

THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT: GEOPOLITICAL DYNAMICS AND PATHWAYS TO RESOLUTION

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ABSTRACT

The long-standing Arab- Israel conflict is teetering on the precipice of regional war, if not global war. Many nation-states, non-states actors and global institutions using various antics in support of either one of their protagonists ‘Israel or Palestine’ are amplifying the crises to the level of complete annihilation of human races in the middle-eastern region, thereby questioning their conscience and moral values to broker peace for their collective healthy co-existence, development and growth. Using the clash of civilizational approach paradigm espoused by Samuel P. Huntington (1996), this paper therefore explores the circumstances that led to the conflict ab initio to varying degree of exogenous interests at play promoting the conflict. The paper uses content analysis of documents which are narrative in nature and secured substantially from secondary sources obtained from internets, newspapers, journals, magazines, and books. The paper finds out that so long as the proposed ‘1947 United Nations adopted Resolution 181 known as the ‘Partition Plan’ for the implementation of two independent States (Palestinian Arab and the Jewish Israel), with Jerusalem internationalized’ is not implemented, peace will never reign. Rather, the antics and activities of regional to global actors will continue heighten in sustaining the crisis for their diverse ulterior interests in maintaining their sphere of influence in the region, control resources in the region to the other strategic military industrial adventures and complicities. The paper recommends, among other things, the immediate cease fire from the ongoing onslaught being carried out by Israel against Palestine in Gaza and Lebanon, exchange of hostages, to nation-states with conscience coming together under the banner of various regional and global institutional arrangements to broker sustainable peace between the warring parties or break away their diplomatic ties with on any culprit nation bent on sustaining the conflict for supremacy, in addition to imposing trade sanctions.

Key words: *Conflict, Clash of Civilization, Self-Determination, Sanctions, Proxy War.*

1. INTRODUCTION

If there is any tragedy confronting humanity in the twenty first century that has been the subject of much debate and has an impact beyond the first and second world wars, is the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict. This conflict has not only been a longstanding one but involved a deeply complex issue rooted in historical, religious, and territorial disputes for over centuries. So far, in the recent times, at least 27,585 people have been killed and 66,978 wounded in Israeli attacks on Gaza since October 7, 2023. The death toll in Israel from the October 7 Hamas attacks stands at 1,139 (Alsaafin, Linah and Osgood, Brian, 2024). The count is not final, due to the fact that over 7,000 Palestinians remain missing, and are presumed dead – either under the rubble of their homes, or scattered in the streets in areas that civil defense workers cannot reach (Palestine Chronicle, 2024). Expectedly the casualty figures are heavily skewed against Hamas/Palestine given the power imbalance between the two. The casualties are actually a war reminiscent of a handcuffed individual going into boxing ring against a heavyweight champion. The damage is colossal beyond human imagination, liken to a kind experienced by the Jews at the hands of Nazi Germany and other parts of Europe during the holocaust. Incidentally Gaza's population estimated at 2.3 million is less than 6 million estimated population of Jews (Aljazeera, 2023a).

Since October 7th 2023 when the Gaza conflict started, mainstream Western media and political leadership have been referring to the long-standing conflict between 'Israel and Palestine' as a 'Hamas and Israel' war. Maybe to portray the war as a conflict between an arms-wielding/self-serving terrorist group and the State of Israel, an assertion that is utterly simplistic. The reality is, Hamas as it were, is resistance movement, fighting for the aspirations and the liberation of all Palestinians using non peaceful modus operandi. Other factional parties in the like of Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)/Fatah and Intifada have been engaging Israel with dialogue and other diplomatic means to pursue their stolen legitimate rights and lands from Israel but to no avail. Thus, what might be called 'Hamas wrong means of approach' by the 'Israel oppressor and her allies' however does not always negate legitimate ends or aspirations and has been informed by years of bottled-up anger and the attended psychological trauma that typify life under occupation. To label the Israel onslaught against Palestine or war in Gaza/Hamas as one against terrorism is to be disingenuous and evasive of the truth. Same with using the often- untenable rhetoric among Arab extremists to the effect that Israel should be wiped out of existence. Common sense dictates that, for obvious reasons this could not be possible in the world of today, but the West has been more than eager to hold it against the Arab and the Palestinians to inflict collective punishment and to also undermine their development. A development that makes global unity farfetched as history indicates that it is impossible to keep people down and incarcerated beyond certain point. It beats one's imagination that authorities in Tel Aviv, given the checkered history of the Jews, would naively hold the conviction that it is possible to permanently kill the vision of a whole race, using brute force/persecution. History tells the World that the Jews were the most persecuted race ever but they are still standing.

The origins and causes of the Arab-Israel conflict have been argued that religion is at the heart of it, seeing the contest for Palestine as an extension of the religious wars over Jerusalem in the previous centuries and the Arab-Israel wars as a continuation of the dispute between Prophet

Muhammad (S.A.W.) and the Jews of Medina Madinah. Others have asserted that it was the result of Western colonialism, which denied Arabs self-determination while at the same time favoring Zionism as an essentially European colonialist movement. Yet others have claimed that it was the intransigent and irrational, if not fanatical, behavior of Arabs or Zionists or both which provoked inter communal violence. Others see the causes of the conflict as a product of distinct historical developments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries centered on European anti-Semitism and the rise of Zionism, the emergence of Arab nationalism and the quest for Arab independence, the Ottoman defeat in the First World War, the British mandate in Palestine, and the Second World War and the Holocaust. Thus, it was not religious antagonism, fanaticism or colonial policy which pitted Arabs and Jews against each other. But above all, it is the competing national projects by the Arab Palestine and the Jewish Israel, laying claim to the same territory and resources as the bane of their conflict. Thus, Arab nationalism and Zionism almost inevitably found themselves embroiled in a bitter struggle for land rich in oil and gas resources and self-determination which came to be known as the Arab-Israeli conflict (Best, Hanhimaki, Maiolo and Schulze, 2015).

The U.S. and its allies are backing Israel to partake in the spoils of war. Whoever dominates the Middle East global trade. The U.S. and its allies are trying to control the Suez Canal, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. These waterways are not only vital for oil and gas exports but are also critical corridors for telecommunications, shipping, and internet infrastructure. A large portion of global internet cables and African trade routes pass through the Red Sea and the Suez Canal. Controlling these means controlling global commerce. Iran, strategically positioned near the Strait of Hormuz (through which nearly 20% of the world's oil passes), represents a major obstacle to this plan. Its military presence and influence over key naval passages make it the final piece to be neutralized. Israel acts as the enforcer of Western interests in the Middle East. It receives billions in military aid annually and enjoys diplomatic cover for actions that would be condemned if committed by any other state. It is America's foothold in the region, a forward operating base. Israel's confidence and aggression stem directly from the backing it receives from Washington and London. Europe, too, supports Israel, not out of morality, but because it hopes to share in the spoils of regional domination, once Iran is brought down. This conflict is not about peace, faith, or self-defense. It's about power, control, and dominance. America and Israel are executing a long-term strategy to reshape the Middle East in their image. Israel is not acting alone. It is doing America's bidding. And in turn, America is using Israel as its armored hand in the region.

In order to understand the competition between Jews and Arabs over Palestine territory, and other competing interests at play in the region, it is necessary to take a closer look at their respective national claims, underlying ideas and ideologies so as to not only refresh our understanding of the matter, but to also gauge them vis-à-vis the new contending interests that have evolved and provided new impetus into the crises. Thus, this paper examines the implication of the conflict on the globe by way of unveiling the 'powers that are operating behind the scene' and interrogating their 'vested interests' by way of asking: Why are they doing what they chose to do', thereby

escalating the crises. The paper also tries to examine the varying degree of instruments provided and needed to broker lasting peace between the conflicting parties.

2. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK: THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONAL APPROACH PARADIGM

This paper adopts the clash of civilizational approach paradigm expounded by Samuel P. Huntington to guide the study. After the collapse of communism in 1989 which marked the end of the ideological battle between the east and the west, Samuel P. Huntington (1996) sounded a note of warning in his classic research “Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order”, where he said that emerging civilizations especially from the Arab world and the communist China would pose serious challenges to Western civilization. He posited that:

The West is and will remain for years to come the most powerful civilization. Yet its power relative to that of other civilization is declining. As the West attempts to assert its values and to protect its interests, non-Western societies confront a choice. Some attempt to emulate the West and to join or to “band-wagon” with the West. Other Confucian and Islamic societies attempt to expand their own economic and military power to resist and to “balance” against the West. A central axis of the post-Cold War world politics is thus the interaction of Western power and culture of non-Western civilization (Huntington, 2003: 29).

Several paradigms of world politics were advanced at the end of the Cold War. The first paradigm was based on the assumption that the end of Cold War led to the emergence of one relatively harmonious world. It assumes that end of Cold War implies the end of significant conflict in global politics and the future will be devoted not to exhilarating struggles over ideas but rather to resolving mundane economic and technical problems.

The second paradigm is based on the tendency of people thinking in terms of two worlds, viz: the orient and the occident, north and south, center and periphery, zones of peace and zones of turmoil. Whilst, others have polarized the world along ideological spectrum, viz East and West.

The third paradigm is to think along multiplicity of nation-states, tribes, religion, cultural and other social identities. In this case, the globe consists of 184 nation states of the world or potentially an almost infinite number of tribes, ethnic groups, and nationalities.

The fourth paradigm is called sheer chaos, where the weakening of states and the emergence of “failed states” contribute to a fourth image of a world in anarchy. This stresses the breakdown of governmental authority, the breakup of states, the intensification of tribal ethnic and religious conflict, the emergence of international criminal mafias, refugees multiplying into the tens of millions, the proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, the spread of terrorism, the prevalence of massacres and ethnic cleansing.

Accordingly, these four paradigms are incompatible with each other said Samuel P. Huntington (1996) in his classic research “Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order”. Thus, viewing the world in terms of “seven or eight civilizations” avoids many of their incompatibilities and provides an easily grasped and intelligible framework for understanding the world, distinguishing what is important from what is unimportant among the multiplying conflicts, predicting future developments, and providing guidelines for policy makers. Therefore, his book hinges on “civilizational approach paradigm” which form the basis of our argument because it

builds on and incorporates elements of the other paradigms, which makes it more compatible with them than they are with each other. Thus, the following as it cogent points are features of the projected civilization model:

- a) The forces of integration in the world are real and precisely are generating counterforces of cultural assertion and civilizational consciousness.
- b) The world is some sense is divided by default into two, but the central distinction is between the West as the hitherto dominant civilization and all the others, which, however, have little if anything in common among them. The world, in short, is divided between a Western one and a Non-Western many.
- c) Nation states are and will remain the most important actors in world affairs, but their interests, association, and conflicts are increasingly shaped by cultural and civilizational factors.
- d) The world is indeed anarchical, rife with tribal and nationality conflicts but the conflicts that pose the greatest dangers for stability are those between states or groups from different civilizations.

A civilizational paradigm thus sets forth a relatively simple but not too simple map for understanding what is going on in the world as the twentieth century ends. No paradigm, however, is good forever. The “Cold War model” of world politics was useful and relevant for forty years but became obsolete in the late 1980’s, and at some point, the “civilizational paradigm” will suffer a similar fate probable in the near future. For the contemporary period, however, it provides a usefulness guide for distinguishing what is more important from what is less important. Many important developments after the end of the Cold War were compatible with the civilizational paradigm and could have been predicted from it.

3. THE GENESIS OF CURRENT ISRAEL - PALESTINE CONFLICT

Some religious clerics historians and geopolitics have established a genealogical link and the origin of conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelites tracing it to Abraham/Prophet Ibrahim -A.S., the father of monotheism, who reigns during the patriarchal age. Prophet Abraham - A.S., was promise by God Almighty, in response to his prayers and callings to liberate his people from idol worship, a blessed land and children that will be a great nation and inherit him on earth. Abraham had a wife called Sarah that was barren and a house help/slave called Hagar through which God Almighty will used to fulfill His promise to him. Both Abraham and Sarah are aged and need a child. Sarah proposes that Abraham take Hagar, an Egyptian slave, to be his second wife, in hopes of having a child. Abraham accepted the idea which led to the birth of Ishmael ‘A.S. ’The baren Sara could not bear the brunt of not having a child and seeing Hagar beside her flourishing well, began to exhibit penchant of jealousy and enmity to Hagar, resulting in Prophet Abraham - A.S. receiving divine inspiration from God Almighty to relocate Sarah and her son Ishmael away from Hagar sight, to a faraway place. Hagar was taken to a new location known as the present-day ‘Mecca in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’ to dwell there with the assurance that all will be well with them, and her child will be nurtured to become a great nation. Consequently, the entire Arab lineage that is currently spread across the middle-east came to be born through the younger spouse

of Prophet Abraham – Hagar/Hajara. Her genealogically lineage produced Prophet Muhammad - S.A.W., who through God ordained injunction brought about the establishment of Islamic religion. The deep-rooted jealousy shown by Hagar to Sarah subsisted through her tribal lineage from generation to generation leading to the present day ‘Israel – Palestine conflict’ with Israelites claiming racial identity superiority over the Arabs whose ancestral origin came from Prophet Abraham’s slave wife. In fact, scholars adduced this superiority complex of the Israelites is sole reason behind their refusal to embrace Islam and recognize Prophet Muhammad - S.A.W.

Sara subsequently became pregnant and gave birth to Isaac/Is’haq, Ishaku - A.S. Abraham later marries Keturah, who gave birth to six more sons for him. All the seven children eventually produced the Jews matriarch lineage traced to Prophets such as Moses/Musa A.S., Jacob/Yakubu A.S., and David/Dauda A.S. who brought about the religion of Judaism; and Jesus/Isah - A.S. who brought about Christianity (Seters, 2014).

Other narrative often commonly churned out revealed that the Jewish debacle started with Ramses II Pharaoh’s tyranny and bondage that held them captives for over 350 years. It took the arrival of Prophet Moses ‘A.S.’ to rise against Ramses II to “let the Jews go”. They stayed in the wilderness for over 40 years in a bid to reach the Promised Land -the land of Cana'an/present day Jerusalem cum Palestine. **Prophet** Moses A.S died before then, and Joshua continued the journey. According to the biblical book, Joshua was personally appointed successor to Moses (Deuteronomy 31:1–8; 34:9). Joshua, a charismatic warrior, led Israel in the conquest of Cana'an after the Exodus from Egypt. After sending spies into Cana'an to report on the enemy’s morale, Joshua led the Israelites in an invasion across the Jordan River. He took the important city of Jericho and then captured other towns in the north and south until most of Palestine was brought under Israelite control. He divided the conquered lands among the 12 tribes of Israel and then bade farewell to his people, admonishing them to be loyal to the God of the covenant (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024).

There was no single ruler of Israel after Joshua died. Cana'an and the conquered towns were ruled successively under four several kinds of government, under captains and judges, under prophets, under priests, and lastly under kings, until their final captivity. Joshua was a captain and a judge, so was Gideon, Jephtha, Sampson & C. Deborah and Samuel were prophets and judges, Eli and Samuel were priests and judges, for Samuel was both a priest and a prophet. And lastly of the kings, David was both a prophet and a king. Some say Judah led after Joshua, but at that point in history, Judah was a tribe, not a man (Jewell, 2011).

The siege of Jerusalem of 70 CE was the decisive event of the First Jewish–Roman War (66–73 CE), in which the Roman army led by Emperor Titus besieged Jerusalem, the center of Jewish rebel resistance in the Roman province of Judaea. Following a five-month siege, the Romans destroyed the city and the Second Jewish Temple. The Romans occupied the land for over a hundred years i.e. 63 BC - 66 A.D. and thereafter kept attacking the Jews incessantly with devastating consequences and sending a lot of them into diaspora (Weksler-Bdolah, 2019; Westwood, 2017; Westwood, 2017).

