

Final Paper

Course: **War and Peace**

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The ongoing wars throughout the Middle East have haunted the 20th and 21st century with brutal tragedies and not much outlook for resolution. The Palestine-Israel Conflict is one of the most prominent and unique wars which has tormented people living in the Palestine territory and associated states for centuries. The Israel-Palestine conflict can be traced to the roots of Jewish and Arabic history. Today’s issues remain as a violent tug of war for the territorial ownership of the homeland, which has been established in the narratives of both Israelites and Palestinians. While there have been several attempts at making peace, all of them, including the most recent Oslo Process, have failed due to oversights in the structure of both parties. An analysis of the methods used for peacemaking suggests that conflict resolution is not imminent unless either states core narratives change.

# Historical Context

For people of the Judaism religion, the territory surrounding what is now considered Palestine, holds significant value as the birthplace of their religion from over 3000 years ago: Jerusalem. The Ottoman Empire, which spanned from the 14th to 20th centuries saw the establishment of Palestine, as more than half a million Arabs inhabited the territory (SEGEV, 2024). During this time, Jewish people had enjoyed the religious freedom which the empire granted and found their way around much of the world, particularly Europe. Towards the end of the 19th century, Jews slowly began immigrating to the Ottoman province, typically seeking refuge from disparities in Eastern Europe. Originally, the Zionist ideology was not held by most Jews. However, the early 1900’s saw the immigration of more Zionists who targeted regaining their homeland of Israel for the Jews to live independently (SEGEV, 2024). 1904 saw the arrival of David Gruen, who was an early promoter of the political movement to only employ Jews. As Zionist continued to acquire land, Arab agricultural workers were left dispossessed; which some reacted to violently (SEGEV, 2024). It was apparent that Jewish and Arabic people would struggle to live side by side.

The Zionist movement would take a large stride in 1917 when Chaim Weizmann of the United Kingdom would declare a “national homeland” for Jews inside of Palestine territory. Ultimately, this was a play by England to seize the land from the Ottoman Empire (SEGEV, 2024). Tensions between Jews and Arabs rose as English policies were established for the next 30 years (SEGEV, 2024). With the onset of the World Wars, Jewish people began immigrating into Palestine, largely seeking refuge, rather than for Zionist intent. Weizmann saw this opportunity as means to fortify that the Palestinian Homeland was “the only place for Jews to survive” (SEGEV, 2024).

In 1947, after the conclusion of World War II, the United Nations advised the division of Palestine, with Jerusalem remaining under international control. Arabs rejected the plan with opposition to Jewish establishment within their territory. The Zionist Jews did accept the plan with expectations that war would commence and they could seize all the land upon victory (SEGEV, 2024). Following the announcement of Israel’s independence in 1948, a series of battles took place between Arabic militia and Israel defense. This would see a displacement of 750,000 Arabs from Palestine and establishment of Israel colonies (SEGEV, 2024). Until the 1990’s, series of breakout warfare pushed for territorial control between Israel and Palestine throughout Egypt and the West Bank.

# Narratives of Territorial Ownership

The ongoing conflict has coerced an intermixing of Israeli and Palestinian inhabitance on the same piece of Israel territory. Despite sharing a desire to occupy the same place, the experienced history of each group drives differing narratives on the ownership of the land. In context to the Israel-Palestine conflict, it is important to understand how psychological ownership can differ from legal ownership (Warnke et al., 2024). The narratives being discussed will include the individual experiences of each culture and are significant in the success of peacemaking.

The Jewish narrative begins over 3000 years ago with ancient Hebrews who lived in the sacred land (Warnke et al., 2024). The belief that the land was divinely promised to the Jewish people is categorized by Warnke as a *God-Given Principal*. This principle implies that since the religion one believes is true, what the religion grants must be upheld as true. For the basis of homeland ownership, this concept defines most of the argument for Jews. This principal stands up when Jews were polled regarding their stance on land ownership. 87% of Jews perceived exclusive rights to the contested land, whereas the remaining 13% saw a shared ownership (Warnke et al., 2024). This narrative was further solidified in the Zionist movement which dominated much of the 20th century. A news paper article from 1904 titled, *Jews Plan to Build New Zion in East Africa,* describes the Palestinian land as a “A White Man’s Country” which encompasses “a territory [that] is larger than your state of Connecticut” for which Jews are welcome to inhabit and cultivate (Warnke et al., 2024).

