



Analysing the Palestine-Israel conflict: deciphering the fusion of religious beliefs and political realities leading to a turbulent landscape

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The Palestine-Israel conflict is a complex issue that might intertwine both the elements of religion and politics. At its core, the issue stems from historical, religious and territorial factors. The dispute is mainly over land that particularly holds immense religious significance both for Muslims and Jews. This paper aims to analyze the dispute, examining whether the issue involves political struggles to control the land or factors related to religious holiness. The historical insights in this connection would help analyze the issue in depth, leading to the present-day turbulent conflict that has been ongoing since October 2023. A comprehensive approach is necessary to address both the religious sensitivities of the conflict and the political realities. The research paper employs a qualitative design, incorporating archival research and content analysis of relevant literature to gain insights into the complexities of the issue. Whereas the research findings will shed light on the historical roots that led to the conflict. Proposing a path forward, including potential strategies to provide valuable insights for scholars, policymakers, and individuals interested in fostering reconciliation and peace in the region, will contribute to the significance of the research.

Keywords: Jerusalem, Religion, Al-Aqsa Mosque, Political dynamics, Human rights, Territorial disputes, Potential strategies, Religious politics, Religious holiness.

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1. Introduction

The Palestine-Israel conflict is considered to be the most complex and enduring geo-political issue of the present-day world. The conflict is rooted in a tapestry of historical, political, and religious dynamics. This multifaceted dispute between Palestine and Israel has transformed the lives of millions, influenced global politics, and continues to arouse intense sentiments and divergent narratives. This conflict necessitates an exploration of its historical foundations, which date back to the emergence of the Zionist movement. This movement supported the establishment of the Jewish State in Jerusalem, which they consider as their ancestral homeland. This movement occurred in the late 19th century and is also referred to as the Jewish ideology. Central to the conflict is mainly the interplay between politics and religion. Jerusalem, a region sacred to three religions, i.e. Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, epitomizes the religious importance of the region. However, Jerusalem became the flashpoint in a broader territorial struggle between Jews and Muslims asserting spiritual and historical claims to the land. The ongoing plight between both sides concerning the assertion of the land resulted in several unpleasant events, leading to a non-stop cycle of violence and full-fledged conflict in early October 2023. The modern-day political contours were mainly shaped by the creation of the Jewish homeland, Israel, in 1948, beginning the period of violence and injustice to Muslims (Boisen, 2024; Muhammad et al., 2021).

To examine the Israel-Palestine conflict, it is of utmost significance to shed light on the diverse perspectives and events involved, while also considering the narratives of both the Israelis and the Palestinians. Since Zionist inception in the late 19th century, the conflict between both sides continued to deepen as this movement advocated the Jewish homeland in Palestine. Consequently, in 1948, the State of Israel was established, which led to the first Arab-Israel war, displacing thousands of Palestinians and creating a refugee crisis. In 1967, the Six-Day War caused Israel to gain control of the Gaza Strip, West Bank, and East Jerusalem, which further pinched the relations. However, in the 1990s the Oslo Accord aimed at peace and a two-state solution, but still, the challenges persisted between both sides. In 2000 the increased violence and unrest led to military offensives. In 2005, Israel disengaged from Gaza and paved the way for Hamas, a Palestinian nationalist Sunni Islamist political organization, to take control of the territory. In the following years, violence continued, and the most notable was the GAZA war in 2014, which spanned 50 days until both sides agreed on a ceasefire on the 26th of August of the same year, resulting in significant casualties (Bordas, 2024).

During this period, efforts for peace and negotiations with international interventions occurred with varying degrees of triumph and setbacks. In addition, the historical grievances related to land and region continued with escalations in violence and humanitarian crises. This deep-rooted issue led to the unstoppable attacks and violations in the Gaza Strip on 7th October 2023 when Hamas, a Palestinian militant group, launched a stunning coordinated attack into Southern Israel. This assault resulted in Israel engaging in ground operations, aerial campaigns, and bombing of the Gaza Strip. Throughout the period, this Israel-Palestine issue has remained a center of attention of global concern. International diplomacy in highlighting the need for dialogue and sustainable peace efforts can play a vital role, but there is much criticism of the global community's failing role in mediating a ceasefire in the Israel-Gaza war.

Central to the point, to determine the Palestine-Israel conflict from religious and political perspectives, it is significant to examine the factors that have shaped the dynamics between both sides. The political perspective of the conflict is multifaceted and deeply complex,

profoundly shaping the regional political landscape for decades. However, from Israel's perspective, their focus often lies on the historical ties to the land, Sovereignty, and security concerns. Israel considers itself a state functioning on the principles of democracy to focus on the right to self-determination and safeguarding the country from violence and terrorism, including control of territories and borders (Freedman, 2019). On the other side, Palestinians' stance mainly centres on the issues of statehood, the right of return of refugees displaced during the formation of Israel in 1948. Palestinians seek Palestine as an independent state, Jerusalem as its capital with no Israelis alongside the recognition of their historical affiliation to the land. In addition, the Israeli settlements in the West Bank, the blockade of the Gaza Strip, restrictions on movement, and human rights violations are the key grievances from the Palestinians' standpoint (Khorram & Burkle, 2024). The Political dynamics involve the international community, UN, Hamas, the Israeli government and Palestinian Authority to envision an independent and secure Palestine alongside non-violent Israel. However, challenges related to the status of Jerusalem, Al-Aqsa Mosque, Gaza Strip, West Bank, and other regions of Palestinians remained unresolved.

