

Vancouver Youth Model United Nations 2021



UNSC

Background Guide



VANCOUVER YOUTH MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2021

United Nations Security Council

Co-Directors: Edward Gao and Liam Dachner

Chairs: Vivian Xu and Talia Pimstone

Assistant Directors: Anderson Gao and Jacob Rivelis

Dear delegates,

Our names are Edward Gao and Liam Dachner and it is our utmost honour and pleasure to be your Co-Directors of the United Nations Security Council for VYMUN 2021 alongside your chairs, Vivian Xu and Talia Pimstone, and Assistant Directors, Anderson Gao and Jacob Rivelis. We sincerely hope your experience in this committee will be intellectually stimulating and enjoyable.

This year, the UNSC will be pursuing the Israel-Palestine conflict, a decades-long dispute over land rights in modern-day Israel and Palestine. The Israel-Palestine Conflict is one of the world's leading conflicts in both monetary cost and human toll. Its long and complex history lends itself to being one of the most complex global conflicts of all time. The members of the United Nations Security Council, divided due to their independent relationships with Israel and Palestine, must swiftly resolve this crisis.

Due to the sensitive and controversial nature of this year's topic, we request that delegates refrain from making potentially offensive comments about race or religion during the length of this committee. We also ask that delegates remain respectful at all times and considerate of other delegates' personal beliefs.

As one of the six principal organs of the United Nations, the Security Council will follow traditional Model UN Rules of Procedure. However, keeping with VYMUN tradition, this year's iteration of the UNSC will be a crisis committee.

Given that this is quite an advanced committee with an intricate topic, delegates will benefit from thoroughly reviewing this backgrounder and perhaps consulting supplementary sources. Should you have any questions regarding the backgrounder or committee in general, please do not hesitate to contact us at unsc@vymun.com. We look forward to seeing everyone in October.

Sincerely,

Edward Gao and Liam Dachner
Co-Directors of UNSC | VYMUN 2021

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Israel-Palestine Conflict

Questions to Consider

1. What can the international community do to protect the people in the Israel-Palestine region?
2. How can Israel and Palestine's overlapping claims over Jerusalem be resolved?
3. What can be done to ensure long lasting peace in the region?

Overview

After the division of Palestine into separate Jewish (Israel) and Arab (Palestine) states in 1947, the region became a battlefield that would host numerous wars, operations, and violent uprisings.¹ The violent nature of the conflict began with the attempted Arab invasion of Israeli occupants in 1948 and continues to this day with frequent violence and missile attacks. In recent years, Israel began its plan to annex the West Bank, and has gained control of 60% of the territory through military occupation and civilian settlements.²

Decades of terror within the region has also led to weakened governments and flawed democracy. Palestine, divided by its two regions, the West Bank and Gaza strip, are pseudodemocratic, authoritarian regimes and are governed by the Palestinian Authority and Hamas (a terrorist organization), respectively.³ On the other hand, Israel is a democracy that is not without its flaws and has experienced a chain of government collapses.

There have been prolonged efforts by the international community to establish peace and stability within the region. However, many of these efforts have historically been futile due to deadlock within the Security Council.⁴

Taking everything into consideration, those who have suffered the most in this conflict are the Israeli and Palestinian people themselves. The lasting effects of decades of war, combined with the consistent attacks on Israelis and Palestinians alike, have degraded the living conditions and safety of people in the region. Many in the region, particularly Palestinians in the Gaza strip, lack necessities such as food, water, and adequate shelter.⁵ As a result, over 7 million Palestinians have relocated to surrounding Arab nations, including Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, with Palestinians making up one of the world's largest refugee populations.⁶

¹ <https://research.un.org/en/docs/ga/quick/regular/1>

² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-52756427>

³ <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2021/02/02/global-democracy-has-a-very-bad-year>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/palestinians-are-suffering-hunger-poverty-conflict-global>

⁶ <https://www.afsc.org/resource/palestinian-refugees-and-right-return>

Timeline

November 29th, 1947: The UN General Assembly adopts Resolution 181 which calls for the partition of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states.⁷

May 14th, 1948: The head of the Jewish Agency, David Ben-Gurion, delivers a proclamation declaring the establishment of the State of Israel. United States President Truman recognizes the State of Israel.⁸

May 15th, 1948: British forces withdraw from Palestine. Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon take the opportunity to invade Palestine, attacking Israeli forces and taking control of Arab areas.⁹

February - July 1949: Armistice agreements between Israel and its neighbouring Arab countries (Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon) are signed, ending hostilities between the nations.¹⁰

April 24th, 1950: Jordan assumes administrative control over the West Bank and grants citizenship to all Arab residents.¹¹

May 28th, 1964: The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) is founded in Jerusalem, by the Arab League and Ahmad Shukeiri.¹²

June, 1967: Israel occupies the West Bank and begins to build settlements in the region.