The siege of Jerusalem, circa 589-587 BC, was the final event of the Judahite revolts against Babylon – present day Iraq, in which Nebuchadnezzar II, king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, besieged Jerusalem, the capital city of the Kingdom of Judah. Jerusalem fell after a 30-month siege, following which the Babylonians systematically destroyed the city and Solomon's Temple. The Kingdom of Judah was dissolved and many of its inhabitants were exiled to Babylon (Finkelstein, Silberman, Neil Asher, 2002; Bickerman, 2007). King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon obliterated Israel, just like Jews are doing in Gaza, and enslaved them for 70 years. The contest was later decimated under King Nebuchadnezzar who occupied and ruled the Land of Israel with iron hand. The Jews went through endemic persecution for over 400 years, without freedom, until they could bear no more and so decided to fight for their freedom. According to the books of Ezra - Nehemiah, a number of decades later in 538 BCE, the Jews in Babylon were allowed to return to the Land of Judah, due to Cyrus's decree. Initially, around 50,000 Jews returned to the Land of Judah following the decree of Cyrus as described in Ezra, whereas most remained in Babylon. Later, an unknown number of exiles returned from Babylon with Ezra himself. The return of the deportees to Judah within 110 years from the time the Jews in Babylon were allowed to return to the Land of Judah/538 BCE is known as the return to Zion, an event by which Jews ever since have been inspired (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2023; Psalms Chapter 126).

Jerusalem was cleaned of Jews by 130 A.D. and siege put in place till 136 A.D. during which over a million Jews were killed through disease and starvation. That disaster culminated in the dispersal of whatever was left of the Jews into diaspora after decimating more than fifty percent of the entire Jews stock (Ludlow, 1999). Their alleged persecutions were continued under successor powers of the Byzantines - 324-638 A.D. Islamic Caliphates and the Ottomans. It lasted for about 1500 years i.e. the dawn of Christianity up to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1922. In diaspora the Jews did not get respite either. Out of a population of about 10 million in Europe in the 19th century, more than half were exterminated in Nazi German holocaust and Russian pogrom, reminiscent of what is going on in Gaza today. Hitler killed around 6 million and Russia about $\frac{1}{4}$ million. Many more were killed in Ukraine, Romania, Austria etc., killings that the UN later christened as genocides (The Whitaker Report, Russia White Terror, 1985). Today, the Jews population has grown up to 20 million globally, made up 15 million core Jews and 5 million "non pure ones". Of this number about 7 million are in State of Israel, 6 million in USA and the rest across the world. Some survivors of the horrors made permanent homes in "safer" regions of Europe such as Great Britain, the defunct USSR, USA and parts of Latin America such as Argentina, Brazil, etc. and parts of North Africa and the Middle East. Some exist incognito for fear of discrimination and disdain, a trend that the Jews still face across the globe.

Given the biological, ancestral and religious connections between Jews and Arabs on one hand and the shared beliefs under Christianity, Islam and Judaism on the other, there should ordinarily be no religious or racial disharmony among the groups. However, the exacerbation of the Israel - Palestine conflict, which came to be elevated as an international issue in the recent times, beyond other competing narratives associated with their historical ties of consanguinity, lies in the events that occurred towards the end of the First World War of 1914-19. The eruption of first world war

was conditioned by several factors that have an integrative effect of their own. Insatiable imperialism, first aggressive nationalism and ebullient militarism were the three main factors that triggered the global war, whose combined effect brought about conditions that terminated the old state system and instead inaugurated a new one under the long-desired control of an international organization – the League of Nations. The old feudal order was replaced by the capitalist order that necessarily led to the system of empire-building. The new entrepreneurs of the major European countries like Britain, France, Holland, Portugal, Japan, Spain and Germany looked toward the poor and backward parts of the world for the sake of collecting raw materials and converting them into profitable markets. It led to the exploitation of Latin-America, Africa and Asians countries. The shrewd scholars of the new system justified their advances in the name of ‘civilizing mission’ or ‘white mans burden’ or speaking ‘kultur/Germany’s stress which found its expression in Kaiser’s bombastic utterances of military might’ and the like and fully thrived on the prevalence of blind superstitions in the subjugated areas (Johari, 2013).

The Palestine problem quickly widened into the Middle East dispute between the Arab States and Israel. From 1948 there have been wars and destruction, forcing millions of Palestinians into exile, and engaging the United Nations in a continuing search for a solution to a problem which came to possess the potential of a major source of danger for world peace. Over the following years, tensions rose in the region, particularly between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Following the 1956 Suez Crisis and Israel’s invasion of the Sinai Peninsula, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria signed mutual defense pacts in anticipation of a possible mobilization of Israeli troops. In June 1967, following a series of maneuvers by Egyptian President Abdel Gamal Nasser, Israel preemptively attacked Egyptian and Syrian air forces, starting the Six-Day War, resulted in Israel’s occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Gaza Strip, and Golan Heights. Israel began establishing settlements in these occupied territories, which are considered illegal under international law, leading to ongoing tensions with Palestinians and drawing condemnation from the international community.

Six years later, in what is referred to as the Yom Kippur War or the October War, Egypt and Syria launched a surprise two-front attack on Israel to regain their lost territory; the conflict did not result in significant gains for Egypt, Israel, or Syria, but Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat declared the war a victory for Egypt as it allowed Egypt and Syria to negotiate over previously ceded territory. Finally, in 1979, following a series of cease-fires and peace negotiations, representatives from Egypt and Israel signed the Camp David Accords, a peace treaty that ended the thirty-year conflict between Egypt and Israel.

Even though the Camp David Accords improved relations between Israel and its neighbors, the question of Palestinian self-determination and self-governance remained unresolved. In 1987, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip rose up against the Israeli government in what is known as the first intifada. In the 1990s, negotiations between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization/PLO led to the Oslo Accords. The 1993 Oslo I Accords mediated the conflict, setting up a framework for the Palestinians to govern themselves in the West Bank and Gaza, and enabled mutual recognition between the newly established

Palestinian Authority and Israel's government. In 1995, the Oslo II Accords expanded on the first agreement, adding provisions that mandated the complete withdrawal of Israel from 6 cities and 450 towns in the West Bank.

In 2000, sparked in part by Palestinian grievances over Israel's control over the West Bank, a stagnating peace process, and former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's visit to the al-Aqsa mosque - the third holiest site in Islam - in September 2000, Palestinians launched the **second** intifada, which would last until 2005. In response, the Israeli government approved the construction of a barrier wall around the West Bank in 2002, despite opposition from the International Court of Justice/ICJ and the International Criminal Court/ICC.

Factionalism among the Palestinians flared up, when Hamas won the Palestinian Authority's parliamentary elections in 2006, deposing longtime majority party Fatah. This gave Hamas, a political and militant movement inspired by the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, control of the Gaza Strip. Gaza is a small piece of land on the Mediterranean Sea that borders Egypt to the south and has been under the rule of the semi-autonomous Palestinian Authority since 1993. The United States and European Union, among others, did not acknowledge Hamas' electoral victory, as the group has been considered a terrorist organization by western governments since the late 1990s. Following Hamas' seizure of control, violence broke out between Hamas and Fatah. Between 2006 and 2011, a series of failed peace talks and deadly confrontations culminated in an agreement to reconcile. Fatah entered into a unity government with Hamas in 2014.

In the summer of 2014, clashes in the Palestinian territories precipitated a military confrontation between the Israeli military and Hamas in which Hamas fired nearly three thousand rockets at Israel, and Israel retaliated with a major offensive in Gaza. The skirmish ended in late August 2014 with a cease-fire deal brokered by Egypt, but only after 73 Israelis and 2,251 Palestinians were killed. After a wave of violence between Israelis and Palestinians in 2015, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah announced that Palestinians would no longer be bound by the territorial divisions created by the Oslo Accords.

