

U.S. Geostrategic and Economic Interests and Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study explores the U.S. geostrategic and economic interests in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, analyzing how these interests shape U.S. policy and contribute to the ongoing deadlock in peace negotiations. **Method:** The research adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing secondary sources such as textbooks, journal articles, newspapers, government publications, and international news outlets, which were analyzed using content analysis. **Results:** The findings reveal that U.S. policy is predominantly driven by geostrategic goals, such as maintaining regional dominance, securing Israel's security, and accessing critical resources like oil. U.S. support for Israel has reinforced power imbalances, undermining the possibility of a fair peace process for Palestine. Despite numerous peace initiatives, U.S. strategic interests have consistently overshadowed efforts toward equitable solutions. **Novelty:** By applying Realism as a theoretical framework, this study provides insights into the dominance of power and security concerns in shaping U.S. policy in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, calling for a reassessment of U.S. economic and security policies to prioritize Palestinian sovereignty and fair development. The study recommends multilateral diplomacy to ensure equitable representation in peace negotiations.

INTRODUCTION

It is better to stay in the dark than to become entangled in the humanitarian, political, and economic mayhem in the Middle East. At same time nobody can take part in international politics or come up with solutions to the world's most pressing and pervasive security threat if they don't know what's going on in this area of the globe. A series of attacks that have killed and wounded individuals on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have their origins in the two parties' common ambitions for development on disputed land. With tens of thousands of deaths and massive property destruction, the human cost of these wars is incalculable. From the start of the conflict until 1995, a staggering 92,000 lives were completely decimated, including 74,000 military and 18,000 civilians, as stated in the Strategic Groups Report [1].

Nevertheless, the United States' involvement in the Middle East remains significant due to its national interests, which aren't always congruent. For instance, the need to guarantee the safety of Israel and the accessibility of Persian Gulf oil are two instances. That puts the United States' conflicting stances towards the Middle East throughout the 1900s into context. U.S. foreign policy has made allies and enemies for a variety of reasons, one of which is that it influenced the Arab world to put an oil embargo on America. Despite the fact that it makes reclaiming Palestinian land and eastern Jerusalem more difficult, Arab leaders see Israel's protection as a threat. This has led to

antagonism against Washington, DC, and terrorist strikes on American and Israeli soil. Also, the United States' presence in the area is seen by many Arab countries, particularly Iran, as a violation of Islamic principles. The Islamic ideals, particularly Sharia law, are in conflict with democracy, according to Iran. The United States defends Israel and uses her veto to overturn United Nations resolutions against Israel, which keeps the region unstable. Meanwhile, the Arabs are busily forming coalitions to defeat Israel. According to Erwin [2], this fact lends credence to his assertion that:

Israel has used military force to quell the Palestinians' desire for a nation ever since the six-day war in 1967. Israel is a strategic partner of the United States in the Middle East, and Washington has backed it. Because of this, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has become one of the most intractable and risky international issues since WWII, and it has also infuriated the Arab governments.

This region is now the most talked about, bloodiest, and most watched in the globe due to the violence. The threat of and response to terrorist acts is another serious issue. The majority of global terrorist organisations have their roots in the Middle East, as Onuoha pointed out. These terrorists have emerged and are wreaking havoc in other nations. A few examples of these groups include Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Alshabab, Boko Haram, Al Nusra, Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Tuereg rebels. Almost every continent has suffered the effects of their assaults. It has come to light that Shia Iran supplies weapons to Hamas and Hezbollah, who in turn wage continuous strikes against Israel and neighbouring nations, highlighting the intractable issue of weapons proliferation.

The United States and Russia would both be greatly affected if a nuclear war broke out in the area. For example, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has urged nations not to acquire nuclear weapons and those that already possess them, such as Russia and the United States, to decrease their nuclear warheads and stockpiles. As a result, the United Nations has proclaimed a nuclear-weapons-free world. In response to persistent Arab aggression, Israel has increased its military might and even developed nuclear weapons in the Negev desert. On the other hand, Iran has a nuclear program, which has drawn accusations of military diversion from Israel, the US, and Europe. Iran has denied the accusations, leaving many to wonder why it has refused inspections from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN's nuclear watchdog. Saudi Arabia has recently shown interest in constructing a nuclear reactor, further escalating the threat of nuclear weapons in the region.

Another issue that has arisen and is now threatening to overwhelm the world order is the religious crisis. Jerusalem has great significance for Christians, Jews, and Muslims alike. Christians visit the city on pilgrimage, while Muslims consider the Al-Aqsa mosque, the third holiest site in Islam, to be located there. This has led to tensions between the two faiths. A global religious war could break out as a result of this, since Christians perceive an assault on Israel as an attack on all Christians, Muslims see an attack on the Palestinians as an attack on all Muslims, and the Muslim world views the denial of Jerusalem to the Palestinians as an injustice to all Muslims [3].

Consider Nigeria, a country home to millions of Muslims and Christians. While Muslims in the north of the country express solidarity with the Arab world, Christians in the south and portions of the north also express solidarity with Israel. During the Arab-Israeli War in 1973, the Nigerian government severed diplomatic ties with Israel due to pressure from Muslims; in 1991, during the Gulf War, Muslims showed sympathy for Iraq. The majority of the National Assembly's 106 members are Christians from the South; they represent the political parties UPN and NPP. In 1982, they wanted the federal government to restore diplomatic relations with Israel; however, they later had to back down due to intense religious animosity. The same year, the same motion was passed in the Imo and Info houses of assembly. The majority-Muslim house of assembly in Kwara and Lagos states voted against the resolution in 1981 [4].

