

**T.C.  
ISTANBUL GEDİK UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**



**THE STRUGGLE OF PALESTINE TO CREATE AN  
INDEPENDENT COUNTRY FOR HUNDRED YEARS**

**MASTER'S THESIS**

**Nasrin Omar CALIWAG**

**Department of Political Science and International Relations**

**Political Science and International Relations Master's Program in English**

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ISTANBUL**

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**Istanbul 2025**



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I, Nasrin Omar CALIWAG, hereby certify that this thesis is the work from me; I do this work in the department of International Relations for the Award of Master of Science in International Relations with thesis. This work has not been submitted to any University for a similar or other degree award and will not be presented to any university in the future. (14/02/2025).

Nasrin Omar CALIWAG



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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>UN</b>	: United Nations
<b>PLO</b>	: Palestine Liberation Organization
<b>PA</b>	: Palestinian Authority
<b>UAE</b>	: United Arab Emirates
<b>UNCCP</b>	: United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine
<b>UNRWA</b>	: United Nations Relief and Works Agency
<b>AIPAC</b>	: American Israel Public Affairs Committee

# THE STRUGGLE OF PALESTINE TO CREATE AN INDEPENDENT COUNTRY FOR HUNDRED YEARS

## ABSTRACT

This study looked at Palestine's struggles over the past century to become an independent nation. The study looked at Palestine's attempt to establish an independent nation for a century and whether or not the Palestinian people's independence, knowledge, and leadership helped or hurt their fight for self-determination. Although process tracing is the general methodology of this work, each chapter employed a distinct constellation of sources and a different subset of techniques; thus, the overall approach may be characterized as mixed approaches. To assess the research questions and draw conclusions, the study examined and evaluated the research objectives. According to the study's research on Palestine's borders, population, religion, and history, the country has frequently been at the center of geopolitical conflicts throughout history due to its location and closeness to important shipping lanes. Additionally, the study discovered that Ottoman rule over Palestine from 1517 to 1917 had a major impact on the Palestinian struggle for independence by establishing a lack of political autonomy, fostering a sense of shared Arab identity, and preparing the way for the British Mandate system after World War I, which ultimately made the Israeli-Palestinian conflict more complex by allowing Jewish immigration to the area through the Balfour Declaration. The study also discovered that Palestinian leadership has had no discernible effect on the country's fight for independence because it is adrift, disorganized, and incapable of handling its biggest challenge in decades. The study also found that the international community's reaction to Palestine's independence movement has been a complicated and multidimensional matter. There have been notable failures and setbacks in addition to certain instances of support. Furthermore, the survey found that the majority of Western nations have contributed significantly to the undermining of Palestinian independence movements. Israel has historically enjoyed strong support from nations like the United States and the United Kingdom, which frequently give it substantial financial and military assistance. Since these nations frequently put Israel's interests ahead of Palestinian rights, this has hampered Palestinian independence. External pressures from the United States, European Union, and Israel have also played a significant role in preventing unification since they view a reconciled Palestinian leadership as a potential threat to the existing power system. By blocking any attempts at elections or power-sharing arrangements, these actors have made sure that political stasis continues. The outcomes of this leadership gap have been catastrophic.

**Keywords:** *Independence, Palestine, Struggle, Arab, Zionism, Israel, conflict, United Nations*

# FİLİSTİN'İN YÜZ YILLIK BAĞIMSIZ BİR ÜLKE YARATMA MÜCADELESİ

## ÖZET

Bu çalışma, Filistin'in bağımsız bir ulus olma yolunda geçen yüzyıl boyunca verdiği mücadeleleri ele aldı. Çalışma, Filistin'in bir yüzyıl boyunca bağımsız bir ulus kurma çabalarını ve Filistin halkının bağımsızlığının, bilgisinin ve liderliğinin kendi kaderini tayin etme mücadelesine yardımcı olup olmadığını veya zarar verip vermediğini inceledi. Süreç izleme bu çalışmanın genel metodolojisi olmasına rağmen, her bölüm farklı bir kaynak takımıydı ve farklı bir teknik alt kümesi kullandı; bu nedenle, genel yaklaşım karma yaklaşımlar olarak nitelendirilebilir. Araştırma sorularını değerlendirmek ve sonuçlar çıkarmak için çalışma, araştırma hedeflerini inceledi ve değerlendirdi. Çalışmanın Filistin'in sınırları, nüfusu, dini ve tarihi üzerine yaptığı araştırmalara göre, ülke konumu ve önemli nakliye yollarına yakınlığı nedeniyle tarih boyunca sık sık jeopolitik çatışmaların merkezinde yer almıştır. Ek olarak, çalışma 1517'den 1917'ye kadar Filistin üzerindeki Osmanlı yönetiminin, siyasi özerkliğin eksikliğini oluşturarak, ortak bir Arap kimliği duygusunu teşvik ederek ve I. Dünya Savaşı'ndan sonra İngiliz Mandası sisteminin yolunu hazırlayarak Filistin'in bağımsızlık mücadelesi üzerinde büyük bir etkiye sahip olduğunu keşfetti; bu da nihayetinde Balfour Deklarasyonu aracılığıyla bölgeye Yahudi göçüne izin vererek İsrail-Filistin çatışmasını daha karmaşık hale getirdi. Çalışma ayrıca Filistin liderliğinin ülkenin bağımsızlık mücadelesi üzerinde fark edilebilir bir etkisinin olmadığını, çünkü başıboş, dağınık ve on yıllardır karşılaştığı en büyük zorlukla başa çıkamadığını keşfetti. Çalışma ayrıca uluslararası toplumun Filistin'in bağımsızlık hareketine tepkisinin karmaşık ve çok boyutlu bir konu olduğunu buldu. Bazı destek örneklerine ek olarak dikkate değer başarısızlıklar ve aksilikler oldu. Dahası, araştırma Batılı ülkelerin çoğunun Filistin bağımsızlık hareketlerinin baltalanmasına önemli ölçüde katkıda bulunduğunu buldu. İsrail, tarihsel olarak Amerika Birleşik Devletleri ve Birleşik Krallık gibi ülkelerden güçlü destek aldı ve bu ülkeler ona sıklıkla önemli miktarda mali ve askeri yardım sağladı. Bu uluslar sıklıkla İsrail'in çıkarlarını Filistin haklarının önüne koyduklarından, bu durum Filistin bağımsızlığını engellemiştir. ABD, Avrupa Birliği ve İsrail'den gelen dış baskılar da, uzlaşmış bir Filistin liderliğini mevcut güç sistemi için potansiyel bir tehdit olarak gördüklerinden, birleşmeyi önlemede önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Bu aktörler, seçim veya güç paylaşımı düzenlemelerine yönelik her türlü girişimi engelleyerek, siyasi durağanlığın devam etmesini sağlamıştır. Bu liderlik açığının sonuçları felaket olmuştur.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** *Bağımsızlık, Filistin, Mücadele, Arap, Siyonizm, İsrail, çatışma, Birleşmiş Milletler*

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the Study

In 1922, the League of Nations placed Palestine and other former Ottoman territories under UK rule. Except for Palestine, where the British Mandate included the 1917 "Balfour Declaration," which expressed support for "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people," in addition to "the rendering of administrative assistance and advice," all of these territories eventually achieved full independence. Large-scale Jewish immigration, primarily from Eastern Europe, occurred throughout the Mandate (1922–1947), with the number of immigrants increasing in the 1930s due to Nazi persecution (Fischel & Kark, 2008). After a 1937 uprising sparked by Arab ambitions for independence and opposition to immigration, both sides continued their acts of terrorism and violence. The UK looked at several strategies to provide independence to a violently devastated country. The United Kingdom handed the Palestine issue to the United Nations in 1947. After considering various options, the UN recommended ending the Mandate and dividing Palestine into two sovereign states—one Jewish and one Palestinian Arab—with Jerusalem becoming an international city (Resolution 181 (II) of 1947). After declaring its independence as Israel, one of the two planned states grew to encompass 77 percent of mandate Palestine's land, including a greater portion of Jerusalem, during the 1948 conflict with neighboring Arab states (Kalev, 2017). Moreover, half of the Arab Palestinians were forced to leave or flee. The remaining land given to the Arab State by Resolution 181 was ruled by Jordan and Egypt. Israel captured the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the 1967 war, including East Jerusalem, which it later annexed (Irvin, 2011). An estimated half a million Palestinians fled their homes in a second migration brought on by the war. The foundations of a fair and sustainable peace were established by Security Council Resolution 242 (1967), which called for Israel to leave areas it had conquered during the conflict and a fair settlement of the issue.