In March of 2018, Israeli troops killed 183 Palestinians and wounded 6,000 others after some Palestinians stormed the perimeter fence between the Gaza Strip and Israel and threw rocks during an otherwise peaceful demonstration. Just months later, Hamas militants fired over one hundred rockets into Israel, and Israel responded with strikes on more than fifty targets in Gaza during a twenty-four-hour flare-up. The tense political atmosphere resulted in a return to disunity between Fatah and Hamas, with Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah party controlling the Palestinian Authority from the West Bank and Hamas de facto ruling the Gaza Strip.

The Donald J. Trump administration reversed longstanding U.S. policy by canceling funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency/UNRWA, which provides aid to Palestinian refugees, and relocating the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The Trump administration also helped broker the Abraham Accords, under which Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates normalized relations with Israel, becoming only the third and fourth countries in the region - following Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994 - to do so. Similar deals followed with Morocco and Sudan. Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah rejected the accords, as did Hamas.

In early May 2021, after a court ruled in favor of the eviction of several Palestinian families from East Jerusalem properties, protests erupted, with Israeli police employing force against demonstrators. After several consecutive days of violence, Hamas, the militant group which governs Gaza, and other Palestinian militant groups launched hundreds of rockets into Israeli territory. Israel responded with artillery bombardments and airstrikes, killing more than twenty Palestinians and hitting both military and non-military infrastructure, including residential buildings, media headquarters, and refugee and healthcare facilities. After eleven days, Israel and Hamas agreed to a cease-fire, with both sides claiming victory. The fighting killed more than 250 Palestinians and at least 13 Israelis, wounded nearly 2,000 others, and displaced 72,000 Palestinians.

To resist the ongoing persecutions the Palestinian people are being subjected to, Hamas attacked on Israel on 07th October, 2023. Israel swiftly responded. After five months of Israel military operations, Israel has destroyed Gaza. Over 30,000 Palestinians have been killed, including more than 13,000 children. Over 12,000 are presumed dead and 71,000 injured, many with life-changing mutilations. Seventy percent of residential areas have been destroyed. Eighty percent of the whole population has been forcibly displaced. Thousands of families have lost loved ones or have been wiped out. Many could not bury and mourn their relatives, forced instead to leave their bodies decomposing in homes, in the street or under the rubble. Thousands have been detained and systematically subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment. The incalculable collective trauma will be experienced for generations to come (Albanese, 2024).

4. PROSPECT OF THE ARABS-ISRAEL CONFLICT DEGENERATING INTO RENEWED REGIONAL CONFLICT OR THIRD WORLD WAR

While the Israel-Palestine conflict is undoubtedly a volatile and sensitive issue with the potential to cause significant regional instability, the idea of it directly sparking a third world war is generally regarded as unlikely. However, it remains a flashpoint that requires constant attention and efforts towards resolution to prevent further suffering and instability in the region. The conflict does have the potential to draw in neighboring countries due to historical alliances and geopolitical interests. For instance, countries in the like of Russia, France, China and US in addition those domiciled in the region such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Jordan, Turkey, Iran, Yemen, have vested economic interests in the region thereby heightening the prospect for proxy war. A proxy war is defined to be "a war fought between groups of smaller countries that each represent the interests of other larger powers, and may have help and support from these. However, direct confrontation between major powers such as US, China, Russia, Europe, is not in their best interests, because a large-scale conflict would have severe global repercussions or might result in what is term mutual assured destruction/MAD. Major Powers have a stake in preventing such conflicts from occurring and would likely intervene to de-escalate tensions if they were to reach a critical point. However, these major powers often engage in proxy conflicts rather than direct warfare to push their imperial agenda and or protect their economic interests.

To understand the larger Hamas project and its important implications for Israel and the region, it is necessary to examine the evolution of Hamas in the years leading up to the October 7 2023

attack and what Hamas hoped to achieve. Four days after October 7, a Hamas official publicly acknowledged that the group had been secretly planning the attack for more than two years to liberate Palestine from Israel incarceration. After a brief war with Israel in May 2021, Hamas leaders reassessed their fundamental aims. At that point, they had ruled the Gaza Strip for 14 years - having seized full control from the Palestine/PA in 2007, two years after an Israeli withdrawal - and could have continued to maintain the status quo. Notwithstanding intermittent skirmishes with Israel, Hamas was firmly ensconced in Gaza and sustained by hundreds of millions of dollars in aid from the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, or UNRWA, and in funds from Qatar to cover public salaries.

But shortly after the 2021 war, Hamas's leader in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar in collaboration with the efforts of its external leaders, such as Salah al-Arouri, presented Israel with what he described as two alternative outcomes. In an appearance on Al Jazeera, the Qatari-funded satellite network, Sinwar stressed that Hamas continued to aim for the "eradication" of Israel but that he was amenable to entering a long-term truce with the country - provided that Israel agreed to a laundry list of demands, including dismantling all settlements, releasing Palestinian prisoners, and allowing a Palestinian right of return. But any such truce, he said, would be temporary and driven by the imperative of achieving unity among Palestinian factions, presumably meaning support for Hamas's position of ultimately eradicating Israel.

Sinwar also boasted that Hamas was already in contact with its "brothers in Lebanon" – Hezbollah, and with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and suggested that these allies would have supported Hamas in the 2021 war if it had intensified. Soon, Hamas began meeting regularly with officials from Iran and Hezbollah. Four months later, Hamas also sponsored a conference in Gaza hosted by Sinwar himself that was devoted to plans for the "liberation of Palestine" once Israel "disappears." The conference called for replacing the PLO with a new Council for the Liberation of Palestine that would include "all Palestinian and Arab forces who endorse the idea of liberating Palestine, with the backing of friendly forces." At the same time, instead of prioritizing its governance project in the Gaza Strip, Hamas began to secretly put in play a long-held but still notional plan to launch a ground assault on Israel and initiate what it hoped would be a chain reaction that would lead to the destruction of Israel. The group's leaders pretended to be focused on governing Gaza and addressing the needs of Palestinians living there, while in fact they were stockpiling small arms and, as a Hamas official named Khalil *al-Hayya* later conceded, "preparing for this big attack." Ultimately, as *al-Hayya* put it, Hamas concluded that it needed to "change the entire equation" with Israel (Levitt, 2024).

Following the outbreak of war between Israel and Hamas on October 7, 2023, President Joe Biden made a strong statement of support for Israel. On the same day that Israel declared war against Hamas, the United States announced that it would send renewed shipments of arms and move its Mediterranean Sea warships closer to Israel. There are self-centered reasons why the US backs Israel vociferously, vehemently, and unquestionably. Not the least, the core of the Israeli leadership was substantially made up of European Jews who migrated just to make Israel a reality. Many of them were Westerners. In fact, Lord Rothschild to whom the 1917 letter by Lord Balfour

expressing Britain's decision to support the establishment of the new Israeli State was addressed, was British. Hence, both the US and Britain wanted Israel as their proxy state led by Westerners in an oil-rich Middle East, where their oil multinationals were prospecting for oil. Their intention was not borne of love for Jews as people of God. It was to get a foothold in the Middle East to be able to exploit the region's resources and fulfill their pledge made to the Jews by Great Britain, France, and Russia, of granting them Palestine in return for their support in mobilizing logistics to defeat Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey in World War I and II (Freedman, 1961). The Israel opposition to Hamas, being paid in revenue for Palestinian Gas, led to Hamas rejection of the deal, in which British Gas will pay Israel revenue for Palestinian gas and Israel will pay the Palestinian 25% in goods and services. Hamas tried to negotiate with the Egyptian instead and Israel through a Tantrum. The British ex-Prime Minister, Tony Blair, intervened on behalf of the Israel to scupper the Palestinian-Egypt deal. Israel again tried to bypass the Palestinian in their negotiation with the British Gas, but this time, a furious Hamas, threatened to bomb Israel strategic gas and electric installation of Ashkelon. It was at that point that the British-American and Israel security services decided that without the removal of Hamas, there would be no security in the Israel-Palestinian oil and gas sector. This is one of the things in the web of Israel corruption, manipulation and lies that has led to this Gaza genocide. It was only a matter of time. That's why they will go to any length to protect Israel, as well as pull down any country getting too powerful as to rival their nuclear-armed Israel.

