"The Palestine–Hamas–Israel Conflict: Origins, Causes, and Consequences – A Comprehensive Political Analysis"

Dr. Archana Vasant Umarkar
Head,
Department of Political Science,
Arts Commerce College Thadipawani
Tah – Narkhed Dist – Nagpur

ABSTRACT

The Israel–Palestine conflict, particularly the confrontation between Hamas and the State of Israel, stands as one of the longest, most complex, and polarizing geopolitical disputes in modern international relations. Its roots lie deep within the historical, territorial, and religious fabric of the Middle East, evolving across centuries from the Ottoman era, through the British Mandate, the 1948 Arab–Israeli War, and the consequential displacement known as the Nakba. These historical episodes fundamentally shaped the sociopolitical landscape of Palestine and led to the emergence of resistance movements, of which Hamas became the most influential in the Gaza Strip. The conflict has since grown into a multi-dimensional struggle involving nationalism, religion, security, territorial claims, humanitarian crises, and global politics. This research paper critically examines the political origins, causes, and consequences of the Israel–Hamas conflict through a comprehensive political analysis. It explores the layered historical factors that contributed to the present-day confrontation, including the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Britain's contradictory policies under the Mandate, Zionist migration, Arab resistance, and the eventual creation of the State of Israel in 1948. The displacement of more than 700,000 Palestinians during the Nakba transformed the demography and identity of the region, producing a refugee crisis that remains unresolved. Central to this conflict is the contested geography of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Jerusalem—territories of strategic, religious, and demographic significance. The emergence of Hamas in 1987 during the First Intifada marked a new chapter in Palestinian political resistance. Hamas combined religious ideology with political activism, community welfare, and armed struggle, positioning itself as both a socio-political movement and a military organization. Over time, its rivalry with Fatah fragmented the Palestinian national movement, resulting in separate administrations in the West Bank (Fatah-led Palestinian Authority) and the Gaza Strip (Hamas). This internal divide further complicated peace negotiations, regional diplomacy, and security dynamics. The research also focuses on the 2023–24 Israel–Hamas war, triggered by the unprecedented October 7, 2023 attack. This section examines the motivations behind Hamas's operation, Israel's military strategy in response, and the widespread humanitarian catastrophe that unfolded in Gaza. The conflict led to massive civilian casualties, large-scale displacement, infrastructural destruction, and severe shortages of basic necessities such as water, electricity, and medical supplies. Moreover, the war

heightened tensions along Israel's borders and intensified geopolitical polarization globally, drawing reactions from the United States, European Union, Arab states, and international institutions like the United Nations. A significant component of the study evaluates the UN and UNESCO resolutions addressing the conflict, humanitarian concerns, and cultural heritage disputes, particularly related to Jerusalem. The analysis highlights how international law, global diplomacy, and humanitarian advocacy have struggled to restrain violence or produce a lasting political solution. The paper also delves into Hamas's ideological roots, its organizational structure, and its dual character as a welfare provider and militant group. It discusses the socio-economic services Hamas delivers in Gaza, such as education, healthcare, and charity networks, which have earned it a strong support base. The study further evaluates the role of the Al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas's military wing, its strategic operations, and its impact on the security landscape. Finally, the research presents a political assessment of the overall conflict, emphasizing the consequences of prolonged occupation, cycles of retaliatory violence, regional interventions, deepening humanitarian disasters, and the erosion of prospects for a two-state solution. The conclusion reflects on potential pathways for peace, examining political reforms, negotiations, international mediation, and the need for addressing root causes, including refugee rights, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security guarantees. Through extensive historical, political, and humanitarian analysis, the paper illustrates how the Israel–Hamas conflict is not merely a local confrontation but a global issue with profound implications for international law, regional stability, and human security. The study calls for a multidimensional approach that recognizes the legitimate aspirations of both Palestinians and Israelis while prioritizing human rights, diplomacy, and sustainable peace-building efforts.