Palestine's history is lengthy and turbulent. Numerous anniversaries commemorating unfavourable occasions that would significantly affect the future of

the region known as Palestine have occurred in recent years. The centennial of the First World War, which lasted from 1914 to 1918, was one of the most important of them (Meirison, 2020). Even though the majority of Great War narratives concentrate on Europe, the conflict had a devastating impact on the Middle East and started a series of events that still influence the region today, probably none more so than in the case of Palestine. Many significant events occurred during the war that set the stage for the current conflict in Palestine, such as the McMahon-Husayn Correspondence in 1915–16, the Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1916, the Balfour Declaration in 1917, and the British conquest of Jerusalem in November 1917, which was followed by the conquest of the rest of Palestine. Following the war, the Mandate of Palestine—a thinly disguised front for European colonialism in the Middle East—was given to Britain by the newly established League of Nations (R. Khalidi, 2020). It lasted until 1947–1948. Under British support, Zionist immigration skyrocketed during the majority of the interwar years, giving the organization a strong foundation in the Holy Land.

The 1948 conflict, which the Palestinians call Al-Nakba (the disaster), resulted in the displacement of some 720,000 Palestinians. They escaped to nearby Arab nations including Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, and beyond, where they still reside today with their descendants. Currently, peace talks between Israel and Palestine are greatly influenced by the refugee problem. While Israel regards the right of return as the demise of the arduously won Zionist goal, Palestine sees it as a moral duty and a symbolic requirement to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict (Irvin, 2011). The problem is still unresolved after attempts to negotiate the return of Palestinians eventually failed. The Palestinian community has a distinct feeling of national identity because the vast majority of their people are refugees in nearby Arab nations. Palestinian identity evolved differently among many tribes since they lacked a common region and culture to unite them. This thesis theorizes that the policies put in place by their host countries and the absence of effective leadership have hindered Palestine's path to independence over the past century, as the author intends to explore in this research project.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Palestine holds a unique place in history because it is spiritually significant to the three major monotheistic religions. Palestine ought to be a place of peace, but war and invasion have really been brought about by historical causes, sometimes religious, sometimes political (Schneer, 2011). Even now, the region is still tense and divided, which could endanger international peace. Because of the heated discussion around "the Palestine question," it is frequently difficult to discern the events of our century that led to this dangerous position. The Palestinians have made great progress since the 1967 conflict, however, in their quest for freedom and statehood. In 1968, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which was established in 1964, ratified the Palestine National Covenant. The Palestinian people pledged in the Covenant to defend their rights. In Palestine, these rights include the right to self-determination, national independence, and sovereignty; the right to return to their homes and property in Palestine; and the right to use military conflict to achieve these goals (Dunning, 2016). The Palestinian population, which currently stands at about 4 million, is more than that of many UN member states. Israel is home to almost half a million Palestinians. In the occupied areas of Gaza and the West Bank, there are an additional 1,200,000 people. The rest are living abroad, many of them as foreigners in other nations, many of them still in refugee camps. Most people who are living abroad still aspire to go back to their home country.

The Palestinian issue is frequently only examined concerning the conflict with Israel; little attention is paid to the effects of ineffective leadership on Palestine's path to independence, the role played by the policies and involvement of neighboring Arab nations in influencing the Palestinian independence movement, and the role played by the Palestinian people's independent mindset and knowledge in their fight for statehood and self-determination. Furthermore, the strategy that Palestinian authorities have been developing in recent years has changed from negotiating a solution with Israel as the best way to achieve recognition to pursuing recognition unilaterally through bilateral and international initiatives (Dunning, 2016). This creates fresh concerns and queries regarding Palestine's ability to be recognized as a state under the international order. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to investigate how these elements contribute to a better understanding of Palestine's fight to establish an independent nation for a century.

### **1.3 Study Objectives**

#### **1.3.1 Main objective**

This study's primary goal is to analyse the struggle of Palestine to create an independent country for a hundred years.

#### **1.3.2 Specific objectives**

1. To examine whether lack of contemporary leadership has been a significant factor in the inability of Palestinians to establish an independent country for 100 years.
2. To explore how the independent mentality and knowledge of the Palestinian people have influenced their struggle for statehood and self-determination.
3. To examine historical leadership trends, analyze geopolitical dynamics, and explore their implications on Palestinian sovereignty

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

- a. How has the absence of effective leadership hindered Palestine's path to independence over the past century?
- b. How have the knowledge and independent mentality of the Palestinian people contributed to or hindered their struggle for self-determination?
- c. What impact have the policies and actions of neighboring Arab countries had on the Palestinian independence Struggle?

#### **1.5 Theoretical Framework**

A long-standing legacy in Palestinian political history that could be described as one of "liberation" is invoked by Nabulsi and Hazareesingh (2008) to emphasize the peace process' shortcomings (Nabulsi et al., 2008). concepts addressed during the French Revolution served as the foundation for its theory and practice, and these concepts have been mirrored in anti-colonial movements for global self-determination. Since liberation theories share many of the same assumptions, they are ideologically similar. They try to understand why things are the way they are, but they are often idealistic and motivated more by "what should be" than "what is."

Generally speaking, liberation ideas are also influenced by the specific contexts in which they are produced (Nabulsi et al., 2008). Thus, although some theorists, like Fanon (2022), have postulated the repercussions of colonization, others, like Antonio Gramsci (2020), have based their theories on inequality in an autonomous state framework. Furthermore, there is a distinction between contexts of the struggle for regional sovereignty and conflicts that need to be understood throughout exile and displacement, like the Palestinian case.

An analysis of the ideas and expressions of Palestinian emancipation in various settings necessitates knowledge of the differences between independent nations and institutions and dependent territories, as well as how these are defined legally and internationally. The goal of changing unfair practices and structures touches on several core concepts related to agency, organization, participation, legal action, political representation, and democratic processes. The circumstances in which non-state actors operate may render their assertions and ability to defend them more susceptible. Early liberation strategies that utilize international legal processes are examined in this thesis. The implications of these systems are essential to understanding the decisions made by actors representing national interests at any given moment, even if they are not the primary focus of this examination. The thesis in this area is informed by the work of Rajagopal (2006) and Simpson (2013) on the function of liberation movements in international law and institutions.

Another factor is recognition by other countries and international organizations. Although governments can be considered countries according to their territory or sovereignty, they also have legitimacy because of their capacity to maintain strong institutions, provide for the needs of their people, and honor international agreements. As stated by Hague (2004), politics is "the process by which people negotiate and compete in the process of making and executing shared or collective decisions." Therefore, there are many different forms and processes involved in deciding who can legally represent the people's will or how it should be represented.

