The Arab League

Requirements for Normalizing the Relations with the State of Israel

Research Report

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"let us sing songs of freedom together"

Forum: The Arab League

Issue: Requirements for Normalizing the Relations with the State of Israel

Position: Deputy President

Introduction

The State of Israel has had long-standing tensions with its neighbours since its independence from the British in 1948. This is for many reasons, but mainly due to the conflict between Israel and Palestine and broader strains between Israel and surrounding Arab countries regarding relations with the United States of America (USA) and religious differences. However, as the years have passed, more countries in the Arab League (AL) have established diplomatic relations with Israel, evoking mixed reactions from other members focused on Palestine's well-being.

It is up to this committee to reach a consensus regarding getting rid of conflicts and (re)establishing trade or diplomatic relations with the State of Israel, which will be able to look into possible solutions for the Israel-Palestine conflict and bring back compliance within this United Nations Committee.

Definition of Key Terms

The Palestinian Authority:

The Palestinian National Authority (PA) is the governmental body that holds civil control over areas A and B of the Palestinian West Bank. It was created following a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1994; the two sides agreed to hand over the governing functions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip from Israel to a new Palestinian council, the PA. Since then, the Hamas, the opposing main political party in Palestine, has taken control over the Gaza Strip.

The Arab Peace Initiative:

The Arab Peace Initiative (API) was supported by the Arab League at the Beirut Summit in 2002. It consisted of 10 proposals asking to normalize the relations between Arab states and Israel. In return, Israel would have to surrender the territories of Arab countries seized after the Six-Day War. Only 10 out of 22 leaders in the Arab League attended the summit. While the Palestinian Authority's leader, Yasser Arafat, fully and instantly supported this initiative, the Hamas political party was separated in opinions, with most disapproving. Because of this, the initiative was reintroduced in 2007, and 21 member states of the Arab League attended. All member states fully endorsed the initiative this time, with the exception of the representative from the Hamas, who abstained. Since then, the API has been a promising solution to the gridlock in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Diplomatic Relations:

The Cambridge Dictionary defines diplomatic relations as "the arrangement between two countries by which each has representatives in the other country." Diplomacy customarily but not unfailingly strives to preserve peace between nations.

The Zionist Movement:
The Zionist movement mainly advocates for the fact that Jewish people have the right to exist and that the State of Israel has the right to exist. In practice, Zionism has been the cause of massacres of Palestinian people.

The United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine:
This plan, established in 1947, was the document that proposed the separation of Palestine into two independent states, one Jewish and one Arabic. It stated that the city of Jerusalem would remain international. Most of the surrounding Arab countries voted against this plan, yet on November 29, 1947, the plan was adopted.

United Nations Resolution 242:
The United Nations Peacekeepers Organisation defines the Security Council Resolution 242 as "[a resolution that] calls for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the occupied territories, acknowledges the claim of sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the region and calls on the UN Secretary-General to appoint an Envoy to facilitate an acceptable solution to the conflict."

The Gulf States:
The Persian Gulf States are the countries that border or are located near the Persian Gulf. These states include Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

General Overview

The Past: The Arab-Israeli Conflict

Pre-Independence of Israel

Before considering normalizing relations with Israel, we must understand the past conflicts between Israel and its neighbouring states (particularly Palestine).

The Arab-Israeli conflict began when European Jews emigrated to Palestine during the Ottoman Empire Era following the creation of the Zionist movement. These Jewish settlers purchased land in Palestine (while against the law of the Ottoman Empire for fear of losing control of Palestine) through different organizations. After World War I, the League of Nations was formed, and the British Mandate began. Both Arab and Jewish citizens were promised the land, but the British never stated that either party would get all of the land.

As Hitler rose to power before the Second World War, the Zionist movement felt more urgency to create a homeland for Jewish people. However, these intentions provoked attacks from the Arab/Muslim residents in Palestine, who were entirely against having Jewish people live in Palestine, and the tensions between these groups rose even more. In 1937, a British Commission proposed a solution to the violence: Giving Arabs control over Negev (present-day West Bank) and Gaza and giving the Jews control over Tel Aviv, Haifa (present-day northern Israel), and its surrounding areas. The Jewish leaders agreed as a base for more negotiation, but the Arabs rejected it. Furthermore, the Arabs demanded the termination of Jewish immigration and land sales to Jewish people. The British met these demands, which had a significant impact during World War II, as Jews trying to escape the Holocaust could not do so.