Because of this war, there is an issue of international discord; for example, African countries are divided on who is more righteous: Israel or the Arabs. Following the 1973 Yom Kippur war and Egypt's influence in Africa, all but four black African states severed diplomatic relations with Israel. This was in response to Egypt's occupation of Sinai and the fact that Israel had twenty embassies in Africa by 1962. By 1992, Israel had established diplomatic relations with thirty-two of the forty-one independent African states that were members of the OAU. In 2011, following South Sudan's independence, the Arab world pushed for the country to join the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). However, South Sudan rejected, claiming that it was not an Arab nation and that it wanted to forge strong diplomatic relations with Israel. As a result, Sudan initially refused to let South Sudan export oil from its territory, which caused concern among other African nations and beyond. Many Africans, both at home and abroad, felt strongly about the recent moves of South Africa and Algeria to reject Israel's observer status at the African Union (AU). On the one hand, this was regarded as a win for the Arabs, but on the other, as a setback for the Israeli supporters. This has the potential to undermine the Pan-African movement and damage the African Union (AU) by sowing discord among its 54 member nations. For what reasons is this issue often scrutinised by nations throughout the world? Where does this disagreement originate? How may the United States profit from this area? Is there anything difficult about this interest? What are the Middle East's perennial problems?

As a result, the US has taken a number of measures, including financial sacrifices, to try to end the violence in the Middle East. However, nothing has changed. Against this backdrop this study aims to explore the United States Interest and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This study seeks to provide answers to the following pertinent questions:

1. How has the Israeli-Palestinian conflict impacted on the U.S. geostrategic and economic interests?
2. How has the U.S actions and policies impacted the peace process in the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

Theoretical Underpinning

The study is grounded in the theory of Realism, which posits that international relations are primarily shaped by power, national interest, and security concerns. Realism, as a framework, was founded by political theorists like Thucydides and Thomas Hobbes and further developed by Hans Morgenthau in his work *Politics Among Nations* [5]. The theory focuses on the belief that states act in self-interest, particularly when their security or power is threatened. In the case of the U.S. and its involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Realism helps explain how American actions are motivated by the need to maintain its geopolitical dominance, safeguard its strategic interests in the Middle East, and secure access to energy resources, particularly oil. The U.S.'s unwavering support for Israel is also framed through the lens of its broader regional interests, such as countering the influence of Iran and maintaining stability in an area that is critical for global energy supplies [6]. The assumptions of Realism—state-centric analysis, power politics, and national security as the primary motivators—are critical for understanding why the U.S. has continued its support for Israel, despite the ongoing conflict and the lack of a lasting peace agreement.

Realism's relevance to the study is particularly important when examining the U.S.'s geostrategic and economic interests in the region. The U.S. has maintained strong ties with Israel not only due to shared democratic values but also because of Israel's strategic importance in the Middle East. Israel serves as a key ally for the U.S. in countering regional adversaries, such as Iran, and in safeguarding American influence over critical global oil reserves. The U.S. also benefits economically from its relationship with Israel, as it is a key partner in various industries, including technology and defense. According to Eyal Zisser [7], the U.S. has invested significantly in Israeli military and security infrastructure, viewing the alliance as a means to maintain its own strategic interests in the region. Realism highlights the way power and security concerns dominate the U.S. approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where the pursuit of regional hegemony and economic advantage often overshadows the pursuit of a fair and balanced peace agreement. This framework also explains why the U.S. has consistently used its veto power at the United Nations to shield Israel from international scrutiny, prioritizing its own strategic alliances over the political realities of the Palestinian cause.

The U.S.'s role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be understood as a combination of both geostrategic and economic imperatives. The U.S. has historically viewed the conflict as a means to solidify its political and economic dominance in the Middle East, a region crucial for global energy markets. While advocating for peace, the U.S. has often been criticised for reinforcing the status quo by supporting Israeli territorial expansion, particularly in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Critics argue that the U.S. has undermined its credibility as an impartial mediator by prioritizing its strategic partnership with Israel [8]. This dynamic is exemplified by the U.S.'s push for the Roadmap for Peace [9], [10], which, although promoting a two-state solution, did little to address the underlying power imbalance between Israel and Palestine. From a Realist perspective, the U.S. has sought to create a balance of power that favours Israeli security,

while limiting Palestinian autonomy, largely due to concerns about regional stability and oil supply routes. The economic and security interests of the U.S. in the Middle East, therefore, play a central role in shaping its policies toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which continue to be guided by a pragmatic assessment of power, rather than an idealistic pursuit of peace or justice [9].

RESEARCH METHOD

The study adopted a qualitative approach, utilizing secondary data sources such as textbooks, journal publications, newspapers, government documents, and international news outlets. This method was particularly relevant as it allowed for an in-depth examination of the geopolitical and economic dynamics surrounding U.S. involvement in the conflict. By applying content analysis to these sources, the study was able to identify patterns, key themes, and underlying assumptions related to U.S. policy decisions, power dynamics, and economic interests, thus offering a comprehensive understanding of the issue from multiple perspectives [11].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Impact of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict on the U.S. Geostrategic and Economic Interests

Geostrategy is about the exercise of power over particularly critical spaces on the Earth's surface; about crafting a political presence over the international system. It is about securing access to certain trade routes, strategic bottlenecks, rivers, islands and seas. United States geo-strategic considerations in the Middle East pre-dates the Cold War rivalries between the Superpowers, that is, the ideological confrontation in United States and Soviet relations which became apparent after World War II.