Notwithstanding differences in methodology and setting, liberation theories have some things in common, chief among them being an awareness of the pragmatics of political conflict. Another more obvious relationship is that numerous liberation thinkers have interacted with one another, and different liberation

movements have borrowed ideas and methods from other movements. Based on his observations and experiences of the Algerian War of Independence, in which he saw the cruelty of French persecution, Fanon's (2022) writings have influenced following racial thoughts as well as liberation movements. Fanon is notable for advocating for the use of armed resistance against oppression. His ideas have had a significant impact on ideologies of liberation and were extensively read during the mid-twentieth century anti-colonial movement. Another important study on hegemony is that of Antonio Gramsci. In addition to utilizing direct force, hegemonic forces also dominate by "consent" through a variety of belief systems, normative concepts, and practices that are upheld by the many societal institutions. Understanding how hegemonic practices can be contested and overturned is made possible by Gramsci's theory of hegemony, which is useful for the practice of planning and implementing liberation. In addition to explaining how hegemony functions, emancipatory thinking looks for ways to bring about change.

The Palestinian fight for independence makes these theoretical points more pertinent. The hegemonic notion that the redemption of the Arab states, particularly Nasser's Egypt and Arab nationalism, was necessary for the liberation of Palestine and the return of people to their homes, villages, and lands was challenged by the PLO's self-determined course after 1967. Hegemonic notions about the social and political standing of Palestinians were challenged in part by a variety of grassroots events held by Palestinian groups living in exile. Given that the thesis examines Palestine's 100-year battle for independence, the analysis will make use of the idea of "discursive spaces." Here, "space" refers to social venues for mobilization, forms of expression, and theoretical conceptualization (Mahmoud, 2010). Though they are positioned within broader frames, discursive spaces are dynamically formed and evolve throughout time and various thinking and practice configurations. This more in-depth focus, along with an emphasis on the geopolitical context of some early political discourses of Palestinian liberation, allows for a thorough analysis of Palestine's struggle to establish an independent nation for a century and how elements like the Palestinian people's lack of efficient leadership, knowledge, and independent mentality either aided or impeded their quest for self-determination.

## **2. PALESTINE – BORDERS, PEOPLE, RELIGION, HISTORY**

### **2.1 Borders and Geographic Features**

Palestine is a Middle Eastern country that is at the meeting point of the Mediterranean, Asia, and Africa. Because of its distinct strategic location, it has historically had a considerable impact on trade, culture, religion, and politics, as this thesis examines. Its location as a bridge connects Europe, Africa, and Asia by spanning the Arabian Peninsula to the Mediterranean (Gil, 1997). Throughout history, Palestine has frequently been at the center of geopolitical conflicts due to its location and closeness to important sea lanes.

Palestine's two primary regions are the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The West Bank is bounded to the west and north by Israel and to the east by Jordan, while the Gaza Strip is located next to Egypt and Israel on the Mediterranean coast. Even though these areas are modest, they have been the focus of protracted arguments and confrontations (Pappe, 2022). Throughout history, the borders of the region have been arbitrary, influenced by the Ottoman Empire, the British Empire, and, more recently, the creation of the State of Israel.

Palestine's political conflicts and economic activity have been influenced by its geographical terrain. Arid deserts in the south, rough hills in the interior and fertile plains near the Mediterranean coast make up the region's geography. Water resources and fertile agricultural land are found in the Jordan Rift Valley, which is a portion of the Great Rift System. These resources have been disputed historically.

Palestine's economy has historically relied significantly on agriculture, although political control has had a significant impact on access to water supplies and fertile land. Israeli and Palestinian land disputes frequently center on the fertile regions of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Fischel & Kark, 2008). In their paper "Sultan Abdulhamid II and Palestine: Private Lands and Imperial Policy," Fischel and Kark (2008) describe how geographical resources have historically been used to uphold authority and control, making the region's disputes even more complex.

The importance of Palestine goes beyond its location. Some of the most significant historical and cultural landmarks in the world may be found there, and it has strong ties to the three main monotheistic religions of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. The fact that these locations are thousands of years old supports Palestine's special status as a cradle of civilizations. However, a recurring struggle for territory, sovereignty, and identity has been exacerbated by this rich cultural and theological legacy as well as continuous political difficulties. Notwithstanding these difficulties, Palestine and its people are praised for their tenacity, their extensive historical heritage, and the stunning natural beauty of their homeland.

## **2.2 Religion and People**

Islam, especially the Sunni branch, is the most common religion in Palestine, while Christianity and a tiny Jewish community are also widely practiced. Wars and political disputes have drastically changed Palestine's topography throughout time, especially in its protracted battle with Israel. Although the population is made up of several different ethnic groups, Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs, including Muslims, Christians, and Druze, make up the majority. Different national and cultural identities are represented by these two significant groupings (Meirison, 2020). While Palestinian nationalists use their common Arab ancestry to bridge religious divides, Jewish nationalists frequently highlight Judaism as the foundation of both religious and national identity.

Jerusalem is an important holy site that is regarded as sacred by all three Abrahamic religions: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. It is home to important locations like the Western Wall, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and the Al-Aqsa Mosque (Barin, 2014). This common heritage, which reflects the difficulties of coexistence and war in Palestine, has both significantly influenced the region's cultural identity and served as a constant source of conflict.

In Gaza and the West Bank, the Arab majority is adamantly against Israeli annexation and control of their territories. Between 2005 and 2023, the number of Israelis living in West Bank settlements almost doubled (Jones et al., 2023). The dispute is still centered on Zionist and Palestinian Arab nationalists' competing claims to the territory. On both sides, some groups uphold mutually incompatible claims, while others support amicable agreements to heal these divisions.

### 2.3 History

Greek authors referred to the territory of the Philistines as Philistia, which is where the name Palestine originated. The Romans later gave it a new name, Syria Palaestina, which eventually found its way into Arabic. The name's development reflects the lengthy and intricate history of the area.

Ancient civilizations have had a significant influence on Palestine's history. According to archeological evidence, the Canaanites were among the first people to settle in the area and founded city-states in the Bronze Age. The groundwork for later civilizations was established by their contributions to trade, agriculture, and culture. Major powers such as the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans were drawn to the area over centuries due to its strategic location. Each made its imprint, influencing the region's political and cultural climate.

Palestine joined larger empires that brought Hellenistic and Roman influences while it was ruled by the Greeks and Romans. Following the Bar Kokhba Revolt, the Romans renamed the area Syria Palaestina to eradicate Jewish identity. Important religious and cultural hubs also emerged during this time, especially in Jerusalem, which developed into a hub for many civilizations.

Following the conquest of Palestine by Muslim Arab armies in the 7th century CE, Islam took over the region, and Palestine became a crucial component of succeeding caliphates, such as the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties (Edhem Eldem, 2018). Jerusalem, in particular, rose to prominence with the construction of the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque, further solidifying its significance in Islamic tradition.

After Palestine joined the Ottoman Empire in 1517, things were comparatively stable. To make governance and trade easier, the Ottomans separated the area into administrative districts. Jerusalem's rise to autonomy in the late 19th century was a reflection of its religious and strategic importance within the empire (Frantzman & Kark, 2011). Important infrastructure was constructed by the Ottomans, which aided in the development of the area's economy and culture.

Palestine was placed under British rule as part of the League of Nations mission after World War I ended and the Ottoman Empire fell. Because of Zionist movements and racism in Europe, Jewish immigration rose dramatically during this

time. Tensions and disputes between Jews and Arabs over territory and political power increased as a result of this migration.

Many Palestinians were displaced when the State of Israel was established in 1948, which was a watershed in the history of Palestine (Meirison, 2020). Since conflicting claims to land and sovereignty have continued to create the modern Middle East, this incident sparked a lengthy and ongoing struggle in the region.