Furthermore, the conflict through a religious perspective adds another layer of complexity to the conflict. Both the nations have deep religious ties to the land, particularly to Jerusalem a city holy to Muslims, Jews and Christians. Both the sides have different stance concerning the possession of land. From the Palestinian's viewpoint, Jerusalem is significant to Muslims as their holiest site in Islam, housing the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which is significant after Mecca and Madina. This place also holds profound religious significance for Muslims across the world. However, the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which is one of the major reasons for the conflict, is not a place of worship for Palestinians but also a symbol of their identity and resilience. The attachment of Palestinians to the land of Palestine is multifaceted, encompassing historical, religious and cultural dimensions. It reflects a crucial part of their heritage and identity, reinforcing their sense of belonging to the land despite the obstacles they face. Hence, Palestinian's narrative emphasizes the religious connection to the land, including the right of access to religious places, and the safeguarding of their cultural heritage in other areas and Jerusalem in particular (Harms & Ferry, 2012). From the Israeli's perspective, the religious significance of the land of Israel, specifically Jerusalem, is depicted in their religious texts that shape their stance concerning the conflict. According to Israelis, the historical bond to the land reflects their identity, due to which they claim sovereignty over the territory. Therefore, the religious ties to Jerusalem hold immense religious significance in Judaism.

Thus, the beliefs and religious narratives intertwine with territorial claims, political aspirations, and national identities, contributing to the deep-seated tensions between the two communities. However, efforts to address the religious dimension of the dispute call for respecting and recognizing the diverse religious perspectives, guaranteeing freedom of worship, approaching holy sites for all faiths, and promoting inter-religious dialogue for broader peace-building initiatives. Such crucial steps will lead towards peaceful reconciliation in the region (Gold, 2015). However, it is important to acknowledge the narratives of both sides in a peaceful manner. It has been seen that international interventions have sought to resolve and mediate the conflict yet remained unsatisfactory. This reflects the profound challenges of reconciling historical traumas and competing nationalisms. Looking forward, a path to peace necessitates understanding the historical context of the conflict, the political and religious stakes, and, particularly, the human rights dimension. However, a viable way forward is only possible through an empathetic and comprehensive approach (Kelman, 1987). Hence, the Israel-Palestine conflict in the context of history, religion and politics remains one of the most

protracted disputes in modern history. An in-depth understanding of its intricacies is necessary to explore the historical origins of the conflict, trace the evolution of both religious and political dynamics, and examine the contemporary manifestations of hostility.

While extensive literature is based on the Palestine-Israel conflict, most of the analysis either focuses on the religious dimensions of the conflict or the political dynamics of the conflict in isolation. Studies that address religious narratives often emphasize theological claims, historical grievances and ideological influences but seldom integrate these with present-day political shifts. Conversely, political dynamics tend to prioritize international diplomacy, state policies, and geopolitical strategies but often neglect the profound role of religious identities in shaping the narratives of the conflict. In addition, many scholarly insights focus on historical perspectives, concentrating on earlier events related to the issue, such as the formation of the Israeli state or the early intifadas. However, these accounts tend to overlook the current dynamics, particularly the role of evolving religious ideologies within the political movements in the last decade. The recent religious-political alliances, like the increasing influence of militant Islamist groups within the Palestinian territories and the rise of religious nationalism within Israeli politics, have not been fully integrated into the discussions regarding the 2023 escalation patterns.

Moreover, the literature often emphasizes the role of international peace processes and actors without adequately addressing how political mobilization and religious rhetoric have shaped the trajectory of conflict. However, there is a lack of nuanced exploration concerning the intersection of political strategy and religious symbolism that fuels the nature of violence, particularly concerning specific events like the October 2023 escalation. The existing literature has failed to comprehensively decipher how both state actors and non-state actors leveraged religious rhetoric to justify actions, mobilize support, and influence international narratives. Thus, this article fills the literature gap by analyzing the fusion of political realities and religious beliefs that led to the volatile view of October 2023. Additionally, this paper aims to bridge these gaps by providing a comprehensive analysis of how political and religious approaches intersect and have led to the eruption of violence. However, by focusing on the context of the 2023 conflict, this work contributes the latest insights into the modern evolution of the Palestine-Israel conflict while offering a more integrated structure for understanding the factors behind the ongoing instability in the region.

2. Methodology

The methodology for this research paper employs a qualitative, interdisciplinary approach to explore the given topic. However, given the sensitivity and complexity of the subject, the methodology integrates various research techniques such as document and content analysis. This research draws upon secondary sources that provide insights into the religious and political narratives from both Palestinian and Israeli perspectives. It includes historical records, media sources, religious declarations, and political movements to identify the recurring themes, political strategies, and spiritual symbols that have fuelled both sides of the conflict.

3. The historical dynamics of Zionism and Palestinian nationalism

3.1. From British mandate to statehood (1917-1948)

Zionism is a political and nationalist movement that emerged in the late 19th century with the

aim to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The Zionist movement was driven by the belief that Jews hold a distinct national and ethnic identity that must have their own sovereign state. They considered the land of Palestine their ancestral homeland due to the holy city of Jerusalem. The Jewish people wanted to escape from the widespread anti-Semitism and persecution they faced in other parts of the world and particularly in Europe. To trace back the origin of Zionism, it developed in response to the rising anti-Semitism in Russia and Eastern Europe, where Jews were subject to violent attacks and discriminatory laws. However, the European nationalist movements which emphasized the connection between territory and nationhood had also influenced the development of Zionism (Roy, 2004). The Austrian-Jewish writer and journalist namely, Theodore Herzl is considered as the father of Zionism. To advocate a separate homeland for Jews, and a solution to anti-Semitism, He in 1896, published *Der Judenstaat* refers to as "The Jewish State". However, to formalize the movement goals, he in 1897, organized the first Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland. Over the time various types of Zionism developed that reflects a variety of Zionist ideological perspectives, Such as Labor Zionism, Revisionist Zionism, Cultural and religious Zionism. However, the modern Political Zionism, whose primary focus was on political and diplomatic efforts that could secure the international recognition of the Jewish State, was pioneered by Theodore Herzl (Hermann, 2013).