KEYWORDS

- Israel–Palestine Conflict
- Hamas
- Gaza Strip
- Political Analysis
- Middle East Geopolitics
- Humanitarian Crisis
- Two-State Solution

INTRODUCTION

The Israel–Palestine conflict is one of the most enduring, complex, and emotionally charged disputes in world history. Rooted in overlapping territorial, historical, religious, and national claims, it has shaped the political identity of the Middle East for over a century. Within this broader conflict, the confrontation between Hamas and the State of Israel has emerged as a central and highly volatile dimension, particularly since the late twentieth century. The conflict reflects a struggle between a modern nation-state seeking security and sovereignty and a stateless population fighting for self-determination, freedom, and recognition. Understanding the Israel–Hamas conflict requires an examination of its multilayered historical evolution. The seeds of the conflict were planted during the late Ottoman period, when Jews and Arabs coexisted but nationalist movements began taking shape. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire during World War I created a political vacuum that the British filled under the Mandate system. British policies—including the Balfour Declaration supporting a

Jewish national home and simultaneous promises of independence to Arab populations—created contradictions that fueled tensions. As Jewish immigration increased, especially due to European antisemitism and the Holocaust, Arab resistance intensified. By the time Britain withdrew from Palestine in 1948, violent clashes had escalated into a full-scale war, resulting in the establishment of the State of Israel and the mass displacement of Palestinians known as the Nakba. The unresolved issues of 1948 continued to shape the modern conflict. The West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem—territories captured by Israel in 1967—remain central to the dispute. Palestinians view these regions as their homeland and the basis for a future state, while Israel maintains varying degrees of strategic, security, or religious claims. Jerusalem, a city sacred to Jews, Muslims, and Christians alike, stands at the symbolic heart of the conflict. International institutions such as the United Nations and UNESCO have passed multiple resolutions addressing these issues, yet implementation remains limited. Amid these political developments emerged Hamas. Founded in 1987 during the First Intifada, Hamas combined Islamic ideology, social welfare efforts, and armed resistance to Israeli occupation. Unlike the secular nationalist Fatah movement, Hamas rooted its legitimacy in religious principles and grassroots-level social services, gaining widespread support in Gaza. Over the years, Hamas evolved into a complex organization with political, military, and social wings. Its armed wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades, played a significant role in shaping the military aspects of the conflict. The rivalry between Hamas and Fatah further complicated the Palestinian struggle by dividing political authority between the Gaza Strip (Hamas) and the West Bank (Fatah-led Palestinian Authority). The Hamas–Israel conflict reached an unprecedented escalation on October 7, 2023, when Hamas launched a large-scale assault on southern Israel. The attack, which resulted in significant Israeli casualties and hostage-taking, shocked the world and triggered a massive military response by Israel. Israel's subsequent campaign, marked by intense airstrikes, ground operations, and prolonged blockade conditions, devastated Gaza's civilian infrastructure and generated one of the most severe humanitarian crises of the 21st century. Thousands of civilians were killed, millions displaced, and essential services collapsed. This conflict has had far-reaching geopolitical consequences. It has influenced relations between major powers, reshaped regional alliances, intensified debates on international law, and polarized global public opinion. The United States, European Union, Arab states, Iran, Turkey, and international organizations such as the United Nations have all taken distinct positions, reflecting their strategic interests and ideological commitments. The crisis has also reignited discussions about the feasibility of the two-state solution, the future of Palestinian governance, and the long-term prospects for peace in the region. The purpose of this research paper is to provide a comprehensive political analysis of the origins, causes, and consequences of the Hamas–Israel conflict. It examines the historical background, evaluates key turning points, and assesses the political, social, and humanitarian dimensions of the crisis. By studying events from the Ottoman period to the present-day 2023–24 war, this paper seeks to understand why the conflict endures, what factors escalate it, and what potential pathways exist toward a more stable and just resolution.