### **3. PALESTINE UNDER OTTOMAN RULE (1517-1917)**

By encouraging a lack of political autonomy, establishing a sense of shared Arab identity, and establishing the framework for the British Mandate system after World War I—which ultimately exacerbated the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by allowing Jewish immigration to the area through the Balfour Declaration—Ottoman rule over Palestine from 1517 to 1917 had a significant impact on the Palestinian struggle for independence.

Palestine was ruled by the Ottoman Empire from 1517 to 1917. Administrative regulations, social customs, economic systems, and agricultural practices all saw substantial changes during this time. By striking a balance between local government, modernizing reforms, and outside influences, the Ottomans aimed to incorporate Palestine into their enormous empire. However, these initiatives frequently ran into obstacles, such as the rise of nationalist movements and the expanding influence of Western countries. The changing dynamics of the area throughout this period paved the way for numerous problems that still influence its history and identity.

#### **3.1 Governance under the Ottoman Division**

##### **3.1.1. Integration into the ottoman framework**

Palestine was subjugated by the Ottoman Empire by 1517, and the area was included in its administrative system. The main provincial units that made up Ottoman territory were further subdivided into smaller districts known as sanjaks. The provincial unit at the time, Damascus Eyalet, included Palestine. Jerusalem, Nablus, and Acre were the three main sanjaks into which Palestine was split by the 19th century as a result of administrative reforms that over time produced increasingly distinct territorial divisions (Rogan, 2009). The sanjak of Jerusalem had special significance during the period because of the fervor of religion, and they reported directly to Istanbul.

The Ottoman administrative system emphasized a hierarchical structure. Provincial governors, or mutasarrifs, were tasked with enforcing laws, collecting taxes, and maintaining order. However, local elites and tribal leaders often wielded considerable influence, particularly in rural areas. This decentralized nature created inefficiencies in governance and allowed these figures to maintain significant autonomy (Quataert, 2005).

### **Tanzimat Reforms**

The Ottomans implemented the Tanzimat reforms between 1839 and 1876. The goal of these reforms was to increase citizen equality while modernizing and centralizing government. The administrative structure of Palestine and the larger Ottoman Empire underwent a sea change as a result of these reforms. Policies like the Islahat Edict (1856) and the Gülhane Edict (1839) were implemented (Topal, 2021). These decrees instituted military conscription, reorganized tax structures, and guaranteed equality before the law (Quataert, 2005).

The Land Code of 1858 was one of the significant modifications. The goal of this reform was to increase government revenue and organize land holdings. However, it produced unanticipated outcomes. Rich landlords and foreign buyers acquired the majority of the land, giving local farmers only a limited amount of authority over their properties, which further exacerbated social and economic issues (Scholch, 1985). Additionally, this reform made it simpler for Europeans to buy land, which made things more difficult for local leaders and ultimately made it harder for the Ottoman authority to maintain control over the area.

## **3.2. Economic and Social Dynamics**

### **3.2.1. Role of agriculture, trade, and modernization**

Agriculture was the mainstay of the Ottoman-era Palestinian economy. The bulk of the inhabitants worked as farmers, and the Jezreel Valley's and Galilee's vast plains were crucial for growing fruits, grains, and olives that were shipped to markets throughout the empire (Kark & Oren-Nordheim, 2001). Nevertheless, the problem of conventional farming practices and the characteristics of land ownership impacted and constrained the products' productivity.

Palestine became significantly integrated into international commerce networks in the late 19th century. Citrus fruits, especially oranges, were exported to Europe through ports like Jaffa (Quataert, 2005). The modernization of Palestine's economy was marked by the building of the Jaffa-Jerusalem railway in 1892, which improved connectivity and made it easier to move people and products. Urban areas like Jerusalem, Haifa, and Jaffa were able to flourish as hubs of trade and commerce as a result of these advances.

### **3.2.2. Urbanization and social change**

Palestine's social fabric was also altered by modernization efforts. European influence, trade, and infrastructure investments drove urban growth, and European powers built schools, hospitals, and other institutions in cities like Jerusalem through missionary and charitable endeavors. Although these efforts helped the region develop, they frequently led to inequalities, with the advantages of modernization being concentrated among foreign investors and urban elites (Rogan, 2009).

However, the benefits have been less pronounced in the rural areas. Due to the seizure of their farms, debts, and absentee landlords' economic control, many peasants encountered an increasing number of challenges. Social inequality was made worse by this urban-rural divide, which increased local residents' dissatisfaction.

### **3.3. Challenges to Ottoman Sovereignty**

#### **3.3.1. Influence of western powers**

Western countries became more involved in Ottoman Palestine in the 19th century. European countries, especially Russia, Britain, and France, influenced the area through economic and religious means. Churches, schools, and hospitals were established as a result of the substantial expansion of Christian missionary activity. These organizations frequently undermined Ottoman authority by acting as tools of European soft power (Kark & Oren-Nordheim, 2001).

Additionally, Ottoman sovereignty was undermined by Western nations' economic encroachment. Particularly following the Property Code of 1858, European investors purchased huge parcels of property. This change tied Palestine's economy

more closely to European markets and disenfranchised local inhabitants (Scholch, 1985). As the Ottoman Empire's reliance on foreign investment increased, it lost authority over Palestine and established long-lasting dependencies.

### **3.3.2. Rising nationalism**

Imperial unity was seriously threatened by the rise of nationalist movements in the late Ottoman era. The Tanzimat reforms, which many saw as instruments of centralization that ignored regional customs, caused Arabs to develop a stronger sense of identity, and Palestinian elites, influenced by larger Arab nationalist currents, started to express calls for more autonomy and self-determination (Rogan, 2009).

At the same time, Zionism's ascent created fresh conflicts in the area. In the late 19th century, European Jews started to migrate to Palestine to escape persecution. With the help of Zionist groups in Europe, they bought property and built settlements. Despite their initial modest size, these movements planted the seeds for future hostilities because they ran counter to local communities' interests (Quataert, 2005).

### **3.3.3. Decline of Ottoman authority**

The Ottoman Empire was at a turning point toward the end of the 18th century. While European powers were growing and gradually expanding their influence, their power had drastically decreased. European countries were able to meddle in the empire's internal affairs as a result of their increasing might. The stability of the empire was also being threatened by the emergence of nationalist movements in the areas it had conquered. Some Ottoman areas were lost as a result of wars with Balkan insurgents and battles with Russia, many of which were motivated by nationalist goals.

Keeping the empire intact and stopping the rise of nationalist movements were the Sultan's top priorities during this time. In response, the Tanzimat Reforms were implemented to prevent the emergence of nationalist sentiments and guarantee the allegiance of non-Muslim people to the Ottoman state. The goal of these reforms was to consolidate power in the state and bring the various ethnic and religious groups in the empire together to build one Ottoman society. Additionally, the reforms

aimed to bolster the Sultan's authority by strengthening control over the provinces and conquered territory.

But by the early 1900s, the Ottoman Empire was having more and more problems. Nationalist rebellions, internal unrest, and outside pressure from Western nations all made it harder to run the country efficiently. Because of these factors, places like Palestine were left in a fragile position, open to both internal conflict and outside interference. In the end, the empire's decline led to its fall after World War I, which put an end to Ottoman sovereignty in Palestine and ushered in a new period of British rule.



#### 4. JEWISH MIGRATION AND ZIONISM

The Zionist movement-driven Jewish migration to Palestine had a profound effect on the Palestinian struggle for independence because it quickly changed the demographics of the country and increased tensions and violence between the growing Jewish population and the native Palestinian Arabs. This ultimately resulted in the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 and the forced exodus of a sizable portion of the Palestinian population. While many ethnic and religious groups, such as Arabs, Jews, and Christians, had lived in Palestine for millennia, the advent of Zionism and the backing of European colonial powers led to a war that still shapes the region today (R. Khalidi, 2020).