The Middle-East is quite unique in many ways to the interests of the Superpowers. First, its strategic position as a transportation gateway between Asia, Europe and Africa. The unique geographical characteristic of the region is that the Middle Eastern landmass is rimmed by five seas; the Caspian Sea, Black Sea, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Red Sea /Gulf of Aden and the Arabian or Persian Gulf all of which are important for regional as well as for extra-regional powers that have historically sought to achieve control over them [12].

Moreover, maritime transportation through three chokepoints; the Suez Canal (connecting the Mediterranean and Red Seas), Bab-al-Mandab (connecting the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden), and the Straits of Hormuz (connecting the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea) makes Middle East a tremendously significant area in sustaining the global economy [13].

Maritime security is key to economic stability as state and non-state actors continue to threaten transit via strategically and economically significant global maritime chokepoints including the Straits of Hormuz, Suez Canal, and Bab al-Mandeb Strait. Consequently, the establishment and maintenance of military bases becomes a key interest to the U.S who primary are concern with the stability of oil and gas market. These

bases are more pronounced in the Arab oil-rich states along trade routes and pressure points that will allow the United States' policy to, directly and indirectly, influence the entire region. The United States' military bases can be defined as military places that are used for training purposes, preparation, and stocking of military equipment for American military assistance or operations throughout the world. These military bases are not open to the public and usually, take different shapes according to the military purpose for which they were established. The United States' military bases can be classified into four primary categories: Air Force; Army or Land; Navy; and Communication and or Spy [13].

Before World War II, the number of United States' military bases overseas was limited. However, with the onset of the Cold War, the number of military bases and military installations increased rapidly around the world. According to Alexander Cooley's description of the United States' Department of Defense's 2006 Base Structure Report, "the United States officially maintains 766 military installations overseas and another 77 in non-continental U.S. territories. Fifteen of these facilities were estimated to be worth more than \$1.6 billion each, whereas an additional 19 were valued at between \$862 million and \$1.6 billion" [14].

Prior to 1980, the United States maintained a minimal military presence in the Middle East. In the early 1970s, the United States concluded an agreement with Bahrain for intermittent use of its naval facilities by the United States Navy for a stipend of \$4 million a year. However, following the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, Bahrain, no longer supportive of the American military presence, terminated the lease [15], [16]. Then, the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the 1979 Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan constituted a substantial threat to America's vital interests in the region, especially considering the location of an estimated 40% - 70% of the world's oil reserves. In his 1980 State of the Union address, President Jimmy Carter announced that the United States would defend its interests in the Gulf region from outside force by any means necessary, including military action. In March 1980, Carter ordered the formation of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) ("2015 Index of U.S. Military Strength," n.d.). In order to promote a long-term solution to the region, President Ronald Reagan unified the command structure of the RDJTF and became more involved in its relationship with the region. This act, combined with the creation of the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) on January 1, 1983, established and enhanced the command structure to better accommodate its mission in the region (U.S. Central Command History, n.d.).

The United States CENTCOM Area of Responsibility (AOR) covers the central proximity of the world, the Middle East. It includes countries in the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia, most notably Afghanistan, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, and Yemen (see Figure 1). The primary mission of the United States CENTCOM is to secure conditions for the region's stability, security, and prosperity by stimulating cooperation between nations, responding to crises, limiting and preventing aggressions, and supporting development

and reconstruction (“U.S. Central Command History,” n.d.). Through combined military operations, education, and human service, CENTCOM serves to maintain access to facilities in the Middle East as well as to develop relationships with local leaders [17].

Four service components and one subordinate unified command make up the United States CENTCOM: the United States Naval Forces, Middle East located in Bahrain, the United States Army Forces, Middle East based in Kuwait, the United States Air Forces, Middle East in Qatar, the United States Marine Forces, Middle East established in Bahrain, and the United States Special Operations Command, Middle East based in Qatar (“2015 Index of U.S. Military Strength,” n.d.)

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the Saddam Hussein regime began posing a new and substantial threat to the United States’ national security interests in the region. After the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the United States began assembling a coalition of more than 30 countries to oust the Iraqi military from Kuwait in January 1991. The United States CENTCOM directed more than 532,000 United States’ military personnel that made up the coalition armed forces (a total of more than 737,000), the apex of the United States’ deployment in this region. In 1991, there was a Gulf War ceasefire, but there were persistent Iraqi conflicts over the next ten years (“2015 Index of U.S. Military Strength,” n.d.).

In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the United States CENTCOM’s AOR was central to the Global War on Terrorism and engaged in operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Horn of Africa, and elsewhere in the AOR [17], [18]. Specifically, at that time, the George W. Bush administration insisted that the Iraqi regime did not cooperate with the United Nations’ arms inspectors to confirm that any WMD were destroyed and that it was supporting terrorism. As a result of these factors, America invaded Iraq in 2003. Initially, 150,000 United States’ military personnel were deployed to join personnel from coalition powers. This number increased by 30,000 in 2007, but the United States’ forces in Iraq have otherwise typically remained between 100,000 and 150,000. It was not until December of 2011 that the United States officially withdrew its troops, leaving only 150 personnel remaining at the American embassy in Iraq. Since this time, the remaining troops in the Middle East (roughly 35,000 United States’ military personnel) are primarily based in the Gulf states (“2015 Index of U.S. Military Strength,” n.d.).