To stay safe, most of the oil-rich Arab countries have accepted to be good boys of American imperialism. And America, in return, helps keep them in power. That is why most of the Arab countries are undemocratic monarchies: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Jordan, Bahrain, UAE etc. Here the hypocrisy of America is writ large. A self-appointed guardian angel of democracy keeps undemocratic monarchies in power in exchange for oil. Plenty of it. But woe betides those countries that try to be independent without America's influence. Their leaderships, sooner than later, are brought down. That was the story of Saddam Hussein of Iraq, who was directly toppled in a 2003 invasion by the US and UK. Saddam was accused of trying to produce weapons of mass destruction. They claimed they received intelligence report to that effect. At the end, it was all lies! No weapon of mass destruction was found, but the goal had been achieved. A disobedient boy had been removed from power and the oil pipes of Iraq thence flow cheaply into American/ British vessels. That was also the story of Muammar Gadaffi of Libya. Like Saddam, Gadaffi was independent -minded. He won't be a yes boy of Western imperialists. At an opportune moment of the Western-backed Arab Spring, he was taken out. Like Iraq, the Libyan oil pipes have become the booty of war.

While the UN Security Council called an emergency meeting to discuss the renewed violence, the members failed to come to a consensus statement. Given the history of brutality when Israel and Palestinian extremist groups have fought in the past, international groups quickly expressed concern for the safety of civilians in Israel and the Palestinian territories as well as those being held hostage by militants in Gaza.

Israel and Iran are believed to possess nuclear weapons. While this adds a layer of complexity and potential escalation, it also serves as a deterrent against large-scale conventional warfare in the region. No country wants to risk the catastrophic consequences of a nuclear conflict. With the Israel-Hamas war, a nuclear Rubicon of sorts has been crossed: Two elected Israeli officials - a government minister and a member of parliament - not only publicly referenced Israel's possession of nuclear weapons but suggested that they be detonated over Gaza. This was a disturbing first. Israel fired nuclear weapons against Iran twice, using a total of 51 weapons, and Iran replied with a nuclear strike of its own. Surprisingly, the strategic uncertainties following the exchange were greater than those that preceded it (Burr, Lawless, and Sokolski, 2024). The questions concern persons were asking are: How much damage might Israeli nuclear strikes inflict against Iran's nuclear and missile sites, infrastructure and population? Would Iran's nuclear and missile capabilities be incapacitated, or are they buried so deep they would survive? Would the region's economies be "knocked out" by such a nuclear exchange or just "jolted?" Would Washington, Moscow or Beijing be drawn into the conflict? In what way? None of the participants in the war game was confident they could answer any of these questions. One of the best ways to clarify these matters is for American and Israeli experts and officials to peek into the future by gaming different nuclear war scenarios.

Concerns are mounting that the current war between Israel and Hamas could expand with the opening of a second front on Israel's northern border with Lebanon. Cross-border clashes between Israel and the Iran-backed Lebanese militant group Hezbollah alongside Palestinian armed factions have occurred almost daily since the October 7, 2023. The fighting has led to casualties in both Israel and Lebanon, including at least 40 Hezbollah fighters, and forced the evacuation of many communities on both sides of the border. Yet despite mounting tensions, Hezbollah does not appear to have an interest in widening the war at this time. Lebanon is already on its knees, contending with unprecedented economic, social and political crises that have essentially rendered the country a failed state. Meanwhile, the Israeli government has long warned that its response to a Hezbollah-provoked war would be wide-ranging and devastating. As such, Hezbollah is keenly aware that it cannot afford to bring further ruin on Lebanon, or it would dramatically undermine its domestic support base. Instead, its calculus seems to hinge on portraying unity with Palestinian factions while harassing Israel with limited strikes designed to fulfill its "resistance" narrative without plunging into all-out war. Yet this strategy is extremely risky in the highly volatile environs of the Israel-Lebanon border. The potential is high for miscalculation that can erupts into a full-scale conflict. As a reminder, the 2006 Israel-Lebanon war began with a Hezbollah cross-border raid and kidnapping of two soldiers, but quickly spiraled into a brutal war lasting 34 days. Beyond the possibility of unintended escalation, Hezbollah could also change its calculus depending on the trajectory of the Israel-Hamas war. If Hamas is on the verge of total destruction, or if an Israeli ground incursion leads to massive civilian casualties, Hezbollah - perhaps compelled by Iran - could opt to widen the war and open a second front with Israel. Much would depend on the circumstances and the reaction by the Arab and Muslim "streets."

Israeli troops are understood to have made their deepest incursion into southern Lebanese territory since the recent offensive began on October 1, 2024, as the militant group Hezbollah considered its response to a fresh ceasefire proposal. On Friday night, Israeli forces reached the village of Chama, some 61 miles from the capital of Beirut, known for its shrine to Saint Peter, referred to in Arabic as the prophet Shimon Al-Safa. After reaching the area, Israeli troops managed to blow up the shrine, which lies on the village's main hill, according to reporting from Lebanon's National News Agency (NNA). CNN has reached out to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) for comment on the report. A nearby UN peacekeeping position was also hit by an artillery shell from the strikes. Meanwhile, intense Israeli strikes targeted areas of Beirut's southern suburbs Saturday, marking the fifth straight day of Israeli attacks on the Dayiyeh region of Beirut, a Hezbollah stronghold. Israel has intensified its strikes on the capital and expanded its ground operation in southern Lebanon in recent days. The heavy strikes coincide with revived negotiations for a ceasefire in Lebanon. The US ambassador to Lebanon, Lisa Johnson, relayed a new US-Israeli ceasefire proposal to the Lebanese government on Thursday night, a Lebanese official familiar with the discussions told CNN. The latest proposal is the first to be submitted by the US and Israel since a temporary ceasefire was negotiated in late September. Those efforts were upended when Israel killed Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in a major bombing attack in Beirut's southern suburbs. Authorities are 'optimistic' that Hezbollah will agree to the terms of the agreement. The government expects to submit an official response on next Monday, the official said. It remains unclear if the intensified strikes across Lebanon will influence the ceasefire negotiations. On Thursday alone, Israeli airstrikes resulted in the deaths of at least 59 individuals throughout Lebanon, according to the Lebanese Ministry of Health. Most of the strikes have been in Shia-majority areas where Hezbollah wields influence, but Israel has also struck buildings housing displaced families well outside areas of the militant group's dominance. Meanwhile Hezbollah has continued systematically firing projectiles onto areas in northern Israel. At least 60 projectiles were identified crossing from Lebanon into Israel on Saturday, the IDF said. Israel launched a major offensive in Lebanon in mid-September following months of tit-for-tat border attacks, which started when Hezbollah attacked Israel in solidarity with Hamas and Palestinians in Gaza. Returning 60,000 civilians to their homes in northern Israel has become a political imperative for the Israeli leadership. (Salem, Kourdi, Mallo, Kennedy and Qiblawi, 2024).

Syria is already an active Israel-Iran conflict zone. Over the past several years, Syria has been the most active arena in the ongoing shadow war between Israel and Iran. Starting in 2017, the Israeli government opted to change its rules of engagement in Syria, accelerating and emboldening its strikes against Iranian proxies and key Syrian military targets. More recently, in May 2023, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant claimed to have doubled the number of Israeli strikes against Iranians in Syria. Not surprisingly, these tensions have increased since October 7th, 2003. Since the Hamas attack, Israel struck both the Damascus and Aleppo airports, in the latter case multiple times, temporarily disabling them. On October 24, Israel hit Syrian military targets in response to rocket launches from Syria toward Israel. Ironically, Syria being such an active zone of Israeli-Iranian confrontation may diminish the prospects of a new front opening in Israel's war against

Hamas, given that significant kinetic activity between Israel and Iran already occurs in Syria, keeping the fight on the eastern side of Israel's border.