Examining the historical foundations of the Jewish people and their experience of diaspora, as well as the long-standing presence and rights of the Palestinian people, is essential to understanding the complexities of this conflict and how it affects Palestine's fight for independence. A major motivator for Zionist claims has been the Jewish connection to the country, which is based on religious traditions and biblical stories. However, this story frequently ignores the Palestinians' historical presence and their enduring connections to the land (Masalha, 2012).

The political movement known as Zionism gained traction in the late 1800s because of influential individuals including Moses Hess, Leon Pinsker, and Theodor Herzl. A turning point in the movement's history was the First Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897, where Herzl presented his ideas for a Jewish state in his book *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State) (Herzl, 1920). However, the native Palestinian populace paid a heavy price for this idea. The 1917 Balfour Declaration, which demonstrated British backing for Zionist goals, gave the cause a lot of impetus. This proclamation said that Britain was in favor of creating a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine, disregarding the rights and ambitions of the Arabs who had lived there for a long time (Schneer, 2011). Jews immigrated in great numbers to Palestine during the British Mandate, frequently with the help of European colonial

powers that regarded Zionism as a means of furthering their geopolitical objectives in the area (Al-Kayyali, 1978).

Zionism has had a significant and wide-ranging effect on Palestinian society. Palestinian society is split and fighting systematic discrimination and human rights violations as a result of the occupation, the destruction of villages, and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. Palestinians have been remarkably resilient in upholding their rights and maintaining their identity in the face of these obstacles (Sa'di & Abu-Lughod, 2007). The dispute over historical narratives is a crucial component of this struggle. Palestine has been portrayed as "a land without a people for a people without a land" in Zionist narratives, which frequently aim to erase or reduce Palestinian history and presence in the region (Said, 1992). Palestinian rights are rendered meaningless by this erasing of Palestinian history, which also serves to validate Zionist claims. As a form of resistance and identity maintenance, Palestinians have responded by persistently preserving and asserting their own historical and cultural narratives.

#### **4.1. Palestinian National Struggle in Response to Zionism**

The emergence of the Zionist movement and the creation of Israel led to the development of a unique Palestinian national identity, which emerged in reaction to Zionism's problems. Despite the fact that Palestinian Arab identity predated Zionism, the struggle against the Zionist movement and the loss of their homeland solidified and reinforced Palestinian national consciousness (Khalidi, 1997). Key motifs in the national narrative were the Palestinians' fight for self-determination and the defense of their resources and territory.

In the history of the Palestinian national struggle, the establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964 was a pivotal moment. Under Yasser Arafat's initial leadership, the PLO aimed to coordinate opposition to Israeli occupation and bring together disparate Palestinian factions (Sayigh, 2007). The PLO used a combination of military conflict and diplomatic pressure to get Israel and the world community to acknowledge Palestinian rights, such as the right of refugees to return and the creation of an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza.

In the late 1980s, however, the PLO's early emphasis on military conflict and outright rejection of Israel gradually gave way to support for a two-state solution. The PLO's stance underwent a significant shift with the 1988 Palestinian Declaration of Independence, which tacitly acknowledged Israel's right to exist (Tessler, 2009). The Oslo Accords, which were signed in 1993 between Israel and the PLO, marked the culmination of this change and established the Palestinian Authority (PA) as the temporary government of the West Bank and Gaza.

Although the Oslo Accords at first gave rise to optimism that the conflict would be resolved, the inability of the agreement to stop the growth of Israeli settlements and enhance Palestinian living conditions caused disenchantment with the peace process to emerge. The Second Intifada, a popular uprising that mixed peaceful resistance with more militant tactics, began in 2000 as a result of frustration and rage at political stagnation and ongoing occupation (Hammami & Tamari, 1997). The Second Intifada demonstrated the Palestinian people's tenacity and resolve in opposing the occupation, even if Israel ultimately put an end to the rebellion.

Hamas, an Islamist resistance group centered in Gaza, rose to prominence in part because of dissatisfaction with the PLO's leadership, which was seen as being too accommodating of Israel. After winning the 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections, Hamas promoted armed conflict as a strategy for liberating Palestine and refused to acknowledge Israel (Jamal, 2017). The PLO-led conflict between Hamas and Fatah caused political division, with Hamas ruling Gaza and Fatah controlling the West Bank, making the Palestinian struggle for independence and unity much more difficult.

## 5. THE CRISIS OF THE PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP

Since its establishment in 1965, the P.L.O. has been governed by the current Fatah-led Palestinian Authority government. Political Islamist movements ( Hamas and Islamic Jihad) have become quite popular in the Palestinian political system, although not being part of the P.L.O. The most accurate surveys place their share between 30 and 40 percent. In the late 1980s, several movements initially emerged. In contrast to Islamic Jihad and Hamas, there are minor P.L.O. factions that are physically less present and have a far smaller membership. This fragmented political environment presents two challenges for independence. To begin with, the current leadership cannot claim to speak for all Palestinians or even for the majority of them. Ineffective leadership is not just a political problem; it is a national disaster. External pressures from the United States, European Union, and Israel have also been a significant element in preventing unity because they saw a reconciled Palestinian leadership as a potential danger to the current power system (Rahman, 2024). Because they have discouraged attempts at elections and power-sharing agreements, these actors have made sure that political stasis continues. The consequences of this leadership gap have been catastrophic. Palestinians do not have a unified voice to advocate for themselves on the international stage.

The foundation of the Palestinian political system in its post-1948 incarnation was the organization for the military liberation of the whole area that had been the British Palestine Mandate. This covered both the areas that were integrated into Israel in 1948–1949 as well as those that were occupied in 1967. This goal was the main emphasis of the Palestinian national movement as it was gradually rebuilt in the 1950s and 1960s following the severe social upheaval caused by Israel's ethnic cleansing of more than half of the nation's Arab inhabitants in 1948–1949 (Khalidi, 2009). Palestinian officials at this point and later gave little to no careful consideration to how they would divide up a future liberated Palestine, both in terms of its Arab and Jewish populations. Furthermore, given the widespread international support—including that of all the major Middle Eastern powers—for Israel's

continued existence inside its pre-1967 borders, there was no serious consideration of how such an objective might be accomplished.

The Palestinian national movement was founded in the PLO in the middle of the 1960s, and as a result, it first set a radical and very challenging objective. According to Khalidi (2009), it was demanding the liberation of all of Palestine, the undoing of the progress made by the Zionist movement, and the integration of Jews and Arabs into a single secular state with equal rights for everyone. Its accomplishment would have necessitated a significant shift in the Palestinians' extremely adverse force balance (Khalidi, 2009). This would then have required the full mobilization of the Palestinian people, the resounding backing of the Arab peoples and a significant portion of the world system, as well as the conversion of a sizable portion of the Israeli population to this cause. After a brief period from 1968 to 1970 when it seemed that some of these goals might be achievable, the Palestinians ultimately failed to achieve any of them, experienced a string of setbacks, and were forced to make tough strategic and tactical decisions.

This led to a crucial and complex new stage for the Palestinian national struggle following its devastating losses in Jordan in 1970 and 1971. The October 1973 war demonstrated that the major Arab states, particularly Egypt and Syria, were prepared to accept the international consensus embodied in Security Council resolution 242, recognize the state of Israel within its 1967 borders, and engage in peace negotiations with it, as opposed to endorsing the PLO's broad liberationist goals. The goals of the Palestinians now conflicted with those of the most powerful Arab nations (Khalidi, 2009). Furthermore, the gradual closure of the Egyptian, Jordanian, and Syrian borders to Palestinian commando operations in Israel and the occupied territories, as well as the eventual limitation of independent PLO activities to Lebanon, made the PLO's select strategy of "armed struggle" unfeasible in practice.