In 1917, with the Balfour Declaration, the British government expressed their support for the establishment of Jewish homeland in Palestine, due to which Zionism gained significant momentum. In the aftermath of World War, I and the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Palestine came under the control of British Rule via the Mandate of the League of Nations. Amidst this period, tensions took place between the Arab communities and Jewish due to the influx of Jewish immigration spurred by the Zionist uprising. This led to continuous tensions in the form of Arab-Jewish conflicts from 1920's to 1940's. The tensions intensified, culminating in uprisings and riots, such as Arab revolt in 1936-1939 (Schumacher, 2023). However, following these uprisings, United Nations proposed a partition plan in 1947 to settle the conflict and that would divide the land of Palestine into two separate Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem as an international entity. This partition plan was rejected by the Arab leaders, however accepted by the leaders of Jews.

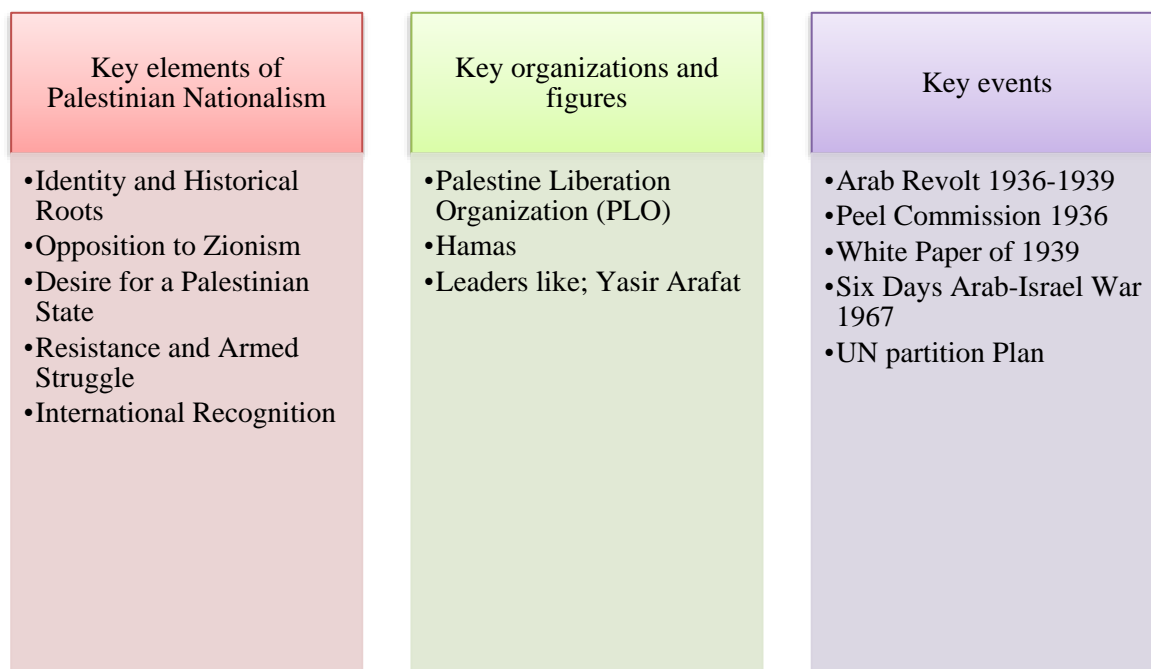
Moreover, Zionism achieving its primary goal in 1948, David Ben Gurion, a key Zionist leader on May 14, 1948, declared the establishment of Israeli State. This new state immediately gained recognition by several countries including United States, Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, Uruguay, Nicaragua, and Poland, but was rejected by the Arab states, and it sparked the first Arab-Israel war (Musthafa, 2024). Arabs opposed the Zionist movement and the Jewish State in Palestine, as it was considered both by Palestinians and Arabs as a form of settler colonialism that displaced approximately 700,000 Palestinians from their homeland. The tensions worsened and in 1967, Israel captured the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem during the Six Day War. These tensions contributed to the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict till date. These Palestinian's region has since been a focal point of strained situation, with the Gaza Strip and West Bank remaining under varying degrees of Israeli occupation and control (Rasool et al., 2024; Zahoor & Sadiq, 2021).

Following this period, in the late 20th century Palestinian's started their movement, and in 1964 established the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The PLO was led by Yasser Arafat who sought to create an independent state for Palestinians. However, in 1993, the Oslo Accords were signed, initiating the peace process that led to the creation of the Palestinian Authority,

albeit with limited self-government in parts of Gaza and the West Bank. Despite numerous peace initiatives, the Palestine-Israel conflict remained unresolved, and issues like border disputes, the status of Jerusalem, security concerns and the right of return of refugees still exist, which continues to fuel the tensions (Komesaroff, 2024). In recent years, Palestine's Statehood efforts have pursued international recognition as a State by over 130 countries and achieved non-member observer state status at the United Nations in 2012. The situation on the ground remained unchanged, as the peace efforts stalled, particularly in Gaza, where recurrent conflicts occurred between Hamas (the governing authority in Gaza) and Israel. Gaza Strip is confronted with blockade with dire humanitarian scenarios, whereas the West Bank is fragmented by the Israeli settlers and considered illegal by international law, though Israel violated this (Tessler, 2009).