June 10th, 1967: The Six-Day War, also known as the Third Arab-Israeli War, is won by Israel. Israeli forces take control of the Gaza Strip from Egypt and the West Bank from Jordan.¹³

November 22nd, 1967: The UNSC unanimously adopts Resolution 242, calling for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the 1967 occupied territories.¹⁴

October 22nd, 1973: The UNSC adopts Resolution 338 which calls for a ceasefire between Israel and surrounding Arab nations (Yom Kippur War).¹⁵

December 8th, 1987 - September 13th, 1993: The First Intifada, a series of Palestinian protests and violent riots against Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, take place in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Israel.¹⁶

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/creation-israel>

⁹ <https://www.britannica.com/event/Arab-Israeli-wars#ref340992>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ <https://www.britannica.com/place/West-Bank>

¹² <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Palestine-Liberation-Organization>

¹³ <https://www.britannica.com/event/Six-Day-War>

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

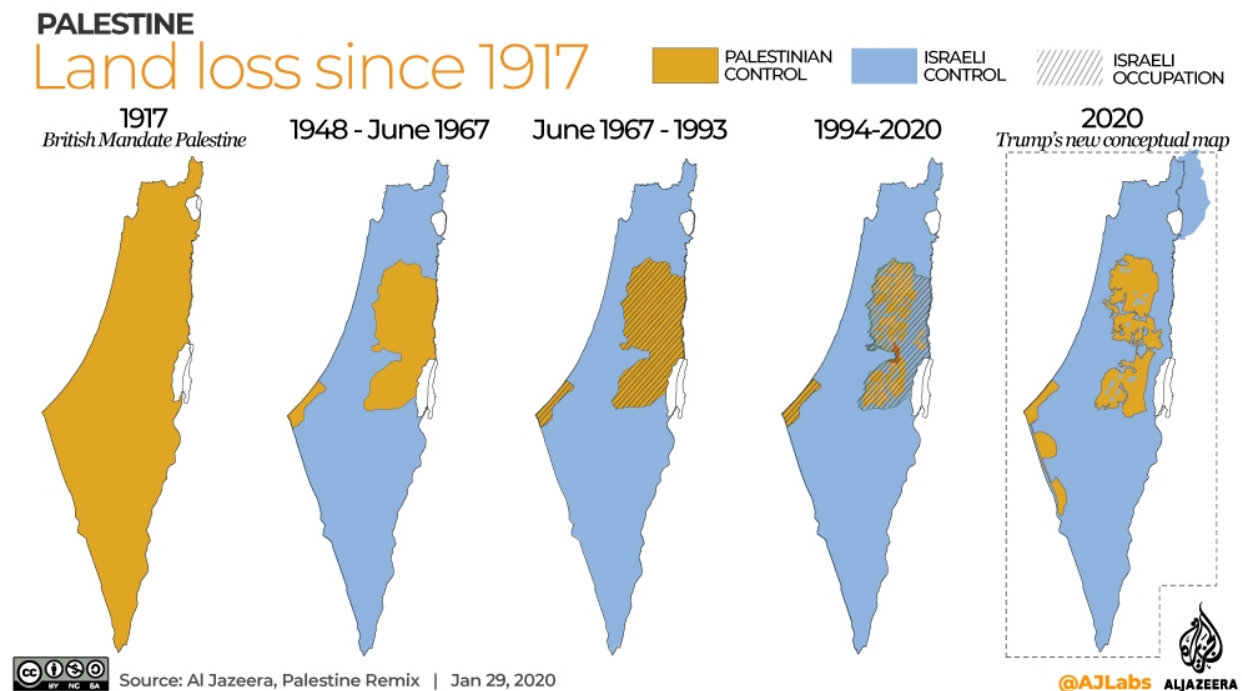
¹⁶ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/intifadah>

September 13th, 1993: The Oslo I Accord, an agreement between the government of Israel and the PLO, is signed in Washington D.C. The Palestinian Authority is created and tasked with the governance of parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Hamas rejects the peace process and agreement, continuing its terror against Israel.¹⁷

January 25th, 2006: Hamas wins the Palestinian legislative elections, assuming administrative control over the West Bank and Gaza Strip.¹⁸

June 15th, 2007 - Present: Hamas wins the Battle of Gaza, a military conflict between Hamas and Fatah, and becomes the de facto government of the Gaza Strip.¹⁹

January, 2020: The US government announces the political portion of President Trump's peace plan, which proposes new borders for Israel and Palestine.