The PLO leadership's dominant faction decided that the movement's goals needed to shift in response to this new circumstance. They ultimately gave up on their earlier goals and dedicated themselves to establishing a miniature Palestinian state in the areas that Israel had captured in the 1967 war (Khalidi, 2009). Thus, starting with the Palestinian National Council's 1974 provisional program and ending with the Algiers Declaration of Independence in 1988, the PLO's objectives changed

from being radical and utopian to being far more realistic. The West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem constituted 22% of Mandatory Palestine. These included taking part in international negotiations with Israel and strengthening state institutions in anticipation of the creation of a small Palestinian state alongside Israel.

Significant changes in focus, direction, and methodology were required as a result of this change in goals, which many Palestinians and the majority of onlookers did not fully understand at the time or thereafter. Even though Arafat had "renounced" terrorism in 1988, the PLO was still ostensibly a liberation movement and devoted to military conflict. Nevertheless, it was now firmly committed to acknowledging the state of Israel, participating in negotiations based on Security Council resolutions that specifically acknowledged few, if any, of its own goals, and establishing a mini-Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel (Khalidi, 2009). These new objectives suggested—if not demanded—that the PLO give up using violence.

With the spread of colonialism and the establishment of what Israeli activist Jeff Halper has referred to as a "matrix of control," Israel's economy and military might continue to grow, and it gained more and more control over the occupied Palestinian lands. These two processes turned out to be far more powerful than any opposition the Palestinians could muster (Khalidi, 2009). Between the mid-1960s and 1988, armed resistance failed to stop Israel's gradual annexation and absorption of the occupied areas, and the PLO was unable to come up with a suitable replacement (Khalidi, 2009). Thus, these unstoppable processes persisted despite the PLO's goals being scaled back. The PLO's emphasis on establishing a Palestinian state in the occupied territories appears to have prompted Israel to increase its colonization and control over these areas.

These severe realities and the Palestinian response to them are the root cause of the current political crisis in Palestine. From a position of tremendous weakness, the once-dominant section of the Palestinian national liberation movement has instead turned its attention only to what seems like unending negotiations. While the majority of Palestinians continue to suffer, it has done so while establishing a para-state structure under the Israeli occupation that largely meets the security requirements of that occupation and from which its leaders, cadres, and their families profit handsomely.

Moreover, Since the political split between Hamas and the Fatah-led PA in Gaza in 2007, Palestinian politics have become more dysfunctional and stagnant. According to Rahman (2024), the absence of elections and democratic legitimacy has made it possible for those in authority to grow increasingly corrupt, autocratic, and estranged from the people they are supposed to represent. The leadership's response to Israel's assault has been weak and scattered due to a lack of a clear vision, plan, or popular mandate.

Rahman (2024) claims that there have been multiple unsuccessful attempts to heal the political rift during the previous 17 years. Rather than giving up any ground or seeking true peace, each party has placed more importance on retaining control over its territory—Hamas in Gaza and Fatah in the West Bank (Rahman, 2024). This leadership void has had disastrous results. Without a united voice, Palestinians are unable to advocate for themselves internationally. Little has been done to defend Palestinians in the West Bank or further their cause by the Ramallah-based leadership's apparent strategy of avoiding inciting Israel's wrath in the hopes of escaping Gaza's fate. Palestinians in Gaza have turned into their own best advocates, using social media to expose Israel's war crimes and chronicle their terrible reality due to a lack of adequate representation and the prohibition of foreign journalists from entering the territory (Rahman, 2024). Although their initiatives have attracted sympathy and attention from all across the world, they lack the coordinated, calculated political leadership required to turn this support into tangible change.

Overall, the Palestinian leadership has no discernible influence on the country's fight for independence because it is clueless, disjointed, and unprepared to handle its biggest challenge in decades. The need for Palestinians to establish a new, cohesive national leadership is more than ever, given the current crisis and the opportunities that lie ahead. This history demonstrates how Palestine's quest for independence has been hampered over the past century by a lack of capable leadership.

## **6. THE IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL AND ARAB POLICIES AND ACTIONS ON THE PALESTINIAN SITUATION**

### **6.1 Arab States' Policies and Actions**

There is a lot of myth and misinformation surrounding the Arab states' involvement in the Palestinian independence movement. Without a doubt, the topic has played a significant role in contemporary Arab politics. However, Arab states frequently moved cautiously and constrainedly due to national or regime self-interest, even if they appeared to be deeply involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict and had fully and passionately supported the Palestinian cause since the 1930s (Rubin, 1998).

The PLO relied on the military, financial, and diplomatic assistance of the Arab world for decades to combat Israel and survive. The PLO Charter's most significant assertion was that it had the right to seek the full backing of the Arab governments, second only to a declared determination to destroy Israel by violent means. This expectation was frequently let down. Furthermore, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the PLO's errors—such as supporting Iraq's invasion of Kuwait—as well as changes in regional and global politics significantly reduced the Palestinians' previously held influence.

Despite its importance, the Arab states' position in Israel-Palestinian relations today is less directly related to the specifics of the peace process and less influenced by Palestinians than it may appear. The Arab states' willingness or capacity to take action is constrained by powerful circumstances. Their strategy is founded on the goals of the regime as well as the evolving regional political landscape, power dynamics, and alliances.

After the PLO reached its accords with Israel, it was unable to deny other Arabs the same rights. The opportunity was seized by the majority of Arab states to either decrease aid to the Palestinians or further distance themselves from the conflict. In this new environment, the PA cannot expect radical governments to

support its cause or moderate Arab states to forgo improving relations with Israel (Rubin, 1998). Despite the PA's awareness of the issue, Western governments and observers often are slow to grasp these changes. The PA itself has little authority over the specifics or timing of any action taken by the Arab state on its behalf, making it a supporting actor in Arab politics (Morris, 2008).

Key concerns in modern Middle East politics include the prospects of peacemaking and Arab-Israeli ties. The Arab governments are attempting to adapt to Israel's more typical role in the region. One significant new factor in inter-Arab relations is the Palestinians' shift from revolutionary activity to statehood.

However, Arab leaders are astonishingly quiet in providing the PA with direct material or even diplomatic assistance, despite their verbal criticism of Israel and support for the Palestinian cause. Four recent instances to mention:

- Syria insists that the Arab states' standard for repairing relations with Israel be advancements on the Israel-Palestinian front rather than Israeli concessions to itself.
- The PA's principal supporter, Egyptian President Husni Mubarak, declined to go to the September 1996 Washington summit in spite of Arafat's entreaties for him to do so in order to strengthen the PA's stance. Although Mubarak's absence wounded the Palestinians, it made him appear more resilient and, thus, more popular at home.
- In 1996, Jordanian-backed officials in charge of Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem attempted—but were unable—to cede control to a PA-appointed team (Rubin, 1998).
- Only Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) provided the PA with substantial financial assistance, and even they gave the PLO less than they had in the past.