The Palestinian's aspiration for a sovereign state and violent-free statehood continues to confront significant challenges, both externally and internally. The history of Palestine since it became formally known to the world is characterized by a series of disputes, ongoing conquests, deep-seated religious and cultural significance and shifting political control (Muslih, 1992). Its modern history, significantly from the late Ottoman era till date, has been dominated by the struggle between Arab and Jewish Nationalist movements. The political and cultural movement advocating for the self-determination, national identity, and sovereignty of the Palestinians is referred to as "Palestinian Nationalism". It arose in response to the decline of the Ottoman Empire, the emergence of Zionism, and later the formation of Israel in 1948. Palestinian nationalism belief is rooted in the historical bond to the land of Palestine, distinct Palestinians' identity, and their struggle for recognition and independence (Ukashi, 2018). Palestinian nationalism was characterized of several key elements, organizations and events as mentioned in Figure 1:

Figure 1: Evolution of Palestinian Nationalism



Source: Illustrated by author

The nationalism movement emphasizes the historical continuity of Palestinians with their land, particularly before the formation of the Israeli state. In addition, Palestinian nationalism has been shaped in opposition to Zionism, which sought the establishment of an Israeli state in Palestine. However, the displacement of Palestinians amidst the 1948 Arab-Israel war was a major grievance that fueled the nationalistic sentiments. Central to the point, one of the primary goals of Palestinian nationalism is the creation of an independent Palestinian state. However, Palestinians also envisioned their independent status in the Gaza Strip, West Bank, and East Jerusalem territories that are still occupied and under attacks by Israelis since 1967. Leaders like Yasser Arafat became the symbol of the Palestinian independence cause. Political resistance and armed struggle were integral to Palestinian nationalism, with various factions advocating different strategies. Groups like Fatah and Hamas played vital roles in the nationalist movement, also emphasizing Islamic elements of human rights and freedom of movement (Luka et al., 2021). The movement has sought international support, which has led to varying levels of recognition, including the United Nations' designation as an observer and the recognition of the state of Palestine by over 130 countries worldwide. Currently, Palestinian nationalism continues to be a major force in the Palestine-Israel conflict, with debates centred on achieving an independent status, ending the Israeli occupation, and addressing the refugee crisis.

3.2. Which narrative provides stronger support for a territorial claim to the land: religious or political?

As discussed above, the Palestine-Israel conflict inter-twins religious roots and political struggles, which play a significant role in shaping identity and supporting territorial claims. However, to answer the question, it is better to examine how both religious beliefs and political narratives play a role in claiming the territory. For Muslim Palestinians, the land is sacred due to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which is located in Jerusalem. However, the spiritual significance of the land is also highlighted in the Quran and Hadith, referred to as the “Blessed Land”. This place is known as the land of many Prophets, including Ibrahim (A.S), Musa (A.S), Isa (A.S) and Prophet Muhammad (SAW), whose night journey took place from Al-Aqsa Mosque and ascended to the heavens mentioned in Surah Al-Isra and Mi’raj. Therefore, Palestine is considered a symbol of faith and maintaining control over Al-Aqsa Mosque and Jerusalem is a religious duty tied to their identity and faith (Kosal, 2024). For Israelis (Jews), it is a biblical promised land; the Hebrew Bible and Torah refer to the land of Israel, given by God to Abraham and his descendants. Thus, central to Jewish covenantal identity and theology, this promise underpins their religious claim to the land. Jerusalem is the holiest city in Judaism and is home to the Western Wall, a site of pilgrimage and prayer. From a historical perspective, the first and second temples stood on the Temple Mount, making it a central point of Jewish worship. Likewise, Islam and Judaism also consider Palestine the land of the Prophets. Their Messianic belief that the rebuilding of the Third Temple in Jerusalem is a sign of the arrival of Messiah and will refer to the completion of the divine prophecy (Mitchell, 2017).

Hence, such shared theological beliefs overlap and create a point of contention on both sides. Additionally, the political narrative offers robust support for territorial claims to the land, as it is central to governance, statehood, and the legal frameworks that are focal points in international law and diplomacy. The political claims are grounded in foundational events such as the establishment of the state of Israel, UN resolutions, and National Movements that advocate for self-determination. The political narrative has shaped the negotiations and discussions over borders, rights, and sovereignty, making it a central and primary basis for

formal territorial claims and potential settlements. However, both perspectives can be compelling depending upon the circumstances.

3.3. Recent developments: the Gaza war

The recent Gaza war, also known as the Israel-Hamas conflict, began with a surprise attack in October 2023 by Hamas (the militant group of Palestinians). Hamas, on October 7 launched an unprecedented strike on Israel, including a ground incursion and a barrage of rockets. The assault resulted in the deaths of around 1400 people in Israel including civilians, and taking over 200 hostages. Hamas described this attack as a response to Israeli occupation, violence against Palestinians, and blockage for years. This included the continuous tensions over the expansion of Israeli settlements, deteriorating living conditions in Gaza, violent extremism at religious sites (Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem), and the blockade imposed by Israel since 2007. However, in response, Israel attacked with large-scale air strikes that aimed to dismantle the military capabilities of Hamas. This reaction caused devastation in Gaza at a large scale, resulting in significant civilian casualties, widespread infrastructure destruction, and intensified the humanitarian crisis. The escalation has deepened the existing grievances on both sides, with no clear resolution in sight to date. This reflects the broader unresolved Palestine-Israel conflict, marked by cycles of violence and stalled reconciliation efforts (McDoom, 2024).