Second, its ecclesiastical significance as the birth place of three major religions in the World. The three largest Abrahamic religions; Judaism, Christianity, and Islam holds Jerusalem as an important setting for their religious and historical narratives. Jerusalem is the holiest city for Judaism, being the former location of the Jewish temples on the Temple Mount and the capital of the ancient Israelite kingdom. For Muslims, Jerusalem is the third holiest site, being the location of Isra and Mi'raj event, and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. For Christians, Jerusalem is the site of Jesus' crucifixion and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

More so, Israel has concerns regarding the welfare of Jewish holy places under possible Palestinian control. When Jerusalem was under Jordanian control, no Jews were

allowed to visit the Western Wall or other Jewish holy places, and the Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives was desecrated. Since 1975, Israel has banned Muslims from worshipping at Joseph's Tomb, a shrine considered sacred by both Jews and Muslims. Settlers established a yeshiva, installed a Torah scroll and covered the mihrab. During the Second Intifada the site was looted and burned. Israeli security agencies routinely monitor and arrest Jewish extremists that plan attacks, though many serious incidents have still occurred. Israel has allowed almost complete autonomy to the Muslim trust over the Temple Mount. Palestinians have voiced concerns regarding the welfare of Christian and Muslim holy places under Israeli control. Additionally, some Palestinian advocates have made statements alleging that the Western Wall Tunnel was re-opened with the intent of causing the mosque's collapse.

Third, its vast natural endowments. It is estimated that the region holds 52.5% of the total crude oil reserves of the world as well as 44.6% of total natural gas reserves (Paraschos). The strategic location of the Middle East at the junction of three continents and with huge energy resources is the attracting mechanism to external countries to the region and United States cannot be an exception, who primary are concern with the stability of oil and gas market.

Post World War II realities highlighted Soviet expansionist policies intended to bring into Soviet orbit as many countries as possible with the overriding objective of making them Communist nations. The fear of Communist infiltration necessitated the formulation of the Truman Doctrine of 1947 – Containment as a check against Communist Soviet. The dynamics of Cold War politics which dominated the international system during this time were essentially a reflection of Superpower rivalry. Virtually no region of the world was immune from these ideological preferences in view of the strategic positions occupied by these powers as Permanent members of the UN Security Council and the enormous influence they wield as a corollary of their privileged status [19]. It has also continually made available its military strength in aid of Israel. The Soviet Union on the other hand has demonstrated her support both militarily and otherwise to advance the interest of a preponderant number of Arab nations as well as guerilla formations within the Arab Community [20].

This Balance of Power which was outcrops of the bi-polar years dominated international politics in the Middle East region. Nations that immensely benefitted from Soviet's goodwill included Syria, Egypt Iraq.

Economic Interests

Historically, American foreign policy is the articulation and aggregation of its domestic policy. In other words, foreign and domestic policies are two sides of the same coin. American Administration officials are as a matter of policy expected to discharge a strong mandate to promote United States business, investment and commercial interests abroad. This policy framework is a recognition of the fact that her international position primarily depends on the health and strength of her economy [21].

United States economy is driven by oil and the external dynamics affecting oil prices directly impacts on it. In an address before the Arab-American Business and

Professional Association, the United States Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs, Edward P. Djerejian stated that United States Gross National Product is in excess of \$6 Trillion, and annual export are approximately \$700 Billion or 11 percent of GNP [22].

He further stated that fifty-five percent of America's economic growth is directly attributable to exports. The bulk of which, goes to the Middle-East. United States foremost foreign policy interest is to maintain unimpeded access to critical natural resources like oil and natural gas. The instability in oil prices in the 1970s drove up United States inflationary rate just as declining oil prices attracted low level of inflation and economic expansion in the 1980s. The signing of the Israeli - Palestinian Declaration of Principles in September 13, 1993, midwife by the United States, was an attestation of how strategically significant the Middle-East is to the United States.

Conflict in the Middle East has impacted on economic growth as it has introduced irrationalities into the regional trading system. American government's message to States in the region has been to support the Peace Accord mentioned above, end the Arab economic boycott of Israel, and commence a process of normalizing relations with Israel. In furtherance of this, the United States government persuades their partners at the G-7 Summit in Tokyo in 1993 to include in their Political Declaration, a call for an end to the boycott.

Peace in the Middle East will engender growth of American trade and its domestic impact will be sustainable increase in the rate of employment.

The Impact of U.S Actions and Policies on the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process

Since the 1967 Six-Day war, Israel has relied on military force to suppress Palestinian demands for a homeland. The United States has supported Israel as its strategic ally in the Middle East. This has not only provoked the anger of the Arab states but also made the Israeli-Palestinian dispute one of the most vexing and dangerous diplomatic problems since world war II. Betrayal has been offered to hitherto depressed Palestinians even before the 1900s, and it is pertinent to excavate those issue in other to present a clear picture and understanding of this research work.

U.S Policy and Zionism

According to respondent Eitan from Israel; 'Zionism is a movement that promoted the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine'. At first, Americans viewed Zionism as "merely a minority political group" that only dealt with the domestic affairs of the Jews [23]. That changed when Louis D. Brandeis emerged as the leader of American Zionism. Although Brandeis resigned his post after being appointed to the US. Supreme Court by President Woodrow Wilson in 1916, he remained a powerful behind-the-scenes voice promoting Jewish interests in the United States.