The recent nominated U.S. ambassador to Israel 'Mike Huckabee' said in an interview with Israeli Army Radio that the United States could back an Israeli annexation of the West Bank, The Times of Israel reported on November, 13, 2024. He also did not rule out the possibility of allowing Israel to resettle Gaza, although he said it would ultimately be up to President-elect Donald Trump to decide. Israel's government will likely eventually announce a formal plan to annex the West Bank, though its implementation will likely depend on support from the Trump administration. The White House may delay a decision on annexation based on how Saudi-Israeli normalization talks are progressing, given that Riyadh is highly unlikely to normalize with Israel should it annex the West Bank. Annexation talk will also fuel unrest in the West Bank and destabilize the Palestinian Authority, which governs parts of the territory. Should Israel annex the West Bank, it would end the prospect of a Palestinian state, increase the probability of formal population transfers from the West Bank elsewhere (like Gaza or neighboring countries), spark a large-scale uprising and isolate Israel internationally. Meanwhile, illegal, far-right Israeli outposts are increasingly likely to appear in the Gaza Strip (RANE, 2024).

On Tuesday, Donald Trump announced that he would be nominating former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee to serve as his ambassador to Israel. A Baptist minister, Huckabee is both familiar with the region and a vocal player in its many controversies. He has led religious pilgrimages to Israel and visited the country dozens of times over the course of several decades. He also opposes a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, says that "there's really no such thing as a Palestinian," and advocates permanent Israeli control over the occupied West Bank, which Palestinians claim for their future state. These positions stand in stark contrast to those held by most American Jews: A Pew survey earlier this year found that 46 percent support a two-state solution, the highest proportion of any religious demographic. Just 22 percent support a single Israeli state in the entire land, as Huckabee does. Thus, though exceedingly unlikely to bring peace to the Middle East, Huckabee's appointment has one salutary effect: It makes clear whom Trump's Israel policy is meant to serve. Far from the product of some clandestine Jewish cabal, as anti-Semites might allege, it is a transaction meant to reward evangelical Christians, who are among the president-elect's most ardent non-Jewish supporters. Trump has stiffed many of his business partners over his career, but in politics, he has made good on his promises to his allies on the Christian right. Domestically, he nominated the justices they needed to overturn America's abortion laws. Internationally, he largely deferred to their preferences on Israel, recognizing Jerusalem as the country's capital and backing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. "We moved the capital of Israel to Jerusalem," Trump said at an August 2020 rally in Wisconsin. "That's for the evangelicals."

By contrast, the president-elect has frequently complained that American Jews - who mostly vote Democratic - have been ungrateful to him. His previous ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, though Jewish himself, infamously referred to a liberal Jewish organization as "worse than kapos," a term for Nazi collaborators. Elevating Huckabee helpfully clarifies who truly holds sway on this

subject. But evangelicals are not the only members of Trump's circle with a stake in the region, and they will not be the only ones to shape its future. Both Trump and his son-in-law Jared Kushner, an architect of Israel's Abraham Accords with the Sunni Arab states, have personal and business interests in common with the Arab states of the Persian Gulf. During the previous Trump administration, Kushner texted regularly with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and after Trump left office, the country's Public Investment Fund poured billions into Kushner's private-equity firm. And although Trump's evangelical allies like Huckabee would happily have Israel annex swaths of the West Bank, the president's Middle Eastern partners in places such as the United Arab Emirates strongly oppose such a move - and succeeded in blocking it during the previous Trump presidency as a condition of the Abraham Accords.

The question today is whether the conflict between these two camps will play out differently this time. As Trump enters office, he will find a region far less amenable to compromise. In 2020, Netanyahu shelved annexation in exchange for Arab diplomatic recognition, but in 2024, his unpopular governing coalition depends on far-right religious parties, which demand annexation and largely dictate the prime minister's agenda. Meanwhile, Arab authoritarians like Saudi Arabia's bin Salman and UAE ruler Mohamed bin Zayed, once eager to downgrade the Palestinian issue in pursuit of an alliance with America and Israel against Iran, can no longer easily sideline the subject, given popular discontent over the Gaza war. These diverging interests are likely to provoke a clash during Trump's second term, in which Huckabee will play a significant role.

In his decades-long religious love affair with the land of Israel and general disinterest in its Palestinian inhabitants, Huckabee resembles many members of Israel's hard-right government. To the country's settlement movement, he is a dream pick who will advance their maximalist aims. But although Huckabee's appointment signals that evangelical and the Israeli far right will have a voice in the conversation, the former governor will not have a veto - and he seems well aware of the limits of his position.

Asked by Israel's Army Radio whether annexation would be on the agenda in a second Trump term, Huckabee demurred, saying, "I won't make the policy; I will carry out the policy of the president." Similarly, when pressed on whether he'd support Israel rebuilding settlements in the Gaza Strip, a far-right aspiration unpopular among most Israelis, he replied, "I don't want to make any comments about policy because those won't be mine to make." In fact, Friedman, Trump's last ambassador, also backed annexing parts of the West Bank, but he lost that fight with Kushner and Trump's domestic team, who preferred the Abraham Accords. Trump is heavily influenced by those closest to him, and with distance comes diminishment. Whether Kushner will be returning to the White House remains unclear. What is clear, however, is that those in the West Wing will have more sway over Trump's approach than those in the West Bank. (Rosenberg, 2024).

The primary risk of a full-blown world war emanates from the possibility of the United States and China getting involved in a direct confrontation, he warned. Currently, however, the US-China tensions have "not yet crossed" the irreversible line from being containable to becoming a brutal war between the biggest powers and their allies, Dalio said. "We should recognize that these two hot wars i.e. the Israel-Hamas war and the Russia-Ukraine war, are not just between the parties

directly involved in them - these wars are part of the bigger great power conflicts to shape the new world order - and they will have big effects on the countries who are allies and enemies of the four sides in these two seemingly irreconcilable wars. These two wars will cost the allies of these countries a lot," he explained. While Israel has received the backing of the US, Canada and most of the West, those standing in solidarity with Palestine includes Iran, and its Axis of Resistance - Syria, Yemen and Lebanon. A number of Arab countries, considered close to Washington, are feeling pressure from the local populace who have rallied in support of Palestinians. Notably, China and Russia - the two ideological rivals of the US - have underlined the need to resolve the seven decades old dispute and "establish an independent State of Palestine" (Dalio, 2023).

Three European nations had so far announced formally the recognition of a Palestinian state, a landmark move that drew a swift rebuke from Israel and praise from Palestinians. The announcements from Ireland, Norway and Spain dealt the latest diplomatic blow to Israel, as the United States' close ally faces mounting international isolation and backlash over its deadly military offensive in the Gaza Strip. The formal recognition took place May 28, 2024, and may be followed by other European countries as outrage over Israel's actions in Gaza bolsters the Palestinian cause on the global stage and adds to pressure on Israel to engage in talks for a path toward a two-state solution to the decadeslong conflict. The Israel Foreign Minister - Katz said he had immediately recalled Israel's ambassadors to Oslo, Dublin and Madrid and ordered a formal reprimand, or severe démarche, to the three countries' envoys in Israel. The White House said that President Joe Biden believes a Palestinian state should be realized through direct negotiations between the parties, not through unilateral recognition (Da Silva, 2024).

5. THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE PROCESSES AND THE PATHWAYS TO RESOLUTION

Despite the seemingly perpetual nature of the conflict, there have been periods of relative calm and diplomatic progress. This indicates that there are channels for dialogue and negotiation that can be utilized to prevent a total breakdown into widespread warfare. There have been numerous attempts by international actors to mediate and resolve the conflict. Organizations like the United Nations, the European Union, and various individual countries have consistently tried to broker peace agreements. This international involvement helps prevent the conflict from spiraling out of control. Intermittent discussions are held by various parties and proposals put forward in an attempt to resolve the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a peace process (Eran, 2002).