For Palestinians, the narrative started during the 19th century inhabitation of Arabs during the Ottoman Empire. As Arabs had been cultivating the land for centuries at this point, the *Investment Principal* appropriately categorizes how Palestinians formed an identity around the territory (Warnke et al., 2024). Because the tie to their land was largely formed on the basis of work and cultivation, the perspective on ownership is formed on legitimate dependence on the territory. The same poll which polled Jews on perceived ownership was given to Palestinians; contrastingly, 54% were in favor of some level of shared land vs 36% of ingroup ownership (Warnke et al., 2024). The distinction can be made that Palestinian narrative is more focused on having access to the contested land rather than outright privileges.

The significance of the narratives is engrained in how they define each group’s competence. Unlike actual states, neither party can lean on legislation to drive their population; rather, they rely on congruence of their population’s narrative for success. As the poll data highlights, neither group is in total ingroup agreement. This fact, in addition to a lack of legitimate government disadvantages both Israel and Palestine. The violent disagreement of a small intragroup can harm the intent of the entire party. Furthermore, the unwillingness of either party to take responsibility for past and present conflicts challenges the ability to progress.

# Critique of Prior Peacemaking Attempts

In 1993, the Oslo Process laid out a reform plan for Israel and Palestine to seek out an eventual total solution. This transitional *process* would allow a time frame for the parties to homologize their governments and prepare to solve the ‘core’ challenges such as what to do with Jerusalem (the homeland), Palestinian refugees, Israeli settlements, and other high tension political regards (Kacowicz, 2005).

The main failure point of the Oslo Process was its inability to address the volatility of each party. The Oslo Process did not account for the requirement of “conflicts [being] terminable, provided that the parties’ interests are fulfilled” (Barak, 2005). Based on narratives of Israelis and Palestinians, the standpoint regarding the most controversial topics such as Jerusalem and Palestinian territory are contradicting. Kelmen added that groups must “maintain collective needs such as identity, security, and recognition” among other traits (Barak, 2005). Unfulfilled or clashing needs constitute means for intergroup conflict (Barak, 2005). Since the Oslo Process resulted in both parties expecting their agendas to be fulfilled without regard to the needs of the other group, it was destined to fail.

For a successful resolution, Oren Barak argues that Israel and Palestine must look to the aid of outside countries. Two key points are, 1) How outside states handle conflict resolution, and 2) how outside states can mediate conflict resolution of parties that lack the statehood to conduct meaningful resolution (Barak, 2005). Democratic statehoods such as the United States of America demonstrates that the development of a strong government and diplomatic process can help unify the entire group. The role of a statehood as a third party is also argued to assist in peacemaking (Barak, 2005). Since Israel and Palestine are in conflict, it is challenging to identify the other party’s interests and communicate their own needs. During formal negotiations, outside forces can offer incentives or apply pressure to maintain the cooperation of both parties. By adopting new practices, it could allow Israel or Palestine to gain a perspective that could offer successful peacemaking.

Ultimately, the obligation to create a resolution for the Israel-Palestine Conflict falls upon the parties themselves. The prior attempts at peacemaking conclude that the narratives of Israel and Palestine will need to shift in order to gain the credibility it takes to be proactive. The longstanding history of the Jews and Arabs, the development of the Zionist movement, and the constant struggle to win over the Palestinian homeland provides insights to how narratives where developed. In conclusion, it is apparent that drastic action needs to be taken for the brutal Israel-Palestine Conflict to end; and while there is not much outlook for a successful peacemaking, it is there.

# References

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