While Brandeis promoted the Zionist cause in the United States, Chaim Weizmann, a Russian-born Jewish chemist, did so in Great Britain. Encouraged by Prime Minister David Lloyd George Foreign Minister Arthur James Balfour, both supporters of Zionism, Weizmann sought U.S. support for a Jewish state under a British protectorate. Despite some opposition in the British and American governments, Wilson, pressed by

Weizmann and Brandeis, supported the British government's announcement regarding the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

The interwar years witnessed increased American support for Zionism. The Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) quickly rose to 200,000 members after Congress and President Warren G. Harding declared their support for the Balfour Declaration (Peretz, 1996). By the mid-1930s, Stephen S. Wise, head of the ZOA, undertook a rigorous campaign to promote the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. With the help of Abba Hillel Silver, wise pressed President Franklin D. Roosevelt to "swallow our demands." Meanwhile, Zionist leaders, in mid-May 1942, adopted the Biltmore Program, a reaffirmation of the Balfour Declaration. David BenGurion, head of the Jewish Agency which then functioned as a de facto Jewish government in Palestine, supported this call for the founding of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine [6].

Knowledge of the gravity of the Holocaust intensified Zionist clamor for the immediate establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. Silver, now head of the American Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs (AFCZA), spearheaded a campaign to gain the support of politicians, religious leaders, and the American public for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Aided by strong financial backing and effective grassroots organization. AECZA succeeded in making the Jewish question a prominent issue in American politics [12].

U.S Policy and Israel

Although the American response to the Jewish cause was impressive, President Roosevelt refused to endorse it, assuring Arabs that he would not take any action that would prove hostile to their interests. When Harry S. Truman assumed the presidency following Roosevelt's death in mid-April 1945, he showed greater sympathy toward demands for a Jewish state. The onset of the Cold war quickly spilled over into the Middle East. The oil-rich region would not be allowed to fall to communism as evidenced by the Anglo-American response against Soviet activities in Iran in 1946. To prevent Soviet control of the region, the U.S. sought a greater presence in the Middle East. Control over Palestine, a small piece of land strategically located along the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea at the crossroads between the Middle East and Northern Africa, would satisfy this need. Hence, demands to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine became intertwined with Cold War considerations. One should also note that in response to demands for a Jewish homeland. Truman had to consider that there were five million Jewish Americans constituting a powerful community in the U.S. Any serious threat against their interests, especially concerning the Jewish question, would put Truman in a perilous political position [15], [24].

While Palestine remained a British mandate (1919-47), the British government supported the massive immigration of peoples of Jewish descent (mostly from Eastern Europe) to the area. As regard to this Peretz assert that Jewish population in Palestine rose from 65,000 in 1919 to 650,000 by 1947. Violence soon erupted in response to this influx of Jewish immigration and the usurpation of Palestinian lands that accompanied it. Truman, meanwhile, accepted the partition of Palestine as stipulated by Peel Royal

War Commission Report of 1937. The partition was not carried out, however, as some Zionists now insisted that a Jewish state cover all of Palestine.

By 1947, economic hardship caused Great Britain to transfer its mandate over Palestine to the United Nations, The United Nations' Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) recommended the division of Palestine. In response, the General Assembly, in late November 1947, adopted UN Resolution 181 which affirmed the plan to partition Palestine into Jewish and Arab states and designate Greater Jerusalem as an international zone [22]. Palestinians rejected the plan, and within a year both sides were at war.

During the conflict, Haganah, a Jewish paramilitary defense organization, seized several territories, allowing Zionists to claim a clear victory. On May 14, 1948, the provisional government issued its Declaration of Independence. That same day, The Truman administration recognized the State of Israel. This action provoked the ire of Arab states which denounced the U.S. for perpetuating the systematic dispossession of Palestinians of their lands. With a massive immigration of European Jews that followed the war, Palestinian Arabs were evicted from their homeland, causing an international refugee crisis. The war displaced 700,000 people, Arabs and Jews alike, after the armistice [20].

Between 1949 and 1956, tensions mounted in the Middle East as Egypt, Syria, and Jordan tried to secure their respective boundaries while Israel expanded its territorial limits at the expense of Palestinian villages. Then, in 1950, Israel announced the transfer of its capital from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, a contested area sacred to Christians, Muslims, and Jews. Despite UN mediation efforts to avoid conflict, Israel, in February 1955, attacked the Gaza Strip in Egypt. Egyptian President Nasser, taking note of his army's lack of arms as a key factor that contributed to its defeat, sought military assistance from the West, particularly the United States. When the U.S., Britain, and France rejected Nasser's request, Egypt turned to the Soviet Union for military assistance.

Since Nasser's ties to the Soviets threatened western strategic interests in the Middle East, in October 1956 Israel, Britain and France invaded Egypt, resulting in the Suez Crisis. Israel acquired the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza, but President Dwight D. Eisenhower demanded that it withdraw from those territories. Jewish lobbyists criticized Eisenhower for pressuring Israel to return these territories, causing Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to complain that "the Israel embassy is practically dictating to the Congress through influential Jewish people in the country." Refusing to bow to such pressure, Eisenhower insisted on the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Sinai Peninsula and cut off U.S. aid to Israel. Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion eventually acquiesced to U.S. demands. This marked a rare instance when the U.S. government opposed Israel during its ongoing conflict with its Arab neighbors.