Since the 1970s, there has been a parallel effort made to find terms upon which peace can be agreed to in both the Arab-Israeli conflict and in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Notably the Camp-David Accords between Egypt and Israel, which included discussions on plans for "Palestinian autonomy", but did not include any Palestinian representatives. The autonomy plan would not be implemented, but its stipulations would to a large extent be represented in the Oslo Accords (Rashid, 2013).

Despite the failure of the peace process to produce a final agreement, the international consensus has for decades supported a two-state solution to the conflict, based on United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 and 388. This includes the establishment of an independent Palestinian

state under the pre-1967 borders including East Jerusalem and a just resolution to the refugee problem based on the Palestinian right of return, in accordance with United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194 (Rashid, 2013). This is in contrast to the current situation under the interim agreement of the Oslo Accords in which the Palestinian territories are fragmented under Israeli military control and the Palestinian National Authority has only partial self-rule in Area A of the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. A final settlement as stipulated by the Oslo Accords has yet to be reached (Noura, 2019).

Israel's "clear and repeated rejection" of the two-State solution "is unacceptable", said UN Secretary-General António Guterres, adding that "this refusal, and the denial of the right to statehood to the Palestinian people, would indefinitely prolong a conflict that has become a major threat to global peace and security." Council members roundly called for the two-State solution to be realized and for an end to the war, with many calling for an immediate ceasefire to end the suffering of Palestinians and allow the aid they urgently need to be delivered unhindered, a call for the release of hostages, as well as for Israel to limit its action in Gaza, in line with international humanitarian laws requiring military operations to respect the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution(UN, 2024).

On March 25, the United Nations Security Council/UNSC passed Resolution 2728, calling for an "immediate" cease-fire in Gaza. The motion's passage came after weeks of back and forth and posturing among the UNSC's permanent and rotating members. The exact phrasing of the resolution and its relevance to the situation on the ground, as well as bilateral and multilateral relations - particularly U.S.-Israel ties - have been the subject of heavy public and media attention, raising questions about the resolution's subtext, intent and limitations.

The assumption that injecting money into Hamas-governed Gaza would pacify an explosive situation was wishful thinking. Economic improvement could never replace the desire of Palestinians to see an end of the occupation and recognition of their political, human and civil rights. This conflict does not need management, it needs its root causes to be addressed. Despair at the miserable conditions the Palestinians have endured not only since the 1967 occupation but since the 1948 Nakba, is understandable and has provided the conditions for radicalization. Attempts to overcome the deadlock were only to be expected.

All the wars in and around Gaza since Hamas seized control there in 2007 have ended the same way, with a ceasefire deal. The ceasefires all came with a fatal flaw that guaranteed the next war between Israel and Hamas. Throughout the peace process, the two-state solution has been a central concept in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and international diplomacy. Territorial disputes, security concerns, the status of Jerusalem, settlements, and the right of return for Palestinian refugees have remained significant obstacles. Thus, both sides to begin permanent status negotiations. Arab world can play a constructive role in bringing together Israelis and Palestinians in ways never imaginable to help support a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Twenty years ago, the Saudi peace plan offered Israel full recognition and peace with Arab states, in return for a viable and sovereign Palestinian state in Gaza and the West Bank, with a capital in East Jerusalem. It could be relaunched by extending the existing Abraham Accords between Israel

and some Arab countries, but adding to it the price tag of a Palestinian state. It is an ambitious idea, that would not happen without new Israeli and Palestinian leaders who believed in the project. The Americans could mediate, though they would have to be even-handed, something they have never managed before. Both sides would have to be prepared to make painful compromises on cherished beliefs, especially concerning territory. Political storms would break over leaders prepared to take risks for peace. Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by a Jewish extremist in 1995 when he tried to make peace with the Palestinians. An Islamist extremist killed Egypt's President Anwar Sadat because he made peace with Israel.

The imposition of sanctions on the State of Israel will tame their continued aggression and land grabbing against the Palestine. Sanctions have the capacity to severely hinder a country's economic growth and their ability to maintain a strong military presence. Sanctions play an important role in international politics, especially when used as a tool for military containment. In this war game, the conflicting countries are able to decide whether to impose sanctions or not, and chose to go to war or accept the other country's terms – depending on the severity of the sanctions. There are different types of sanctions, such as economic sanctions, international sanctions, military armament embargo, and diplomatic sanctions. Sanctions put pressure on countries that endanger the peace, implement harmful policies, or violate international law. Sanctions can also be imposed on specific individuals or organizations.

One of the examples used were the U.S. sanctions against Iran during the Iran-Iraq war. The sanction balance was strong enough to affect Iranian military power, but not too strong so that Iran would attack to escape the sanctions. Iran's former dependence on Western weapons and parts was a major factor in the success of the sanctions. When the sanctioning countries halted trade, Iran had to turn to poor-quality replacement parts that rendered many of their war machines inoperable. By the end of the war, Iran had only 12 operational helicopters from the original 500. The economic effects of the sanctions carried over long after the end of the war as well; resupply orders were cut or canceled, leaving Iran with only 184 of the 1,500 tanks they ordered before the war and less than a quarter of the aircraft originally budgeted for. The Iranian sanctions provide a good example of the specific outcomes a balanced sanctioning regime can cause to a threatening military presence. Thoughtful sanction regimes can truly change the outcome or likelihood of war without having to pay the high human and economic costs of military campaigns. When examining the recent European Union/United States sanctions against Russia, some may suggest the sanctions failed considering Russia is not totally contained in Eastern Europe. However, others would argue the sanctions were successful due to their role in slowing Russia's advance into Crimea, as well as any further Western military mobilization as a response. The balance of severity in the sanctions, as well as the unified message of support from the sanctioning countries, have so far been successful in preventing a large escalation of violence in the regional conflict.

Sanctions are a tool of diplomacy that provide governments with a nonviolent method to reduce another country's military power. The parties involved in conducting and receiving sanctions, as well as those observing the sanction campaign from the outside, benefit from an effective nonviolent method to address conflict. With time, these methods can bring the conflicting parties

to the negotiating table, in this case Israel and Palestine. As David Cortright states, “sanctions are useful for persuading an adversary to come to the bargaining table, but they must be accompanied by meaningful incentives for cooperation”. Once a successful process of cooperation has begun, it is more likely that agreements and further cooperation can be achieved. It is important to observe the success of a sanction regime through a wide lens, and not just by the immediately observable results. Just because a country or group of countries failed to meet all of the objectives set before sanctioning does not mean that the sanctions failed. Rather, success should be weighed against the sanctions’ ability to balance power and the human and economic costs from a war that the sanctions may have helped prevent – not the potential hardships that come during a sanction regime. “Sanctions are means of applying pressure, but their effectiveness depends on offering to lift sanctions as an incentive for reaching a negotiated settlement”, said David Cortright, Peace Scientist (McCormack & Pascoe, 2015).

The International community must find a way of forcing any framework of proposal for truce between the warring parties is the way to go. So far, Hamas has officially responded “positively” to the framework of proposal for latest truce in Gaza war, but US and Qatar say any deal will take time. The UN says “everything possible” must be done to avoid an Israeli attack on Rafah, a city in southern Gaza, which it says could lead to a “large scale” loss of life (Alsaafin and Osgood, 2024). Hamas’s peace plan, which it calls “reasonable and realistic” has been submitted in response to proposals sent by Qatari and Egyptian mediators who have been holding negotiations with Israel and the US in a high-level diplomatic push to end the war. Hamas has suggested a three-stage truce process that would see hostages and prisoners released on both sides. Each stage would last for 45 days, according to the plan (Aljazeera, 2023b) viz:

- The First stage/in the first 45 days, Hamas proposes to release all Israeli female captives that the group took hostage on October 7. Male captives under 19 years of age and who are not members of or conscripts to the Israeli armed forces, the elderly and the sick will also be released. It’s unclear how many of the more-than-100 captives who are known to still be alive fit these categories. In return, Hamas wants Israel to release 1,500 Palestinians being held in Israeli jails, including all women, children and elderly people. Some 5,200 Palestinians were behind bars in Israel as of October 2023, among them 33 children and 170 women. Among the Palestinian prisoners to be released, 500 would have to be people currently serving life sentences and other extended terms. Hamas is also asking for at least 500 humanitarian aid and fuel trucks to be allowed into Gaza daily. It has asked for the provision of 60,000 temporary homes and 200,000 tents and has stipulated that displaced Palestinians in Gaza must be allowed to freely return to their homes, with no barriers, in the context of a mutual, temporary truce. Hamas has not stipulated where the funding for the homes and tents should come from. In addition, the group wants all crossings into the Gaza Strip to be opened, and for Gaza’s Palestinians who require medical care to be able to travel freely out of the strip. At this point, it adds, talks around the requirements for a “complete truce” can start.
- In the next phase/second stage, also to last for 45 days, Hamas says it will release all remaining male Israeli captives, and in return, Israeli troops will withdraw from all areas of Gaza. At this point, Hamas says, further humanitarian aid must be allowed into Gaza,

while reconstruction of damaged infrastructure must commence. Talks about the requirements for a “complete truce” and a return to “a state of calm” must be agreed upon before the next stage can begin.