3.3.1. Key phases of the war

The Gaza War or Israel-Hamas conflict has unfolded in distinct phases, each characterized by a humanitarian crisis, intense violence, and regional and international implications. The following is a chronological breakdown of the key developments that occurred and shaped the course of the conflict, from its immediate escalation to the current state of affairs.

a) Initial response (October 7, 2023)

The same day, when Hamas was surprisingly assaulted, Israel declared war and initiated a large-scale airstrike on Gaza. These attacks targeted the Hamas's leadership, infrastructure, and military facilities. Israel declared a state of war and mobilized its forces immediately. Thousands of reservists were called up, marking one of the most extensive mobilizations of forces in the history of Israel. Security forces were deployed and directed to regain control over the areas that Hamas militants infiltrated. Especially control was taken over the communities of the Southern border, where many civilians were taken hostage and killed. In addition, plans were announced related to the ground invasion of Gaza as part of their comprehensive strategy to dismantle the military facilities of Hamas. However, the initial ground offensive preparations phase was delayed allowing for more precise aerial operations and consultations with international diplomats. The security measures taken by Israel included the imposition of a complete siege on Gaza, cutting off fuel, electricity, and water supplies. This move was initiated to weaken the operational capabilities of Hamas, but it has worsened the lives of Palestinians in Gaza, leading to a high death ratio. Amidst this conflict, Israel sought support from its international allies particularly the United States, which immediately affirmed its support and backing. Therefore, US military aid was expedited to assist Israel in defence, including missile defence systems and munitions. Besides this, the Israeli government emphasized resilience and national unity with officials to condemn Hamas as a terrorist organization and presented the conflict as a fight against existential threats from Hamas. The

assault from Hamas and Israel's response set the stage for a protracted conflict, with profound political, regional and humanitarian implications (Tekchandani & Yadav, 2024).

b) Regional impacts of escalations (November 2023-2024)

The escalation from October 2023 onward has had profound impacts on the regional level across the Middle East and beyond. The humanitarian and economic crisis has resulted in destruction in Gaza and significant loss of life, with approximately 28000 Palestinians casualties reported. The economic repercussions faced by the Middle East are also at a larger scale including reduced tourism in Jordan and Egypt, due to Houthi attacks in Red Sea disruptions in global shipping has also been reported. A critical Maritime route, the Suez Canal has seen reduced traffic as companies opt for alternative routes that further strain international logistics. Moreover, a 0.5% contraction in the regional GDP forecasted by the IMF has also contributed to the economic crisis. The conflict has heightened the spillover risks, including in Syria and Lebanon, where proxy militias aligned with Iran have reinforced activities. The stability in Iraq and Yemen is also threatened, whereas Jordan and Egypt face potential mass migrations from the Gaza region that led to logistical and humanitarian challenges. In line with the Geopolitical dynamics, Iran's role as a regional player has been amplified significantly through its support for proxy groups. However, it is argued that the conflict may not particularly alter the geo-political balance, as Iran's influence was already entrenched in conflict zones such as Syria and Yemen (Tekchandani & Yadav, 2024; Tayyab et al., 2020; Zikriya et al., 2019; Mirza et al., 2021).

In addition, strains in international relations have also been noticed. Israel's relations with key regional allies like Jordan and Egypt and its broader partnership with the US have faced challenges. Initially, the US support for Israel was strong, but there has been increasing internal pressure on the US administration to reconsider its stance, particularly concerning the humanitarian crisis. The escalating violence has also been expanded to the West Bank, which reflects the deepening tensions between Palestinians and Israelis. Such scenarios make the peace negotiations more challenging. The war has intensified the existing issues in the region, such as economic instability, sectarian divisions, and human rights violations, while reinforcing the critical need for comprehensive peace efforts through international intervention.

c) Humanitarian catastrophe

The conflict has heightened the humanitarian crisis significantly in Gaza, following months of intense fighting. The infrastructure has been devastated, leaving the millions of Palestinians without access to their basic necessities including food, water, healthcare, and electricity etc. over two million people are trapped in Gaza through blockade along with global aid that has been severely restricted. The key points include the displacement and casualties of thousands of people due to airstrikes and ground operations. Civilians there, face dire living conditions taking overcrowded shelters among which many lack adequate clean water and sanitation. The delivery and access to humanitarian aid is particularly hindered by ongoing logistical obstacles and violence. Reports concerning the humanitarian aid indicate that it is often targeted by the Israeli forces that exacerbate the crisis. However, the notable reduction in the number of trucks carrying aid allowed into Gaza has further worsened the shortages. The humanitarian catastrophe has also contributed to the health crisis, as hospitals are overwhelmed by a shortage of medical supplies. Infectious diseases are on the rise due to inadequate sanitation systems and a shortage of clean water. In addition, cold weather has increased concerns about the mass's

ability to survive in harsh weather conditions without adequate shelter. Gaza people have become vulnerable to survival, and the death ratio is increasing daily (Bauhn, 2024). Nevertheless, the international community has struggled somehow to implement the measures to ease the suffering of the Palestinians. In contrast, progress has been made in addressing the availability of vaccines for diseases such as polio. Efforts to address these crises need immediate and sustained intervention from the international community to ensure the humanitarian aid reaches those in need, along with advocating for a long-term resolution of the conflict.