Maps of the division between Israel and Palestine since 1917²⁰

Historical Analysis

The entire history of Jewish Arab conflict is not one that can be summarised succinctly in a single paragraph. That being said, it is important to note three major things: firstly, the two groups have not always been at war, in fact throughout history they were often at peace. Second, is that both groups have a

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/1/29/what-does-trumps-plan-propose-for-palestinian-territories>

legitimate and provable link to the modern land of Israel, as will be described later in this section. Third, that growing tensions throughout the 20th century came to a head in 1948 when Israel was established.²¹

While there were calls for a Jewish nation-state prior to WWII, these views became legitimized and popularized after due to the rise of Nazism. Over the course of the Second World War, 6 million Jews perished, with the remaining Jewish refugees had scattered throughout Europe and the rest of the world after fleeing their own countries to escape persecution and death.

Although anti-semitism was widespread even before WWII, the conflict gave significantly more legitimacy to the idea that Jewish people required a homeland so that they could avoid persecution in the future. It seemed at the time that they were the only major religions that did not have a country in which their faith had significant influence. With sympathy for the Jewish people at a high along with popularity of the Zionist movement, the UN decided that, with the help of Great Britain, they would split the British controlled Mandate of Palestine into a Jewish and Arab half.²² However, this resulted in significant issues throughout the region.

Firstly, the UN ignored the tensions between Jews and Arabs in that area, which had been steadily growing since the 1920s. They ignored the current dwellings of Jews and Palestinians alike and relatively arbitrary lines on the map, giving approximately 56% of the land to the Jews and the remainder to the Palestinians. It is also worth noting that the resources of the two respective areas were vastly disproportionate, the area given to Israel although greater in size consisted mainly of desert with very little arable land and drinking water, while the Palestinians retained the arguably better land and most notably the city of Jerusalem.

On May 15th 1948 the British mandate over Palestine expired and within the next two days the Arab armies of Jordan, Syria, Egypt, Iraq and eventually Lebanon would march their troops into the area which had previously been controlled by Great Britain. Met by newly founded Israeli forces, this conflict would erupt into Israel's War of Independence, which would end in 1949. Approximately 750,000 Palestinians would flee or be expelled, largely leading to the major refugee crisis we still see today. Israel would go on to expand its territories in this war along with the Six Day War of 1967, capturing Jerusalem and annexing the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The current conflicts in the region are a continuation of these wars due to similar causes: many Palestinians are upset about their loss of territory and many Israelis wish to retain Jerusalem. Some believe that there is a need for a Jewish state while some think another Arab state is required. It will be important to consider the history of this conflict as much of it can be applied to today.

Past Action

Although the modern problems in the region were largely caused by the UN in 1947, little drastic change has been done since then. The United Nations Security Council has held countless meetings and collectively drafted numerous resolutions on the Israel-Palestine conflict. However, the power dynamic

²¹ Ibid.

²² <https://www.un.org/unispal/history/>

within the Security Council, which is one that provides the P5 nations (China, France, Russia, UK, USA) with veto power in the UNSC, hinders progress.

Specifically, the US's blanket support of Israel in this conflict has created a deadlock in the Security Council, where resolutions condemning Israel or calling for ceasefires have been consistently vetoed. Due to the US's stance on this conflict, the other members of the UNSC have been unable to efficiently move forward.

Other organs have been relatively successful, such as with the creation of UNRWA (The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) in 1949 which has since registered 5.6 million Palestinians as refugees and provided billions in humanitarian aid. The UNRWA operates in five areas: Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and employs approximately 30,000 people a vast majority of them Palestinian. The UNRWA has worked to ensure that basic human rights are met in Palestine along with ensuring access to schools, libraries, etc.

In 2019 Germany, the EU (including the European Commission), and the United Kingdom were the largest individual donors to the UNRWA contributing a cumulative 37.7 per cent of the Agency's overall funding. Sweden and the United Arab Emirates were also among the top five donors. The funds raised that year equaled almost 1 billions dollars.²³

Nevertheless, as with donations from NGOs, UNRWA has also faced numerous problems such as siphoning and draining of resources by Hamas, which will be discussed later.