- Third stage/finally, Hamas proposes that both sides will release any bodies or remains at this stage, after due identification processes. Any humanitarian measures agreed to in the first and second stages must also continue.

Israel has yet to respond to Hamas’s proposal, although “its details are being thoroughly evaluated”, officials said. However, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and top Israeli officials have repeatedly stated that Israeli troops will not be ordered to pull back until Hamas is “destroyed”. Israel and Hamas on Tuesday played down chances of an imminent breakthrough in talks for a cease-fire in Gaza, after U.S. President Joe Biden said Israel has agreed to pause its offensive during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan if a deal is reached to release some hostages. The president’s remarks came on the eve of the Michigan primary, where he faces pressure from the state’s large Arab American population over his staunch support for Israel’s offensive. Biden said he had been briefed on the status of talks by his national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, but said his comments reflected his optimism for a deal, not that all the remaining hurdles had been overcome (Goldenberg, Shurafa and Magdy, 2024).

The Immediate reconstruction of Gaza bartered infrastructure is key to providing lasting solution to Israel – Palestine. GENEVA, Feb 15 - Gaza will need a new "Marshall Plan" to recover from the conflict between Israel and Hamas, a U.N. trade body official said on Thursday, adding that the damage from the conflict so far amounted to around \$20 billion. Speaking on the sidelines of a U.N. meeting in Geneva, Richard Kozul-Wright, a director at trade body UNCTAD, said the damage was already four times that endured in Gaza during the seven-week war in 2014(Reuters, 2024).

Non align countries, like China, Africa, Asian and Caribbean Island, adjudged to be neutral international stage, should lend their voices and put pressure to broker peace between the warring parties. Beijing has expressed deep concern over the escalation of conflict and called for “calm”. Observers have wondered, if China will try to promote itself as a regional peacemaker after it successfully brokered a rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia. In April 2023, the country’s then-foreign minister, Qin Gang, told the Israeli and Palestinian foreign ministers that China was ready to facilitate efforts towards peace talks. China supports a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as the capital of a sovereign Palestinian state. It has also advocated for international development assistance for Palestinians (Aljazeera, 2023c).

6. CONCLUSION

The paper examines the ways in which the Israeli-Palestinian conflict shapes and transforms the interests, narratives and options of relevant actors, in light of the failure of peace talks and the continuing occupation of the West Bank. The first contribution examines the Israeli discourse, laying out how the absence of resolution creates a paradoxical situation where majorities exist both for a two-state solution and against a Palestinian state. This translates politically into growing

paralysis in relation to possible peace talks. The second contribution analyses how the Palestinian leaderships relate to the Israeli occupying power, within a spectrum of negotiations, resistance rhetoric and direct and indirect cooperation. The contribution also elaborates how the leaderships unintentionally became accessories to the occupying power.

Considering the dynamics of the current war, one cannot ignore the following realities on the ground and how they are shaping the direction and trend of events. Parties possess the belligerents display of intransigence, insisting on eradicating and/or eliminating each other. They are unwilling to observe the so-called truces, which they repeatedly violated, resulting in failures, so far exceedingly more than fourteen ceasefires. The parties' positions are also irreconcilable. The Global West and her Arab countries allies hold a lukewarm attitude toward the war. The multiplicity of negotiation tracks and the divergent views of the mediators are leading to a more fragmented state of affairs than a unified position that can leverage any influence to oblige the belligerents to succumb unto reason. Obviously, external support has continued to flow to the parties, while "impunity" is allowed to perpetuate. Furthermore, there is an absence of any vibrant civilian force to campaign to stop the war. The urban nature of warfare makes it difficult for any party to gain quick and decisive control.

One conclusion from the collapse of the status quo between Israel and the Palestinians is that conflict management is a fallacy that has failed time and again. As a long-term instrument it at best buys time until the next round of violence begins. More than 75 years of conflict between Israel and the Palestinians have seen periodic outbreaks of hostilities and periodic efforts to bring peace based on a two-state solution. For most of this time the focus has been on managing the conflict. This exposes a lack of belief that a peace agreement laying to rest the differences between the two peoples can be reached. It also shows that the international collective security mechanism set up after the Second World War has failed in its mission to peacefully settle conflicts.

Numerous peace negotiations have taken place over the years, but a long-term peace agreement has not been reached. The conflict has been marked by violence, including terrorist attacks by Palestinian militants and military operations by Israel. The United States and other countries have played a key role in attempting to broker peace, but many obstacles remain, including the issue of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, the status of Jerusalem, and the ultimate fate of Palestinian refugees. By controlling the Gaza Strip and encouraging divisions between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority, Israel has ensured an independent Palestinian state remains a remote possibility while presenting the Palestinians as solely responsible for the impasse in the peace process. This apparent status quo also served those in Israel and in Palestine who were not prepared to make the compromises necessary to allow a two-state solution to work.

To make things worse, Israel now has the most right-wing coalition government in its history. Central elements of it are advocating the annexation of the West Bank, while at the same time weakening the democratic state and its society, and with this its military preparedness. Meanwhile, Palestinians are unable to turn to the Palestinian Authority or Hamas, both of which seem more interested in maintaining their position of power, or to an international community that has lost interest. Such a lack of leadership and hope is usually a recipe for disaster. Now that this has

happened, both peoples can continue to manage the conflict, which will merely result in prolonged suffering. Or they could reach for an historical compromise which may not completely satisfy both sides but would meet both national aspirations and supply long-term security. This will be their test when the war is over: to realize that ‘status-quo’ is temporary and ‘conflict management’ is deceptive.

The lesson to be derived from the Hamas October 7 reprisal assault on Israel is that, Hamas sought to put itself and the Palestinian issue back at the center of the international agenda, even if that meant destroying much of Gaza itself. The attack was also meant to thwart a possible normalization pact between Israel and Saudi Arabia that would promote Palestinian moderates and sideline Hamas. Hamas’s leaders also have political aims that may at first seem counterintuitive. They are trying to relieve themselves of the sole burden of governing the Gaza Strip, which had become an impediment to achieving the group’s goal of destroying Israel. And as talks hosted by China in early May 2023 between Hamas and Fatah officials have underscored, the Hamas leadership is also trying to jump-start a process of reconciliation with Fatah and the Palestinian Authority (PA), which Fatah controls, despite years of fierce hostility between the two groups. Those goals, in turn, serve a deeper purpose. In seeking to force a new governance structure on Gaza and to refashion the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in its own image, Hamas hopes to impose a Hezbollah model on the territory. Like Hezbollah, the heavily armed, Iranian-backed Shiite militant movement in Lebanon, Hamas wants a future in which it is both a part of, and apart from, whatever Palestinian governance structure next emerges in Gaza. That way, as with Hezbollah in Lebanon, it hopes to wield political and military dominance in Gaza and ultimately the West Bank without bearing any of the accountability that comes from ruling alone.

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