In 1947, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Partition Plan, which the Jews accepted while the Arabs did not. Nevertheless, on May 14, 1948, the British withdrew their military control and the State of Israel was formed. Subsequently, military troops from Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Saudi Arabia invaded Palestine. These Arab states claimed that the Partition Plan proposed by the UN was invalid, as the majority of the Arab population was against it, and that since the British withdrew their rule, there was no protection. These six countries took it upon themselves to protect the lives of the Arab citizens and their properties. By the time the war ended, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians had fled or been expelled and were not allowed to return. They were forced to reside in refugee camps in neighbouring countries. Meanwhile, many Jewish people were fleeing neighbouring Arab countries because a lot of these countries had negative views towards Jewish people, and the newly established Israel promised a better life. Most of these people ended up staying in refugee camps in Israel before being entirely accepted into society. People considered this a "population exchange" between the Arab states and Israel.

Post-Independence of Israel

Following the official forming of the State of Israel in 1948, tensions continued to rise, and wars continued to break out. Each was terminated with a new peace proposition or due to interference from the United Nations. Still, Arab and Jewish citizens continued to express nationalism and defend their right to 'their' land. In 1956, Israel, Britain, and France invaded the Sinai Peninsula and the banks of the Suez. in Egypt, opposing Egyptian President Nasser's plans to nationalize the Suez Canal. Israel justified this invasion as an attempt to stop attacks on Israeli Citizens. The invading countries eventually withdrew under pressure from the USA and other countries.

The Six-Day War followed 11 years later, in 1967. President Nasser received information from Soviet intelligence that Israel was gathering troops near the Israel-Syria border. A General went to check if this was the case, verifying that it was false and that there were no Israeli troops at the border. Still, Nasser declared total mobilization on May 14th, 1967. After the failure to solve the crisis diplomatically, the war officially started on June 6, 1967. Israel made the first move with an air strike that destroyed the Egyptian air force before it took flight. Despite Israel asking Jordan to cease attacks, it, along with Syria, began to shell Israeli targets. Throughout the day, more fighting broke out in different regions. Another ground invasion into Egyptian territory allowed Israel to conquer the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula. Because of this sudden success on the Egyptian front, Israel decided to attack and successfully capture the West Bank from Jordan on June 7th and the Golan Heights from Syria on June 9th.

Despite adopting the United Nations Resolution 242 in September of 1967, the conflict continued again in 1973 with the Yom Kippur War. Egypt's newly appointed president wanted to reinstate peace in his country, but after the loss against Israel in the Six-Day War, he knew that peace agreements between the two countries would not be favourable to him. Thus, he devised a plan to attack Israel, allying with Syria. It began on Yom Kippur, a Jewish holiday, and many Israeli soldiers were away celebrating. However, after several days, Israeli troops were fully mobilized, backed by the US military. In late October, a cease-fire was called for by the United Nations. However, this cease-fire only included Israel and Egypt, and Syria was left extremely vulnerable. Israel seized even more of Syria's territory, and because of this, in 1979, Syria and other Arab nations voted to expel Egypt from the Arab League.