d) Current status of the conflict

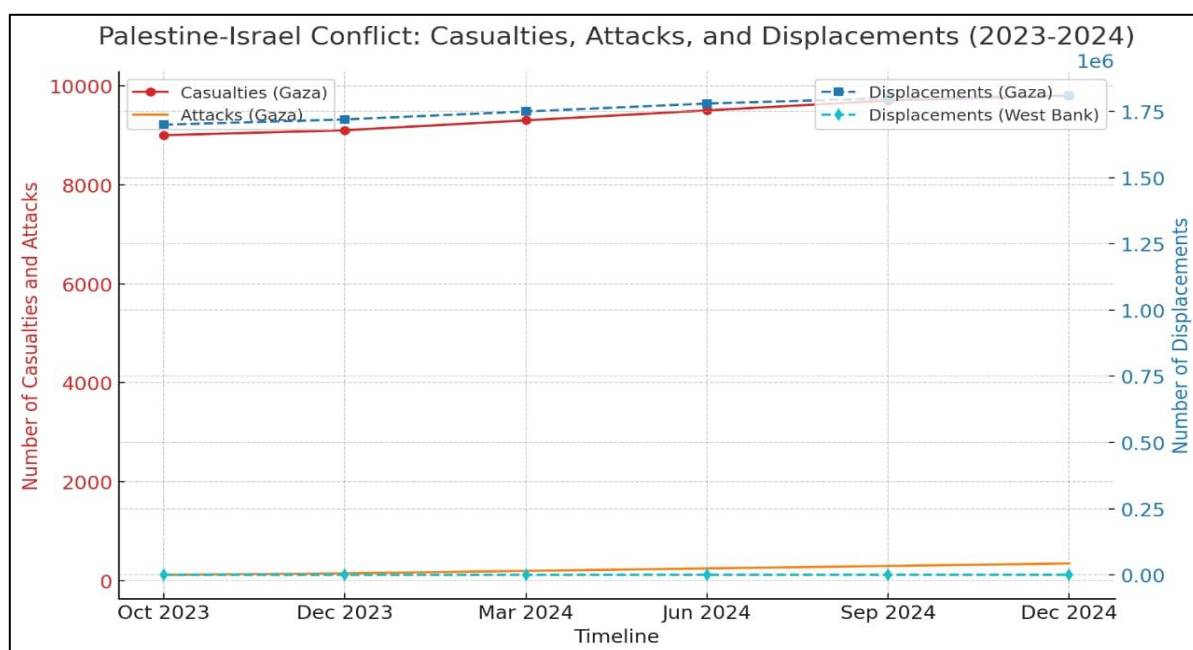
The Gaza-Israel conflict, which escalated with Hamas's attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, has continued for more than 425 days till now (December 2024). This equates to approximately one year and two months. This timeline encompasses events of intense fighting, humanitarian crises, military actions, diplomatic and international efforts, and intermittent ceasefires, all of which have failed to secure a comprehensive reconciliation. The current developments include hostilities and operations, humanitarian impact, civilian casualties and destructions, displacement trends, with no adequate solution until now. If we see the occurrences of hostilities and operations, the IDF which is Israel Defence Forces have continued targeting Gaza and more specifically Hamas, however with reports of strikes on infrastructure and suspected militant positions. Thereby, Hamas has also attempted rocket launches towards Israel in return. This has further led to the cross-border skirmishes extended to Lebanon, where Israel perceived threats and struck Hezbollah facilities. The hostage situation highlights that over 100 hostages were freed under a ceasefire in November, and Hamas continues to hold around 136 people captives. The ongoing negotiations concerning the hostage issues have involved international mediators, including Egypt to secure further releases.

The humanitarian crisis has impacted badly, Gaza faced the catastrophic conditions of casualties with over 27000, since October 2023, and nevertheless, an estimated 90% of Gaza population is still experiencing food insecurity. The key infrastructure, mainly the hospitals and water systems have largely collapsed due to destruction from Israeli airstrikes and blockade. These attacks and airstrikes have exacerbated already vulnerable human lives in Gaza. The region's healthcare system has overwhelmed, leaving many people wounded without adequate care and medication. The survivors of the strikes, particularly children, women and those who have lost their families, face long-term psychological and physical trauma. Furthermore, large portion of Gaza's infrastructure has been destroyed, that has severely affected the living conditions of the people there. The Israeli attacks on Rafah, a city in the Southern part of Gaza Strip, have severely faced devastation including the severe damage of residential areas, and hospitals. Due to the high scale of civilian casualties, it has drawn the attention of international condemnation. Rafah which was considered the safest place amid escalations was targeted by Israeli airstrikes and was part of their ongoing military operations against Hamas. But the reports concerning this indicated that the targeted areas were civilian in nature, with no evidence of Hamas's military objectives nearby. The civilian casualties and destruction have wiped out entire families in some attacks, such as a strike on December 19, 2023, which killed 22 people of Zu`rub's family, including 11 children. The nearby homes were also affected; many casualties occurred while the survivors were seeking shelter and described the horrific scenes of being trapped under the rubble for hours (Greenland et al., 2024).

