gaza Strip.

Current Problems and Negotiations

Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran are all threatening Israel. Iran wants to subjecting Israel to asymmetric warfare in addition to attacks by Hezbollah and Hamas within civilian areas. In addition, Iran wants to make the conflict between Muslims and Jews and focus on symbols like Jerusalem. Finally, Iran wants Israel to remain in the West Bank, so that Israel becomes overextended and cannot properly defend itself. Iran's

**Hamas—Movement of
Islamic Resistance**

president, Mahmoud Ahmadenijad, has also said he wants to destroy Israel.

The current Palestinian Prime Minister is Salam Fayyad, who must report to Mahmoud Abbas, the current leader of Al Fatah. Fayyad wants to have a Palestinian state in the West Bank by 2011 and institute non-corrupt, transparent institutions and efficient police and paramilitary institutions.

Currently, Israel and Palestine are engaging in proximity talks orchestrated by the US negotiator George Mitchell. Abbas is unwilling to go into direct negotiations unless the US can guarantee that Abbas will be pleased with the outcome on the most important issues of border security. However, Netanyahu refuses to discuss these issues in the proximity talks and will only discuss these issues in direct negotiations. Abbas has until September, 2010 to show that the proximity talks are making progress. In September, 2010, Israel will also continue building its settlements in the West Bank, unless another arrangement is made.

Israel's Economy Today

Israel's modern economy traces back to the Stabilization Plan of 1985, which sought to conduct thorough economic reform. Previously a government heavy economy, Israel has rapidly transitioned into a more market-based structure. Since 1985, Israel has continually reduced government spending and government debt.

Israel's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2008 was estimated to be \$203.4 billion. Because the state lacks natural resources, Israel imports a number of raw goods such as food and coal. Israel's major trade partners are the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany. Despite its petite geographical size Israel was ranked number 17 out of 58 of the world's most economically developed nation according to the IMD's World Competitiveness Yearbook rankings.

Israel's major industry includes high-technology projects, textiles and footwear production, diamond cutting and polishing, and metal products, among others. Dan Senor refers to Israel as the "Start-Up Nation" because they have more start-ups per capita than any other country in the world.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Continued Diplomatic Efforts

The Arab League's work on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict thus far has been largely restricted to diplomacy. From the inception of the Arab League, a Palestinian delegate has been allowed to attend the group's meetings, reflecting the Arab League's support for an independent Palestine. The Arab League's diplomatic efforts were responsible for the creation of the Palestinian National Council in 1964, and the Arab League has repeatedly protested Israeli incursions on Palestinian sovereignty. Most recently, Amr Mohammed Moussa, the Secretary-General of the Arab League, visited the Gaza Strip in order to protest Israel's blockade of the Gaza strip. This action, as well as the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, was summarily rejected by the Israeli government. Any further diplomatic efforts must be innovative in order to break this stalemate.

Industrial Development

The West Bank and the Gaza Strip do not currently have developed industry, which hurts their economic well being. Israel, on the other hand, has a strong, relatively modern economy that needs more labor and more space. The majority of citizens in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip do not have the technological or industrial knowledge to improve their economy. The Arab League could appeal to industrialized nations and the United Nations, and request the resources needed to improve the economies of the West Bank and Gaza Strip by sponsoring new industries, preferably through an agreement with Israel. The Arab League could advocate for open borders, so that workers from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip could work in Israel, where labor is needed. This would help improve living conditions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Also, if residents in the Gaza Strip had more job options, it might loosen Hamas' grip in Gaza.

Tourism Development

Israel has a booming tourism economy, as members of all three main world religions come to visit, as well as non-religious travelers. Israel is home to many interesting historical and religious sites and is also located on the Mediterranean Sea, the Dead Sea, and the Red Sea, which all have attractive beaches. Because of the Gaza Strip's location on the Mediterranean Sea and the West Bank's location on the Jordan

Crimes against humanity—a relatively new concept in international law. Actions so depraved that they constitute an offense against all of humanity.

River and the Dead Sea, these territories could also accommodate tourists. Tourism would add currency to its economy and give the residents jobs. The Arab League could work with the Palestinian Authority, Israel, and the United Nations to pave the way for successful tourists

QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION SHOULD ADDRESS

WHO—World Health
Organization

When writing your resolution, remember to address what specifically the G20 is trying to establish with these economic solutions. How best should the international community address economic embargoes? What is the goal of these economic ideas? What is the role of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and Israel in these solutions? Who will monitor the implementation of these actions? How will the success of the actions be judged? How long should it take to implement these actions?

SUMMARY

The creation of the State of Israel in 1948 sparked one of the most challenging international issues of today. Over the years, there have been various economic sanctions imposed against Israel by the other Middle Eastern countries. Israel has recently limited economic access to Gaza to prevent militarization. Although there have been many negotiations, agreements, and treaties, none have led to lasting peace. Therefore, an economic solution before the implementation of the political agreements might help create peace. Economic stability in Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip would make the citizens and the governments more secure and comfortable in negotiations. As representatives of the Arab League, it is your responsibility to negotiate a settlement that is palatable both to your constituent nations and to the international community.

GLOSSARY

Al Fatah – a Palestinian political and military organization founded in 1958 by Yasser Arafat and others to bring about the establishment of a Palestinian state. It has dominated the Palestinian Liberation Organization since the 1960s, despite challenges from more extreme groups, such as Hamas

armistice – an agreement made by opposing sides in a war to stop fighting for a while; a truce

Boycott – A punitive ban that forbids relations with other bodies, cooperation with a policy, or the handling of goods

embargo – an official ban on trade or other commercial activity with a particular country

free trade – international trade left to its natural course without tariffs, quotas, or other restrictions

Gaza Strip – a strip of territory in Palestine, on the southeastern Mediterranean coast, including the town of Gaza

Gross Domestic Product – the total value of goods and services provided in a country during one year

Gross National Product – the total value of goods produced and services provided by a country during one year, equal to the gross domestic product plus the net income from foreign investments

Hamas – a Palestinian Islamic fundamentalist movement that has become a focus for Arab resistance in the Israeli occupied territories. It opposes peace with Israel and has come into conflict with the more moderate Palestinian Liberation Organization

Holocaust – the mass murder of Jews under the German Nazi regime during the period 1941-1945

Inflation – a general increase in prices and fall in the purchasing value of money

Insani Yardım Vakfı – a Turkish group that helped organize the flotilla aid in May, 2010. In Turkish, Insani Yardım Vakfı means “Foundation of Humanitarian Help”

Jericho – a town in Palestine, on the West Bank, north of the Dead Sea

Jerusalem – the holy city of the Jews, sacred also to Christians and to Muslims, that lies in the Judean Hills about 20 miles from the Jordan River. It is revered by Christians as the place of Christ’s death and resurrection and by Muslims as the site of the Dome of the Rock

Jihad – A holy war undertaken by Muslims against unbelievers; in this context, defined by Yassir Arafat as a “sacred campaign”

Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) – a political and military organization formed in 1964 to unite various Palestinian Army groups and ultimately bring about an independent state of Palestine

proximity talks – negotiations that occur via a proxy, rather than directly with the other person

West Bank – a region west of the Jordan River and northwest of the Dead Sea

inception—*creation, beginning. Also, a great movie.*

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palatable—acceptable

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Word—*definition goes here.*