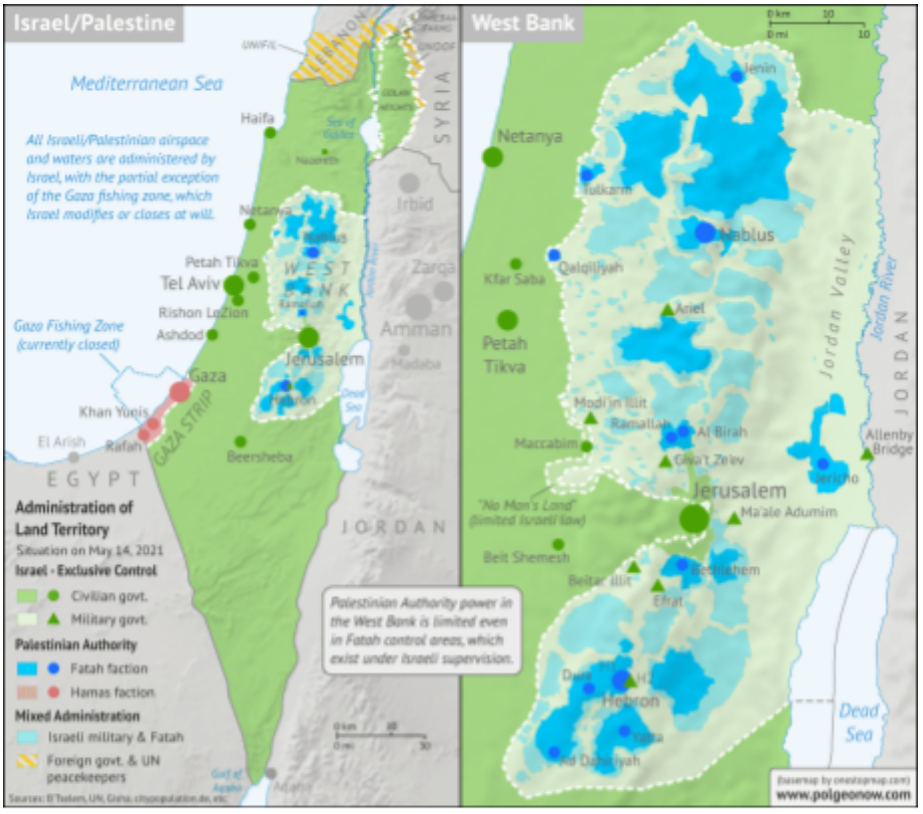
In 1993, Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation began having secret discussions. However, yet again, not much came out of these talks. This process was a cycle of negotiations and suspensions of negotiations, and eventually ended after the Intifada (Arabic civil uprising) began in 2000. The Intifada was the second of its kind, where Palestinian citizens started rioting against the Palestinian leaders. There is no clear ending to the Intifada, but it is said to have ended in 2005 when Israel

completely withdrew all troops from the Gaza Strip and settlements in the West Bank. They also returned over 900 Palestinian prisoners and vowed to stop attacking each other.

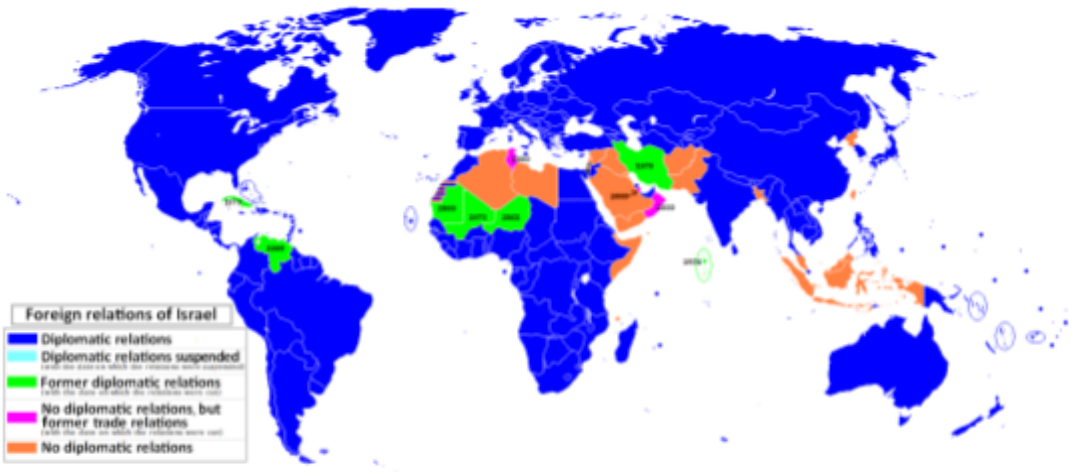
The Present: The Current Situation in Palestine and Surrounding Arab Countries

As of 2023, there are five Arab countries that have official diplomatic relations with Israel. Egypt and Jordan established these ties in 1979 and 1994 with peace treaties. In 2020, the Abraham Accords were signed, which led the UAE and Bahrain to normalize relations with Israel. Sudan indicated it would follow suit when domestic conditions allow. In that same year, Morocco re-established the official ties it had with Israel in the 1990s. In 2022, Israel, the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, Egypt, and the U.S. established the Negev Forum, aimed to grow multilateral cooperation.

Still, many predominantly Muslim countries refuse to establish diplomatic ties in solidarity with Palestine. Below is a map of which countries have relations with Israel, as well as a detailed map of the Israel/Palestine region and who controls these areas.



Map of the Control over the Palestine/Israel Area.



Map of Countries that Have Diplomatic Relations With Israel.