Currently, the international actors are divided, with some countries advocating for an immediate ceasefire, while others like the UK, USA, Israel, and Israeli allies oppose ceasefire without conditions. The International Court of Justice emphasized the condemning of civilian casualties but has not played its actual role in mandating a ceasefire. However, the ICJ has ordered Israel to halt their operations that endanger human lives. But the Israeli government, by claiming that it is part of their campaign against Hamas, ensuring national security and sovereignty, maintains its actions until now while denying targeting civilians and their places. The situation remains highly volatile with both regional and international implications. The efforts to address the humanitarian crisis are continued, and seeking a political resolution is critical but faces substantial hurdles (Falki & Asrar, 2024).

e) Implications from the frequency of attacks

The rocket launches from Hamas and corresponding attacks from Israel reflect the period of intensified war state, such as the events since October 2023 that have led to heightened hostilities until now. The Gaza Strip has seen the highest fatalities due to the intensive attacks and airstrikes from Israel. It has been reported that over 22,000 deaths have been caused as of early 2024. The displacement trends highlight that mass evacuations occurred, especially in northern Gaza, where more than 1 million people were ordered to leave their places ahead of the military incursions. The Rafah, where the crossing is the only entry and exit place from Gaza to Egypt and remained a critical lifeline for humanitarian aid amid escalations, has been repeatedly targeted by the Israeli forces with airstrikes. It has been frequently restricted during the escalations to limit the aid deliveries and evacuation efforts. Israeli focus on the alleged Hamas’s infrastructure, safe houses and tunnels, residential neighbourhoods, and public spaces have been struck. This caused extensive destruction and civilian casualties. The displacement and crisis led Rafah to face a massive influx of displaced people from northern Gaza. Its infrastructure has struggled a lot to cope with the needs and requirements of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) amid continued bombardments. Besides Gaza, Rafah remained a flashpoint in the Palestine-Israel conflict while being a target in military operations and balancing its role as a humanitarian hub.



Data Sources: Al Jazeera (2024), UN OCHA (2024), WHO (2024)

However, to illustrate the escalations in the Israel-Palestine conflict, the data has been depicted through a graph showing, the number of casualties, number and places of attacks on Palestinian regions, number of displacements in the Gaza Strip, Rafah, West Bank, and East Jerusalem etc. to better understand the conflict dynamics.

4. Global responsibility and action: a path towards peace

The Palestine-Israel conflict, rooted in historical, ideological and territorial disputes, remains one of the most enduring crises in the present-day world. The international community, including international organizations, the Muslim world and significant powers, bear a collective responsibility to address this complex issue. However, a path toward peace requires a multifaceted and integrated approach that balances diplomacy, humanitarian efforts and justice.

4.1. The role of the United Nations

While tracing the history of the Israel-Palestine conflict, the role of the UN has been central to the issue. The efforts of the United Nations began with the 1947 partition plan, which sought to implement a two-state solution by establishing a separate Arab state for Palestinians and a Jewish state for Israelis. Over the decades, amid the skirmishes on both sides, the United Nations has passed several resolutions, such as The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 242 in 1967, which called for Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories of Palestine. Similarly, the United Nations General Assembly's Resolution 194 in 1948 affirmed the right to return Palestinian refugees (Bashir, 2024). Despite such resolutions and efforts, the United Nations' impact has been hindered by the frequent vetoing of resolutions by the veto-wielding countries in the Security Council and the lack of effective enforcement mechanisms. To effectively contribute to peace, UN member states should enforce resolutions with international consensus and ensure impartiality.

4.2. The significant role of the International Court of Justice

The International Court of Justice possesses the potential to play a pivotal role in the reconciliation process in the legal aspects of the Palestine-Israel conflict. The ICJ, in its 2004 advisory opinion, declared Israel's construction of the separation wall in Palestine's West Bank illegal and urged it to dismantle it (Irawan et al., 2024). However, the advisory opinions are non-binding, yet they carry both legal and moral weight. Therefore, the International Court of Justice could be instrumental in addressing the conflict, such as the issue of, (a) the legality of Israeli settlements in the Palestinian-occupied territories; (b) and the recognition of a sovereign state of Palestine. Nevertheless, Israel's non-compliance with the International Court of Justice's opinions and the lack of binding authority remains significant challenges. Ensuring accountability for violations of international law and strengthening the legal frameworks are essential steps through which the ICJ can contribute effectively to resolving the issue.

4.3. The responsibility of the Muslim World and OIC

The Organization of Islamic Countries collectively represents the Muslim World. Since the Palestine-Israel conflict holds a religious sensitivity to Muslims across the globe, the OIC has a critical responsibility in advocating for Palestinians' rights. OIC has consistently condemned Israel's actions in the occupied territories of Palestinians and has supported international efforts

for the recognition of the Sovereign Palestine state. However, divisions within Muslim countries have often weakened the OIC's influence. Therefore, the Muslim Ummah must effectively champion the Palestinian cause. To address this complex conflict, they should strive for internal unity and integrity and must prioritize collective action over national interests. OIC can provide humanitarian assistance and support the infrastructure development in the Palestinian territories. Moreover, through coordinated measures like sanctions and boycotts, the Muslim World can diplomatically and economically pressure Israel to quit its barbaric actions in Palestine and resolve the issue through collective efforts.

4.4. Global community and grassroots initiatives

The global community can play a crucial and influential role in condemning the conflict and human rights violations associated with it. They should focus on alleviating the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, Rafah, West Bank and other war-torn territories in Palestine. To rebuild Palestinian society, the global community can contribute through humanitarian aid, educational initiatives, charities, economic development programs, etc. The grassroots movements and International NGOs can complement the state-level diplomacy by addressing the immediate needs of the affected population and by fostering people-to-people connections.