By offering or refusing sponsorship, Arab governments gained significant influence over the PL. Arab states gradually changed their stance from being reluctant to fight for the cause of the Palestinians to either opposing or refusing to support the PLO. In the 1960s, Syria and Egypt forbade the PLO from attacking Israel across their borders; Jordan expelled it in 1970; Syria attacked it in Lebanon in

1976; Iraqi gunmen killed its officials in 1977; Egypt made peace with it in 1978–1979; Syria split it in 1983 and drove the PLO out of areas of Lebanon under Syrian control. Shi'a Muslims and Lebanese Christians slaughtered its citizens in 1982 and 1985. Iraq displaced it by invading Kuwait in 1990 and Iran in 1980. Arab financial promises were frequently not fulfilled. In a 1978 inter-Arab accord, the PLO was given \$250 million annually, while a Jordan-PLO committee was promised \$150 million. Saudi Arabia alone covered its portion. Arab nations also made little contribution to UNRWA's efforts to aid Palestinian refugees.

## **6.2. International Policies and Actions**

There are two ways that the international community has responded to long-term solutions for the Palestinians' fight for independence. On the one hand, the permanent relocation of Palestinian refugees to Arab host nations has been promoted as a solution in several international proposals. These recommendations, which were mostly distributed by UN agencies, mainly the UNCCP and UNRWA, were based on numerous studies on potential ways to accomplish this. However, as part of a larger package of peace to be achieved in the region, several foreign diplomatic missions to the Middle East, primarily sponsored by the US, have suggested resolving the Palestinian conflicts. These strategies, which used language from UN Resolution 242, either used ambiguous "solutions" language that ignored a rights-based framework or explicitly sought to deny the rights of Palestinians.

The 1967 war brought about considerable changes to the area. Now, Palestinians had to contend with a regional alignment that was becoming more and more incompatible with their rights. Following the end of hostilities in 1967, several international peace offers mirrored this pattern. The first was the Jarring Mission, in which the UN Special Envoy visited the area per UN Resolution 242. To normalize relations, Jarring, who was tasked with putting the resolution into effect, suggested that UN Resolution 242 include a territorial exchange between the warring governments, primarily a return of territory to the vanquished Arab states. However, Palestinians saw the Resolution's vague mention of a "just settlement of the refugee problem" as a sign that their rights would be disregarded in favor of a more comprehensive regional solution. It's telling that Resolution 242 doesn't include earlier resolutions, including UN Resolution 194, or international agreements that

guarantee Palestinians the right to return and self-determination and allow them to reunite with their ancestral homes. The US-sponsored Rogers' Plan (1969) and the Jarring Mission (1967) both advanced the "Land for Peace" concept outlined in UN Resolution 242. Nearly ten years later, a variation of this structure was incorporated into the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty (1978), and it was substantially retained in the peace deals between the Arabs and Israelis in the 1990s.

The aforementioned alternatives' proponents view rights as unalienable in theory (for instance, by ratifying UN Resolution 194, human rights law, humanitarian law, and customary international law). However, these same rights are viewed as secondary to the political interests of the participating states when it comes to execution and the realm of realpolitik. Therefore, it is believed that rights are optional and should be applied selectively through international accords without taking into account the desires of the Palestinian people. Subsequent peace accords have violated the legal norm of voluntariness by excluding any procedures for the Palestinians' participatory inclusion.

In principle, international agreements such as the UN Charter and other General Assembly resolutions support the Palestinian right to self-determination. According to the United Nations (2023), they assert that every individual has the right to create their economy, society, and culture, as well as to select their government. One of the United Nations' main challenges now is how to maintain international law and human rights while balancing the conflicting demands of the parties. The full national sovereignty of Palestine is already recognized by more than 140 UN members. The UN's member states have passed multiple resolutions reaffirming the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. But it hasn't been possible to find a long-term solution (United Nations, 2024). Political interests, regional disputes, and member countries' divergent views on how to bring about peace and stability in the area all contribute to the complexity of the problem. For instance, some countries disagree with the idea that peace and stability should be predicated on the establishment of two distinct states for Israelis and Palestinians.

It is impossible to exaggerate the significance of this issue. The lives of millions of Palestinians have made this subject extremely relevant. Their region is not the only one affected by the fighting. It significantly affects international relations as well as peace and stability in the Middle East (Bluedorn & Koranchelian,

2023). The legitimacy of international law and the UN's capacity to adjudicate disputes globally are both weakened by the unsettled status of Palestinian territories.

All things taken into account, the international community's reaction to Palestine's quest for independence has been intricate and multidimensional. There have been notable failures and setbacks in addition to certain instances of support. The Partition Plan, which advocated for the establishment of distinct Jewish and Arab states in Palestine, was approved by the UN in 1947 (Dunning, 2016). Nevertheless, the plan eventually failed to create a Palestinian state, and the international community's support for Palestinian independence was fleeting. Israel gained statehood in 1948, and it was widely acknowledged by the international community. However, because Israel occupied substantial portions of Palestinian territory, this recognition came at the expense of Palestinian statehood. The international world has come under heavy fire for failing to create a Palestinian state and enforce the 1949 Armistice Agreements.

Several resolutions advocating for the recognition of Palestinian rights, including statehood, were adopted by the UN General Assembly between 1978 and 1980. Nevertheless, there was little international action as a result of these decisions, and they were not legally binding. According to Kalev (2017), the Oslo Accords also established the Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the Palestinian people's representative. Nonetheless, the international community has come under heavy fire for its inability to uphold its responsibilities under the accord and encourage Palestinian statehood. The United States and other nations have also used their veto power to prevent the UN Security Council from passing a resolution acknowledging Palestinian statehood. This failure has weakened international efforts to support Palestinian statehood and given Israel more confidence to expand its settlements.

## **7. EXTERNAL FACTORS HINDERING PALESTINIAN INDEPENDENCE**

### **7.1 Role of Western Powers**

Palestinian independence movements have been seriously undermined by the majority of Western nations. The connection between the United States and Israel is close and has historical significance. Israel receives yearly financial support from the US as part of this partnership. United States funding to Israel totaled \$3.3 billion in 2022 (USAFacts, 2023). The goal of this aid is to help Israel with a number of its defense and security requirements. Many Western nations, including France, Britain, Italy, Germany, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, support Israel. These nations, who stand with Israel, have denounced Hamas. The European Union has also issued a statement endorsing Israel's right to self-defense (European Neighbourhood Policy, 2023). Regarding Palestine, they will keep providing them with financial and humanitarian help, just as they have in the past.

Additionally, lobbyists have a big impact on making political decisions and forming public opinion. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee, or AIPAC, and other pro-Israel organizations have become more active in US politics. They have committed significant financial resources to candidates in the May 2022 congressional primary contests (Harb, 2022). The purpose of this calculated financial investment is to offset the growing political support for the Palestinian cause. Western countries have changed their policies and views in the region as a result of lobbying groups' successful pressure on them to adopt anti-Palestine sentiments. The placement of this subject on the global political agenda is a result of their influence.

Due in large part to the ongoing conflict, the international order is currently changing in the Western world. Europe may face more difficulties if the war continues, such as the possibility of financial market disruption. For European leaders, navigating this economic volatility and the current situation in Ukraine presents a challenging environment (Harb, 2022).

Western countries, who have historically been involved in the region through colonization, struggle to respond to the war strategically. For Western leaders to control and stop civil unrest or radicalization, they must strike a balance between humanitarian issues, political considerations, and historical legacies (Harb, 2022).

The issue of a possible change in the global order emerges amid these difficulties. With BRICS already denouncing Israel, the East, represented by nations like China, keeps a vigilant eye out for any chance to take advantage of any lapse in the Western response (Lawal, 2023). As they assess who is in line with their interests, the Western nations' capacity to overcome these obstacles will not only define their course but also influence the dynamics of world politics and public opinion. Because it can also exacerbate political parties' internal divisions.