U.N Resolution 242 and US Policy

In June 1967 Israel occupied the Sinai Peninsula, Golan heights, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem and the West Bank. This sparked the outbreak of the Six-Day War between Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Israel. The crushing defeat of the Arab states in the war immediately influenced U.S. geopolitical considerations in the Middle East. As Britain

withdrew its forces from the Persian Gulf over the next several years, the U.S. increased its aid to Israel to offset Soviet military assistance to Arab states in the region. By providing economic and military assistance to Israel, the U.S. gained a considerable foothold in the region thus balancing the interests of Arab states. More importantly, U.S. policy makers increasingly refused to reevaluate America's unconditional support of the Jewish state of Israel [15].

This became evident in America's non-enforcement of UN Resolution 242. In late November 1967 the United Nations tried to ease Arab-Israeli tensions by adopting UN Security Council Resolution 242 which called for the "withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories of recent conflict" and 'a just settlement of the refugee problem.'" The resolution affirmed Arab protests regarding the realignment of borders. But it proved "deceptively simple and brief" [18]. The ambiguity of the resolution resulted from the lack of a definite term in the withdrawal clause such that it only calls for "withdrawal of Israeli armed troops from territories" without the definitive article "the" or "all" before the last word. While this appears to be merely a semantic slip by the framers of the resolution, it paved the way for conflicting interpretations of that resolution.

The resolution failed to defuse the situation: Arab states continued to call for the annihilation of Israel, and Israel refused to relinquish territories it occupied. Meanwhile, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), formed in 1964 with the support of the Arab states began an insurgency campaign against Israel in an effort to establish a Palestinian state. The Nixon administration through the initiative of Secretary of State William P. Rogers, recognized UN Resolution 242 and called upon Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories. Henry A. Kissinger, then Nixon's National Security Advisor, feared that the resolution would invite greater Soviet influence in the Middle East and argued against the plan. This reinforced Israel's resolve not to yield to UN Resolution 242, apparently demonstrating that Israel now exercised a de facto veto on U.S. diplomatic policy in the region [2]. Kissinger's Cold war calculations, however, failed to take into account that Arab states could exploit the superpower rivalry to change the structure of the Arab world. On October 6, 1973 Egypt and Syria, aided by the Soviets, attacked Israel. Kissinger's 'shuttle diplomacy' restored peace between Egypt and Israel but failed to address Palestinian territorial demands, thus providing only a temporary truce in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Upon assuming the presidency, Jimmy Carter interpreted UN Resolution 242 as the basis for lasting peace in the Middle East. In so doing he called for the withdrawal of Israeli troops "on all three fronts-(the) Sinai, Golan Heights, [and] West Bank-Gaza [6]. In September 1978, Carter presided over the Camp David accords hoping to establish self-rule for the Palestinians. President Anwar Sadat of Egypt and Prime Minister Menachem Begin of Israel, although irreconcilable at various points during the negotiation, agreed to "a just comprehensive and durable settlement of the Middle East conflict through the conclusion of peace treaties based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.'" The agreement tried to resolve the Palestinian problem by granting Palestinians limited self-government subject to an agreement between Israel,

Egypt, Jordan and 'representatives of the inhabitants? Israel returned the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt, but Begin, exploiting the vagueness of UN Resolution 242, refused to surrender Israeli control over the West Bank and Gaza. Instead of scolding Israeli haughtiness, Carter remained silent fearful that a strong stand against Israel could have a negative impact on his future political fortunes. The U.S. government would continue to express its support for UN Resolution 242 "as the foundation of America's Middle East peace effort during the Reagan, Bush (I) and Clinton administrations both failed to press Israel to return conquered territories from the 1967 war.

Betrayal at Washington

The Oslo accord of 1993 sought to produce a lasting peace settlement in the Middle East. The preamble of that agreement states that "the government of Israel and the PLO team representing the Palestinian people agree that it is time to put an end to decades of confrontation and conflict..." to achieve a peaceful settlement. Abba Eban, former foreign minister of Israel, recalls the optimism surrounding the prospects for peace that followed the Oslo accord (Eban). But such optimism proved short-lived as a new wave of violence erupted as extremists of both sides feared the loss of several territories, especially Jerusalem, over which they sought full control. The real cause of the tension between Israel and PLO was the Oslo accord itself. Although the agreement tried to establish a Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority and an elected Council within the Gaza Strip and West Bank, it contained ambiguous references to territories and to powers to be transferred or kept. For Israeli Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, establishment of a Palestinian state was never a serious consideration. They favored a "Palestinian confederation with Jordan" as opposed to PLO aspiration of establishing a Palestinian state on the west Bank and Gaza Strip.

The assumption that the land for peace formula meant the return to pre-1967 territorial boundaries was repudiated in the agreement. Article v of the Oslo accord gave undue advantage to Israel in negotiating the thorny issues of Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security arrangements and borders. Arafat accepted this provision with the understanding that it promised the non-preemption of the agreement during a three-year interim period. Rabin, however, viewed the transitional period as an opportunity to consolidate Israeli occupation of territories, including Jerusalem. He insisted that Jerusalem must remain united under Israeli sovereignty. He intended to build more Jewish settlements in the Greater Jerusalem area during the interim period to make certain that the Palestinians could not assert any claim over the city. Clinton's characterization of East Jerusalem as disputed territory rather than occupied territory only strengthened Israel's denial of Palestinian claims to Jerusalem. To make matters worse, in early October 1993 the Clinton administration asked Congress to provide a two-billion-dollar loan guarantee to fund new Israeli settlements in the occupied territories. This violated the agreement which implicitly prohibits such activity (Neff).