4.5. Major power's mediation and multilateralism as a comprehensive framework

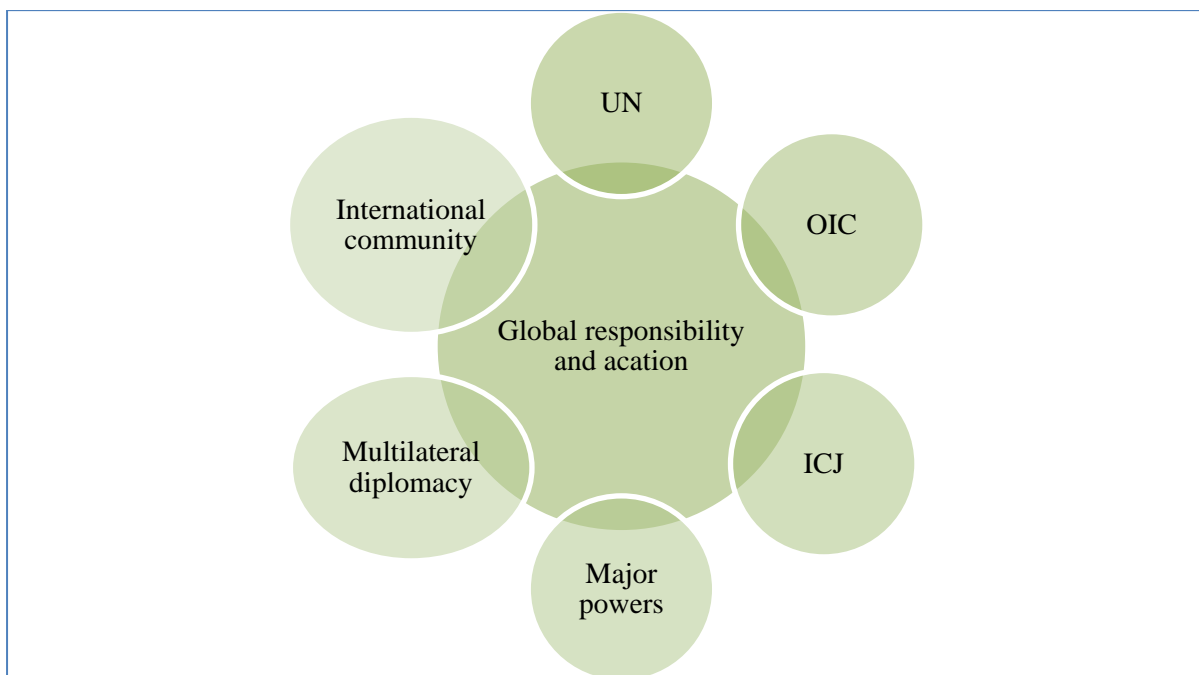
The Major Powers of the world, such as the USA, Russia, the European Union and China, have a profound influence over the Palestine-Israel conflict. Speaking about the United States, so historically, it has been a strong ally of Israel to date. The United States plays a critical role in transforming the peace process between the two sides. Their role can either help resolve the conflict or make it intense further. While it supports Israel and its security, the US must adopt a balanced approach that also addresses Palestinians' aspirations for freedom and rights. In addition, China and Russia have both called for a multilateral approach to peace talks, while emphasizing respect for international law. Their active role in a balanced mediation framework could reduce unilateralism. Furthermore, the European Union has been vocal about the two-state solution for both Palestine and Israel and also provides significant financial assistance and aid to Palestinians amid war conditions (Akgül-Açıkmeşe & Özel, 2024; Gillani et al., 2023). The EU, despite providing aid, should also enhance its diplomatic efforts to mediate between the rival nations. Multilateral diplomacy through international institutions like the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Countries and regional institutions must be prioritized. The key elements of such a framework are characterized by the following:

- Revitalizing the Two-state solution by establishing an independent Palestinian state and Israel with internationally recognized borders.
- To end the occupation by enforcing international laws and ensuring the peaceful withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the occupied Palestinian territories.
- To negotiate a fair arrangement for Jerusalem that respects the religious significance of the region to all the communities.
- To guarantee security to both Palestine and Israel through neutral mechanisms of peacekeeping.

Hence, Major Powers must come together beyond the geo-political rivalries and unite under the umbrella of multilateralism to ensure equity and fairness in reconciliation and peace efforts

in such conflicts in general and the Palestine-Israel war in particular. As the war intensifies, it will have profound implications worldwide.

Figure 2 illustrates the multifaceted approach to achieving sustainable peace in the Palestine-Israel conflict, emphasizing the role of international actors while highlighting the need for a strategy characterized by a unified and multilateral approach that balances legal, diplomatic, humanitarian and security concerns to create a path toward peace and resolution.



Source: Illustrated by author

5. Conclusion

The intricate fusion of political realities and religious ideologies lies at the heart of the Palestine-Israel conflict and its major escalation in October 2023. This escalation is often referred to by some analysts as the “Gaza War”, which has served as a stark reminder of this powerful escalation. As this analysis has shown, the religious and political forces are not merely parallel but also deeply intertwined, i.e., each feeding into and amplifying the other. However, in the context of the conflict, the religious symbolism used by the leaderships of Palestinians and Israelis played a significant role in galvanizing their respective populations while at the same time deepening divisions and fuelling the tensions. Thus, the events of October 2023 underscore the immediate need to comprehend the religious-political nexus to gain insights into the causes that led to such instability. As both sides continue to navigate their territorial claims and complex identities, it is crystal clear that any resolution must address the religious dimensions that shape the conflict. The recent Palestine-Israel war has been one of the most devastating eruptions in a decades-long struggle that defines a moment that calls for an evolved understanding of the intertwined forces. In a nutshell, by analyzing the religious and political fusion of the Gaza War, one step has been taken closer to understanding not only past events but also their future trajectory. Hence, this paper has created the foundation for a more informed and detailed discussion over the topic along with potential solutions and, most crucially, the hope for a peaceful future in the region that has been under too much violence for far too long.

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