## **7.2 Regional Arab Politics**

The larger background of Arab-Israeli tensions and other regional Arab politics have had a significant impact on the Palestinians' aspiration for independence. It is necessary to examine the historical and current aspects of Arab interactions with Palestinians, the region's geopolitics, and the impact of outside actors to comprehend how these elements have impeded Palestinian self-determination (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2024). For example, pan-Arabism, which promoted the idea of a single Arab identity and frequently eclipsed Palestinian aspirations, became a dominant ideology in the middle of the 20th century. Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt and other Arab leaders occasionally put more importance on Arab objectives than the particular requirements of Palestinian independence (Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, 1994). Furthermore, Arab governments frequently adopted stances that did not entirely support an independent Palestinian state out of concern that the emergence of Palestinian liberation organizations may spark nationalism and separatism within their boundaries.

Furthermore, the Arab-Israeli wars have had a significant and enduring influence on the Palestinian independence movement. They have exacerbated security worries, complicated international ties, exacerbated domestic differences, and changed the political and geographical environment (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2024). For the Palestinians, the Arab-Israeli wars, especially those in 1948 and 1967, resulted in substantial territorial losses. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were

displaced during the Nakba (or "catastrophe") when Israel was established in 1948. Israeli dominance over the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem was further extended following the 1967 Six-Day War, which made the possibility of an independent Palestinian state increasingly difficult (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2024). Major international powers were drawn to the Arab-Israeli wars, creating a complicated web of alliances and animosities that have impacted Palestinian self-determination. For instance, the United States has historically backed Israel, particularly after 1967, which has impacted the diplomatic options available to the Palestinians (Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, 1994). On the other hand, several Arab countries have put their ties with the United States or other states ahead of their support for Palestinian goals.

### **7.3 Israeli Influence**

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Waxman, 2019; Gelvin, 2021) is a continuing military and political dispute over land and self-determination in what was once Mandatory Palestine. According to Waxman (2019), the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Jerusalem's status, Israeli settlements, boundaries, security, water rights, the permit regime, Palestinian freedom of movement, and the Palestinian right of return are all significant facets of the conflict at hand.

Boundaries, the status of West Bank settlements, east Jerusalem, the right of return for Palestinian refugees, and security concerns are the main points of contention. Other than the United States and Israel, the international community has been in agreement on a framework for settling the conflict based on international law since the PLO recognized Israel's "right to exist" in 1982 (Louwerse, 2023). The ICJ and other UN bodies have backed this stance; each year, the UN General Assembly passes a resolution titled "Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine" with nearly universal support. According to Louwerse (2023), this decision continuously upholds the illegality of Israeli settlements, the annexation of East Jerusalem, and the rule that acquiring land through conflict is not admissible. Additionally, it highlights that Israel must leave the Palestinian territory it has occupied since 1967 and that the refugee issue must be fairly resolved by UN Resolution 194.

Violence combined with unilateral tactics and hardline political factions' rhetoric has bred animosity and mutual resentment as well as a decline in hope for a

peaceful resolution (Roy, 2016). Security has become less of an issue for Israelis since the discussions broke down, as they are more concerned with housing, work, corruption, and other urgent problems. Instead of focusing on a negotiated resolution, Israeli policy shifted to managing the conflict and the occupied Palestinian territories (Roy, 2016). Because of the growth of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, most Palestinians now think that Israel is less interested in negotiating a settlement and more focused on gaining long-term control of the region to ensure its security (Newman et al., 2011).

All things considered, nations like the US and the UK have long been ardent supporters of Israel, frequently giving it substantial financial and military backing. Because these nations frequently put Israel's interests ahead of Palestinian rights, this has hampered Palestinian independence. The Palestinian Authority, on the other hand, receives money from Western nations, frequently under terms that make it more difficult for it to declare Palestinian independence. For instance, the United States has given the Palestinian Authority a substantial amount of money, but only if the Palestinian Authority agrees to engage in negotiations with Israel. In international bodies like the UN Security Council, Western nations—especially the US—have exercised their veto power to thwart motions that might be seen as being critical of Israel.

Additionally, the complicated history of inter-Arab conflicts, such as the Syrian and Lebanese civil wars, has caused Arab nations to become divided and fragmented, making it challenging for them to stand together in support of Palestinian statehood. Israel's ongoing occupation of the West Bank and the growth of Israeli settlements have made it more difficult for the Palestinian Authority to create an autonomous and contiguous state, which has made the situation worse. The economic and social advancement of the Palestinian people has been significantly impeded by Israel's occupation of the Gaza Strip and its limitations on travel and commerce. Furthermore, a large number of Palestinians have been displaced, property damaged, and killed as a result of Israel's military measures, which include ground invasions, aerial bombardments, and targeted killings.

## **8. CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, REFERENCES**

### **8.1 Conclusion**

This study examined the struggle of Palestine to create an independent country over the last hundred years. Following the 1967 conflict, the Palestinians have made great progress in their quest for freedom and statehood. Founded in 1964, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) ratified the Palestine National Covenant in 1968. By signing the Covenant, the Palestinians pledged to defend their rights. These rights include the freedom to choose their policies, the right to national independence and sovereignty in Palestine, the right to reclaim their homes and property in Palestine, and the right to use military conflict to achieve these goals. For many years, the Palestinian people's right to self-determination has been a deeply ingrained, multifaceted issue that has consistently occupied the top spot on the international agenda. Several General Assembly decisions and the UN Charter are among the international documents that uphold the Palestinian right to self-determination. These uphold the freedom of every individual to select their government and shape their economy, society, and culture.

Political differences among Palestinians, particularly between the Palestinian Authority, which rules the West Bank, and Hamas, which ruled Gaza until the start of the war in 2023, hamper attempts to attain Palestinian self-determination. The divides undermine the general stability and governance of the Palestinian territory and prevent a cohesive front in negotiations. The Israeli occupation is another problem. The occupation entails occupying, partitioning, and asserting Palestinian territory. The Palestinians' authority over their area is weakened as a result. Palestinians and those who support them insist that "settler-colonialism" end.

Furthermore, foreign pressures from the US, EU, and Israel have also played a significant role in preventing unity because they view a reconciled Palestinian leadership as a potential threat to the existing power system (Rahman, 2024). Because they have discouraged attempts at elections and power-sharing agreements,

these actors have made sure that political stasis continues. The consequences of this leadership gap have been catastrophic. Palestinians do not have a unified voice to advocate for themselves on the international stage.

As a result, the current situation facing the Palestinian people is familiar. The lack of representation for Palestinians is reminiscent of the early years of their exodus from their homeland in the late 1940s. The PLO has deteriorated into a ghost of its former self after years of successfully representing the Palestinian people's will in the fight for their rights. The PLO is no longer able to fully represent the Palestinian people because of its extensive West Bank confines. Consequently, Palestinians' capacity to assert their rights has been undermined, resulting in increasing fragmentation and discord.

## **8.2 Recommendations**

In an attempt to resolve its disputes with Israel and acknowledge Palestine as a sovereign state, the UN and the international community have taken action. But the advancements have been either unsatisfactory or worse. More work needs to be done.

According to this report, the UN and the global community should look into new ways to support the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. The world community needs to consider what more it can do beyond what it is doing now.

Additionally, the UN ought to encourage more global collaboration. In order to find a comprehensive solution to the problem, this will encourage increased collaboration between UN member states, regional organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Furthermore, until Israel completely leaves the occupied Palestinian areas and acknowledges Palestinian statehood, the UN should impose diplomatic isolation and economic sanctions, that is, comprehensive economic sanctions. This is to exert pressure on Israel to adhere to human rights norms and international law.

Above all, the UN ought to establish a legally enforceable structure that mandates that Israel and Palestine come to a final status deal within a certain amount of time, with harsh consequences for any party who fails to comply. Avoiding the present political problems, will compel a settlement and guarantee the achievement of Palestinian self-determination.

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