Major Parties Involved

Israel

Israel has had a long and complicated history with Palestine and other countries in the Arab League, as discussed above. This party is, of course, involved in this issue as it directly concerns Israel. The question of this issue is whether a consensus can be found within the Arab League regarding normalizing diplomatic relations with Israel.

The Arab League

The Arab League was formed in 1945 to "strengthen and coordinate the political, cultural, economic, and social programs of its members and to mediate disputes among them or between them and third parties" (Britannica). Its duties are to maintain peace among the members of the Arab League. The Arab League has involved itself in crises regarding the conflict between Israel and Palestine for this reason. It has tried to resolve the conflicts between the Arab states and Israel, such as holding the Arab Peace Initiative in 2002, but it is the committee that is crucial to reaching accordance on this issue as a whole.

Palestine

Palestine is a non-member observer state in the United Nations. It, therefore, does not have a vote on the matter but is still an important member state for this issue. Palestine plays a very big role as it is the main opposition of Israel. It is also the primary factor that stops other Arab League members from establishing relations with Israel. Many nations in the Arab League support Palestine in the Israel/Palestine conflict and refuse to establish any relations with Israel because of this.

Egypt

Egypt plays a significant role in this issue because of its involvement in the Arab-Israel conflict. It is a special country, mainly because it has been on "both sides" of the issue. It has been against Israel and its policies during the early years of the Palestinian conflict but has since signed treaties with Israel and established diplomatic relations. It is important to note this change in behaviour towards Israel and investigate the reasonings for this when finding a solution to the issue at hand.

The United States of America

The USA plays a significant role in this issue because of its ties to Israel. The USA and Israel have strong diplomatic bonds, and the USA is "committed to ensuring the safety and security of Israel" (U.S. Department of State). The USA is also seen as a threat by the Arab League because of its conflict with Iraq, one of the founding members of the Arab League. It is crucial to consider the United States in this discussion as they, as a powerful nation, hold a significant amount of control in the Middle East.

Timeline of Events

1923 - May 1948	The British control Palestine after WWI
May 14, 1948	Independence of Israel
October 29 - November 7, 1956	Israel, Britain, and France invade the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt.
June 4 - June 10, 1967	Six-Day War
October 6 - October 25 1973	Yom Kippur War
September 1993	Secret talks between the Palestinian Liberation Organization and Israel
Sept. 28 - February 8, 2000	Second Intifada in Palestine - civilians against leaders
September 15, 2020	Abraham Accords are signed
March 28, 2022	Negev Forum is established

Possible Solutions

The first possible solution to the complex question at hand may be to band together with Israel in the face of more pressing, common issues. These issues vary depending on the context, but the most notable are economic and military. Economically speaking, collaboration between all the Middle Eastern states is the most practical, as concerted efforts as a region as a whole can be delivered, which will be much more effective than individual countries attempting to make economic decisions or conquests. Through the normalization of Israeli relations, economic activity within the region may become more organized and powerful. In terms of a common military enemy, all countries in the Arab League and Israel face the threat of a larger, more intimidating force of expansionist Iran and its extreme Islamists. Strategically speaking, by banding together as a region the common enemy of Iran can be mitigated, or at least made to be less of a threat to the region's security. Israel is a valuable ally in this sense due to its cutting edge military hardware and technology, which it receives as a result of its relations with the United States of America.

The second route to an absolved issue refers to strengthening the region's foreign policy, specifically by getting on good terms with Israel so that by association, it can develop its relations with the United States. In the status quo, the gulf states seem to be highly anxious about the outlook for the region, especially in terms of security and political tensions. By maintaining the USA's commitment to the region, the security of the MENA will be reassured. The intermediary party between the Arab League and the United States would be Israel. We already know this to be the case through Egypt-Washington relations.

Arguably the root of the issue is the aforementioned Israel-Palestinian conflict, which had the effect of polarizing the MENA region into two distinct 'sides' of the argument. In doing so, it isolated Israel as the only country in the region to not be in direct support of Palestine, which is what has led to the socioeconomic and political marooning of the country. Thus, the third possible solution to the issue would be to solve and reach a final consensus on the Israel-Palestinian conflict, so that in doing so, the intrinsic resentments to Israel may be dissolved, and thus relations to the state can be taken up again. To conclude, at the current economic and political juncture the region faces, normalization of relations with Israel should be deemed as more of an asset than a liability, making it a strategic and powerful decision to work towards this common goal.

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