Two months after the Oslo accord, President Clinton rejected the UN General Assembly's reaffirmation of Resolution 194, endorsing refugee rights, a major issue confronting Israel-PLO negotiations. The Clinton administration argued that there was

no need to support the resolution since the Oslo accord made previous resolutions “obsolete and anachronistic. Section 2 of the resolution states: ‘The refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practical date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss or damage to property which under principles of international law or in equity, should be made by the governments or authorities responsible. With America’s declining support for the resolution, the Palestinian cause lost any legal claim to just compensation and the return of these refugees.

Little progress was made in the peace process until late September 1995 when PLO chairman Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Rabin signed another agreement at Taba, Egypt (the Taba Agreement, or Oslo II). This agreement expanded the scope of Palestinian sovereignty in the west Bank and Gaza, and called for elections of a Palestinian Council. In January 1996, the general election for an eighty-eight-member Palestinian Council and its president was held with 500 international observers present. Arafat won the presidential vote garnering ninety percent of that vote.

The Taba Agreement also called for the gradual withdrawal of Israeli presence in the territories to be covered under Palestinian self-rule, but Rabin and his successor Shimon Peres refused to adhere to this provision. Instead, they ordered the construction of new settlements, extending them into the Greater Jerusalem area and the west Bank. As the ‘guarantor’ of the peace process, the U.S. could have intervened on behalf of the Palestinian cause but it remained silent thus allowing Israel to undermine the peace process again.

The election of Benjamin Netanyahu of the Likud Party in 1996 served as another stumbling block in the peace process. Netanyahu rose to power on a platform supported by the majority of Israelis, namely, the rejection of the peace settlement. He opposed a Palestinian state, the right of return for Palestinian refugees, and any reduction in Israeli control over the whole of Jerusalem. During his visit to the white House in July 1996. Netanyahu told Clinton that his government would continue construction or new settlements at approximately the same rate as previous Israeli governments. Clinton failed to censure Netanyahu for violating the terms of Oslo II.

In an attempt to secure a final agreement on the issue of withdrawal, the U.S., in the summer of 1998, proposed further redeployment (FRD) for at least 13.1 percent of the disputed territories. Netanyahu repeatedly opposed this proposal and Jewish lobby groups followed suit, echoing his arguments in the American media. After several meetings, the U.S. persuaded Netanyahu to consider the proposal. On May 5, 1998, Arafat and Netanyahu met with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in London to resume the stalled peace process and settle differences over Clinton's FRD proposal. Netanyahu wavered, claiming that he needed to first consult with cabinet officials. Clinton, however backed off when eighty-one senators, pressured by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, urged the president to drop the proposal.’

More Betrayal

Undaunted by this recent failure, President Clinton tried to push the peace process forward when he predicted that the forthcoming Camp David summit would open new vistas for future peace in the Middle East. Despite the lack of any common ground between the two sides Clinton urged Arafat to accept Israeli terms. But the summit was doomed to failure when Clinton committed several blunders. For example, Clinton told Arafat that Ehud Barak, Netanyahu's successor, had agreed to the transfer of three Palestinian villages outside Jerusalem under Palestinian control. Barak denied that he never made such a pledge, and Clinton never challenged that denial [9].

Meanwhile, Barak steadily backtracked from previous agreements. He rejected a provision concerning the withdrawal of Israeli troops from specified Palestinian lands. He ignored UN Security Council Resolutions 446 and 465 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, all of which ban the methodical transfer of civilian populations into occupied territory acquired during the Six-Day war. Indeed, during Barak's eighteen-months in office the rate of settlement activity increased by twelve percent over that of his immediate predecessor. Clinton remained indifferent while trying to maintain the appearance of an honest broker.

The Israeli proposal at the Camp David summit did not include the total withdrawal of Israeli sovereignty in the occupied territories. In the Oslo accord, the Palestinians had agreed that seventy-eight percent of all of Palestine should be under Israeli territorial jurisdiction so long as Israel agreed to allocate twenty-two percent of the land for Palestinian self-rule. That twenty-two percent was threatened by another Israeli demand that Palestinians give up additional territory. Thus, from the outset the agreement was not insulated from "a clear bias towards the Israeli negotiating position." Not surprisingly, Arafat rejected the proposal. The U.S. House of Representatives condemned Arafat by characterizing Barak's offer as "extremely generous." Stephen Zunes, a Middle East analyst disagrees. He maintains that if such an offer was generous enough, Israel had an obligation to fulfill the demands of international law [13].

During his last days in office, President Clinton further betrayed the peace process by pressing for the "incorporation into Israel of unspecified parts or occupied East Jerusalem as well as large settlement blocs elsewhere in the West Bank." Even if Clinton had considered Palestinian demands for a sovereign state, his pronouncements lacked attention to the necessary details for establishing that state (i.e., boundaries and dimensions or powers of the state). Since the election of George W. Bush U.S. policy has remained undeniably less assuring. Bush proved more aligned with Palestinian demands than Clinton by insisting upon an eighty-five percent return of occupied territories to the Palestinians. Israeli Prime Minister Arie Sharon, however, argued that only forty-two percent of the west Bank and eighty percent of the Gaza Strip should constitute the Palestinian state. Bush removed the U.S. from the peace process leaving the two parties to devise their own schemes for negotiation. This new approach "ignored the gross asymmetry in power," allowing Israel to brush aside Palestinian aspirations. Several

Palestinian calls to resume negotiations were ignored by the Israelis. Thus, US, withdrawal from the peace process merely favored the status quo.