Current Situation

Politics and Terrorism

Palestine is currently governed under a pseudo democratic government, led by the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank and Hamas in the Gaza Strip.²⁴ Hamas is recognized by the USA, the EU and others as a terrorist group (notable exceptions being China, Norway and Switzerland), having carried out numerous attacks against Israel.²⁵ It is written into Hamas's official constitution that it is their duty to eliminate all Jews.²⁶ After rising to prominence in 1990 by conducting suicide bombing attacks during the First Antifada, Hamas gained control of the Gaza Strip in 2007 following the 2006 election. Hamas has yet to hold another election.²⁷ The same can be said for the West Bank and Mahmoud Abbas, the President of Palestine who is not recognized by Hamas. His political party, Fatah, has gone unchallenged since their success in the 2006 election.

Hamas has used a significant portion of the billions it has received from aid to its military wing, which remains one of the issues that has been cited as to why Palestine is so developmentally challenged. Most recently, a high ranking Hamas official was charged with diverting 60% of American charity World

²³ <https://www.unrwa.org/our-partners/government-partners>

²⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Palestinian-Authority>

²⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-13331522>

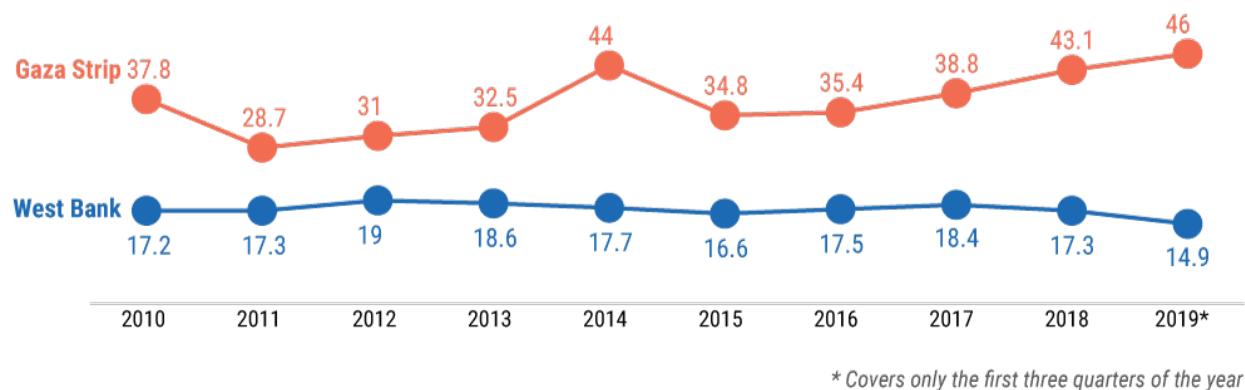
²⁶ <https://fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/880818a.htm>

²⁷ Ibid.

Visions multi million dollar donation to military practices and terrorist activities. There is also the issue of the approximate 350 million USD paid annually by the PA to “terrorists and their families” as described by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.²⁸ Although Israel claims that these individuals are terrorists Palestine asserts that they are martyrs and prisoners of war or freedom fighters.

Economy

The Gaza Strip is one of the most densely populated territories in the world.²⁹ Its tightly controlled land borders with Israel and Egypt, along with its maritime border, have largely isolated its economy. Large parts of the population in Gaza live in dire poverty and depend on humanitarian support from abroad. Unemployment rates in Palestine as a whole have stayed rather even over the years with the West Bank Currently at a rate of 14.9% and the Gaza Strip and 46% as of 2019 before COVID-19. According to the World Bank, comparatively to the rest of the region, Palestine has an average GDP per capita, that being \$3,751 USD.³⁰ Israel dwarfs this number with a GDP per capita of \$34,185 USD.³¹



*Palestine Annual Unemployment Rate (%)*³²

Rise of the Israeli Far-right and Israeli Settlements

Benjamin Netanyahu served as Israeli Prime Minister from 1996-1999 and from 2009-2021.³³ Although currently Leader of the Opposition in the Knesset, his right-wing conservative Likud party has been known for their opposition of Palestinian statehood and support for settlements in disputed regions. It is worth noting that Netanyahu’s Likud party was the party that brokered peace with the Arabs in 1979 with the Camp David Accords, however a lot has changed since then. Most recently in the areas of Sheikh Jarrah, West Bank and the Golan Heights, have taken center stage to various forms of settlement, eviction and colonization by Israelis. It is important to note that the state of Israel is a product of colonization. However it is also important to realise that ethnic Jews, Arabs and Palestinians all have legitimate ties to the land that go back thousands of years.