In the same vein, direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority took place throughout 2010 as part of the peace process, between United States President Barack Obama, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas. The ultimate aim of the direct negotiations is reaching an official "final status settlement" to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by implementing a two-state solution, with Israel remaining a Jewish state, and the establishment of a state for the Palestinian people.

In early 2010, Benjamin Netanyahu, imposed a ten-month moratorium on settlement construction in the West Bank as a gesture for the Palestinian Authority, after previously publicly declaring his support for a future Palestinian state, however he insisted that the Palestinians would need to make reciprocal gestures of their own. The Palestinian Authority rejected the gesture as insufficient. Nine month later, direct negotiations between Israel and the PA relaunched, after nearly two years of stalemate [12].

Direct talks broke down in late September 2010 when an Israeli partial moratorium on settlement construction in the West Bank expired and Netanyahu refused to extend the freeze unless the Palestinian Authority recognized Israel as a Jewish State, while the Palestinian leadership refused to continue negotiating unless Israel extended the moratorium [8], [14]. The proposal was rejected by the Palestinian leadership, that stressed that the topic on the Jewishness of the state has nothing to do with the building freeze. The decision of Netanyahu on the freeze was criticized by European countries and the United States. United state never imposed a sanction on this act which increased more betrayal on the part of the Arab world. Picking a fight with Israel could be politically risky for Obama at home as he seeks re-election in 2012. This amplifies the fact that Israel now exercised a de facto veto on U.S. diplomatic policy in the region.

Trump's decision was rejected by a majority of world leaders; the UN Security Council held an emergency meeting on December 7, where 14 out of 15 members condemned it, but the motion was vetoed by the U.S. Britain, France, Japan, Italy, and Sweden were among the countries who criticized Trump's decision at the meeting. Other countries supported the move; Guatemala said that they will follow up and also relocate their embassy, while the Czech Republic, Honduras, Paraguay, and Romania said that they were also considering embassy relocation. The European Union's foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said that all governments of EU member states were united on the issue of Jerusalem, and also reaffirmed their commitment to a Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

On February 23, 2018, the U.S. State Department announced that the new embassy would open in May that year. The embassy was officially opened in Jerusalem on May 14, 2018, coinciding with the 70th anniversary of the Israeli Declaration of Independence. Representatives from 32 countries were present at opening of the embassy, including EU members Austria, the Czech Republic, and Romania. Protests on the Gaza border were

met with tear gas and sniper fire by the Israel Defence Forces, resulting in the deaths of at least 58 Palestinians, the highest single-day death toll since the 2014 Israel-Gaza conflict. The IDF and the Israeli government defended the use of force as necessary due to rocks and explosives thrown by protesters.

Developing Peace

The two-state solution represents the best chance to achieve peace in the Middle East as regards to Arab-Israeli conflict. In examining the possibility of a two-state solution to resolve this conflict, one must first define the term and then consider the political, economic and social grounds for its implementation. A two-state solution literally means the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state existing alongside Israel in a bilateral relationship defined by cooperation, mutual trust, and respect. A sovereign state controls its territory, resources, and people, and provides for the security of its citizens. In essence, a Palestinian state must have a viable territory much like any nation-state. As part of this proposed solution, which includes negotiations on the refugee and settlement problems, the status of Jerusalem and water supplies, the basis for determining the border between the two states should be UN Resolution 242 and the pre-Six-Day war boundaries. All of Gaza and the west Bank should become part of the proposed state of Palestine.

This means the immediate termination of settlement expansion activities and the withdrawal of Israeli occupation troops from those areas. Israelis under Palestinian sovereignty should have their civil rights protected. Palestinian refugees should be allowed to return to their homeland within the context of UN Resolution 194 and other legal international obligations which must take into consideration personal property rights of Arabs and Jews before 1948. Regarding Jerusalem dividing the city is not a viable option to achieve peace. Making it an open city and a capital to both parties would serve the best interests of both states and satisfy the religious concerns of other nations. Regarding water supplies, the best way to confront this problem is to ensure that Palestinian and Israeli water rights are based on international conventions which promote joint management of water resources.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : This study highlights that U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East has been primarily driven by economic and strategic interests, particularly its access to oil, its alliance with Israel, and the maintenance of military presence to ensure regional stability. The U.S. has struggled to forge a lasting peace in the region, as its actions have often aligned with Israeli interests, undermining efforts toward a just and lasting resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. **Implication :** The study suggests that the U.S. should reassess its approach to the Middle East by promoting multilateral diplomacy and re-evaluating its economic and security policies. A shift toward prioritizing Palestinian rights and regional stability over strictly military and economic goals could contribute to a more sustainable peace process. **Limitation :** This study primarily relied on secondary sources and did not include primary data from diplomatic negotiations or interviews with key policymakers. Therefore, it may lack a direct

understanding of current diplomatic strategies and the internal decision-making processes within the U.S. government. **Future Research** : Future studies could explore the role of other international actors in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, examining how their involvement could potentially influence U.S. policies. Additionally, empirical research involving primary data could provide a deeper insight into the effectiveness of multilateral diplomacy and its impact on peace negotiations in the region.

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