²⁸<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2018/03/14/does-the-palestinian-authority-pay-350-million-a-year-to-terrorists-and-their-families/>

²⁹ <https://www.dw.com/en/who-is-hamas/a-57537872>

³⁰ <https://tradingeconomics.com/palestine/gdp-per-capita>

³¹ <https://tradingeconomics.com/israel/indicators>

³² <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/food-insecurity-fewer-palestinians-gaza-can-meet-their-food-needs>

³³ Ibid.

Humanitarian Crisis

Despite the 7 to 10 billion dollars that Palestine as a whole has received in humanitarian aid since 1993, food insecurity rates have stayed at approximately 30%, 32.7% right before COVID-19.³⁴ In the Gaza Strip, only one in 10 people have direct access to clean and safe water and 97% of freshwater from Gaza's only aquifer is unfit for human consumption.³⁵ Overpopulation, over-pumping and the seeping of seawater into freshwater have significantly reduced the amount of clean water available in Palestine.³⁶ Furthermore, of the 7 million palestinian refugees worldwide, a vast majority seek refuge in countries neighboring Palestine.³⁷ Jordan has the largest number of Palestinian refugees with 39% of the total refugee population, followed by Syria and Lebanon 10.5% and 9.1% respectively.³⁸ This has created a multitude of issues within these countries such as economic strain, increased violence, agricultural strain etc. It's important to also remember that Palestine is not the only country in the region experiencing a humanitarian crisis (e.g. Syria) and that a swift end to the crisis in Palestine would help the region immensely.

Possible Solutions

Two State Solution

The first possible solution is known as the two state solution. Currently implemented to some degree, it would involve the continuation of the modern state of Israel along with either the legitimizing of the state of Palestine (e.g. Palestine is recognized by other states, Palestine becoming a voting member in the UN etc.) or the continuation of Palestine as is. Some delegations may also push for the reversal of Israeli territory to that of the original UN partition of 1947. In order to implement this solution the committee will likely need to acquire joint agreement from Israel and Palestine. This becomes all the more difficult if the solution includes legitimizing Palestine or reversing borders as there is likely to be major pushbacks from Israel and its allies.

One state solution

There are two sub solutions to the heading of the one state solution, the first being the absorption of Palestine by Israel, the second being the reversal of current borders to those pre-Israel, under Palestinian ruling.

Absorbing Palestine would solve many problems that currently face Israel. There would be far less border disputes because there would be no borders and Israel would have unlimited jurisdiction to root out terrorism as it saw fit. The problem is that life would likely deteriorate further for those living in Palestine. Although likely to have the same rights as current Israeli citizens under the law, it is probable that Palestinians would be treated as second class citizens and become subject to a higher degree of scrutiny and prejudice within their own country. Also, it is expected that many Palestinians, specifically those in Hamas, the PA, and the PLO, will not want to be absorbed by Israel and war would likely ensue.

³⁴https://www.forbes.com/2009/01/16/gaza-hamas-funding-oped-cx_re_0116ehrenfeld.html?sh=3d8c5a427afb

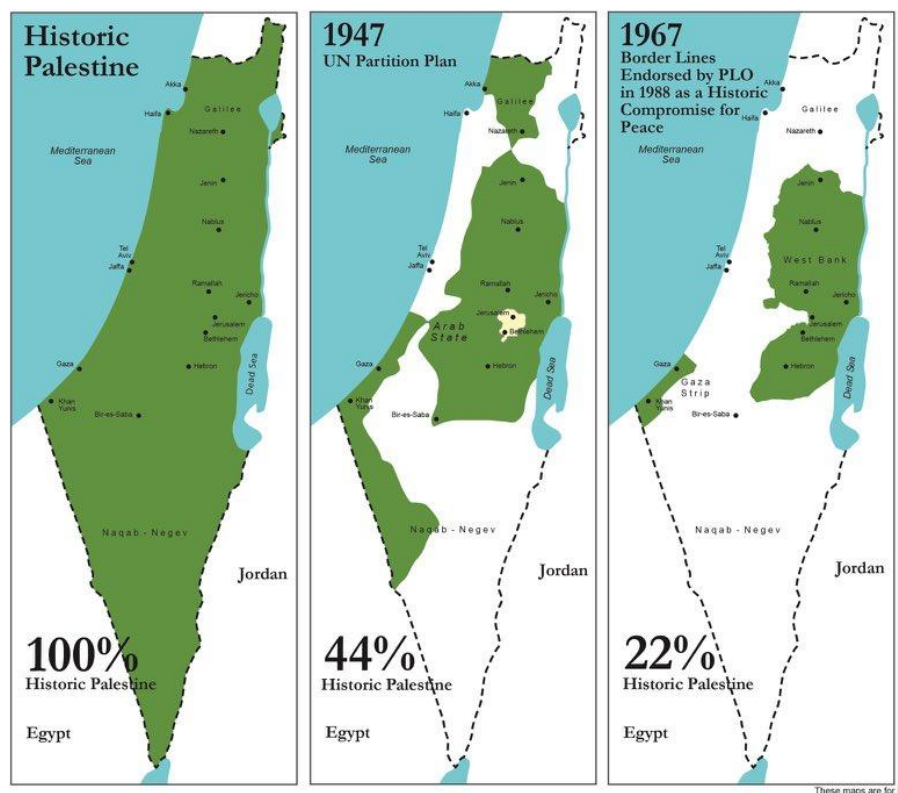
³⁵ <https://borgenproject.org/clean-water-in-palestine/>

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/palestinians-make-up-world-s-largest-refugee-population/1179770>

If this solution is to be seriously considered it can only be implemented with what is essentially the cooperation of not just the governments of Israel and Palestine but also the people perhaps through some form of referendum.



A map of Israel-Palestinian land over time³⁹

The second sub-solution here is the reversal of current borders to those pre-Israel under Palestinian rule. Similarly to the already discussed absorption solution, this is likely to incur pushback from Israel and its allies. Supporters of this solution should put forward a claim that Israel is a country of colonizers that have no right to the land they now live on. Nations that dispute this solution will put forward that Israel as a nation of majority ethnic Jews has a claim that goes back arguably before Islam even existed.

Other

There are a number of miscellaneous solutions that can also be brought forth such as the creation of Jerusalem as an independent UN run city state, the formation of a brand new secular country that adheres to no religion at all or perhaps even the vacation of the entire area. Although these solutions may not seem savoury at first, they may become popular as negotiations regarding the Two-State solution and One-State solutions stall.

Bloc Positions

Two-State Solution (China, Russia, France, United Kingdom, Ireland, Estonia, Kenya, Mexico, Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, Vietnam)

³⁹<https://myupsc.com/the-history-wars-and-solution-of-israel-palestine-conflict/>

The aforementioned nations have indicated their support for a Two-State Solution, where Israel and Palestine coexist as two independent nations in the region. Generally, nations residing within this bloc possess a more neutral stance, not necessarily favouring Israel or Palestine over the other, but rather seeking peace and prosperity in the region. For instance, these nations have supported UNSC efforts to officially condemn the Israeli government for its violence against Palestinians.

Although this bloc is aligned in its support of the Two-State Solution and are in favour of bilateral de-escalation and peaceful resolutions, certain countries historically have been averse to working together. For instance, China and Russia are unlikely to cooperate with the US, given their competitive and tense relationship.⁴⁰ China and Russia also cite the US' pro-Israel interference in the issue as an obstruction of peace.⁴¹ On the other hand, European nations including the United Kingdom, France, and Ireland would be more open to compromises and negotiations with the US and Israel.

Pro-Israel/No Palestine Statehood (United States of America, Israel)

Expressing unequivocal support for Israel, this bloc would strongly favour a solution that exclusively caters to Israel's desires. Specifically, it is the expansion of Israel's territory, which can be achieved through the One-State solution, and the continued exclusion of Palestine in the United Nations. Given the US's historical use of its veto power in the UNSC, the US can be expected to veto any resolutions that are not favourable for Israel. However, this bloc must also consider the ramifications that may occur when progress is not made and the conflict continues.

Pro-Palestine (Norway, Palestine, Lebanon)

This bloc would also favour the one-state solution if Palestinian borders revert to the borders prior to the 1947 UN partition. This bloc is likely to be unsuccessful without extreme compromise due to opposition from major powers (e.g. the US) and use of veto power. If a favourable two-state solution were to come to fruition, this bloc would be inclined to accept as well.

⁴⁰ <https://thediplomat.com/2021/05/what-are-china-and-russia-saying-about-the-israel-palestine-conflict/>

⁴¹ Ibid.

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