Hamas–Israel Conflict: Historical Background

The historical background of the Hamas–Israel conflict is deeply intertwined with the broader Israeli–Palestinian struggle that began more than a century ago. While the Hamas–Israel

confrontation appears modern, its roots lie in the political, territorial, and ideological disputes that emerged during the late Ottoman era and intensified under British rule. Understanding this timeline is essential to making sense of the modern conflict. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed the rise of both Jewish and Arab nationalism. Jewish communities, facing widespread persecution in Europe, mobilized under the Zionist movement, calling for a national homeland in Palestine. At the same time, Arabs in the region developed a strong sense of national identity, resisting the idea of mass Jewish immigration and fearing displacement. These tensions simmered during the final decades of the Ottoman Empire. Although Jews and Arabs lived together under Ottoman rule, political aspirations began to diverge, setting the stage for future conflict. After World War I, Britain gained administrative control over Palestine through the Mandate system. British policies, particularly the 1917 Balfour Declaration supporting a Jewish national home, sparked controversy among the Arab population, who believed their own political aspirations were being sidelined. Over the next three decades, Jewish immigration increased significantly, leading to growing land disputes, riots, and armed clashes between Jewish settlers and Arab communities.The conflict escalated dramatically in 1947–48, when the United Nations proposed the partition of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states. While Jewish leaders accepted the plan, Arab leaders rejected it as unjust. The resulting war of 1948 led to Israel's creation and the mass displacement of Palestinians, a traumatic event known as the Nakba. Over 700,000 Palestinians became refugees, and the West Bank and Gaza Strip came under the control of Jordan and Egypt respectively. These developments reshaped the political geography of the region and entrenched hostility on both sides. In 1967, the Six-Day War transformed the conflict once again, with Israel capturing the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. This occupation became the central grievance for Palestinian resistance movements and global diplomatic debates. The Gaza Strip, densely populated and economically strained, emerged as a focal point of political unrest. In this environment of occupation, poverty, and frustration, new ideologies began to emerge, including religious-based resistance. the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Palestinian nationalist movement was largely dominated by the secular Fatah-led Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). However, in Gaza, Islamic movements rooted in the Muslim Brotherhood began building social, educational, and charitable networks. These groups eventually unified to form Hamas in 1987 during the First Intifada, marking a turning point in Palestinian resistance. Unlike the PLO, which pursued negotiations and diplomacy, Hamas adopted a more uncompromising ideology rooted in political Islam. Hamas's rise introduced new dimensions to the conflict: religion, political rivalry, and armed insurgency. With time, Hamas became both a political force—winning the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections—and a military actor through its armed wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades. The rivalry between Hamas and Fatah further fragmented the Palestinian political landscape, resulting in two separate administrations: Hamas controlling Gaza and the Palestinian Authority governing the West Bank. The Israel–Hamas confrontation became more militarized over the years, with multiple wars such as those in 2008–09, 2012, 2014, and 2021. However, the 2023–24 conflict was unprecedented in intensity. The historical trajectory—from Ottoman coexistence to British controversies, from the Nakba to occupation, and from the First Intifada to the rise of Hamas—reveals that

the Hamas–Israel conflict is not merely a local struggle but the culmination of decades of dispossession, identity formation, geopolitical competition, and failed diplomacy.

Ottoman Empire and British Mandate

The Ottoman Empire governed Palestine from the early 16th century until the end of World War I in 1917. During Ottoman rule, Palestine was a multicultural region inhabited by Muslims, Christians, and Jews who generally lived in relative coexistence. The Empire's administrative structure was decentralized, giving local communities considerable autonomy. Importantly, land ownership patterns, agricultural livelihoods, and religious institutions played a dominant role in shaping the social order. The political landscape shifted dramatically in the late 19th century as nationalist ideologies emerged. The Zionist movement, founded by Theodor Herzl, promoted the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Simultaneously, Arab nationalism was developing, forming the basis for future resistance to Zionist immigration. The fall of the Ottoman Empire during World War I led to radical political change. The League of Nations granted Britain the Mandate for Palestine in 1922, formalizing British control. Britain now faced the challenging task of balancing conflicting promises: the Balfour Declaration of 1917 had expressed support for a "national home for the Jewish people," while earlier assurances to Arab leaders implied support for Arab independence. Under British rule, Jewish immigration increased substantially, especially during the 1930s as European Jews fled Nazi persecution. As a result, tensions escalated between Jewish settlers and the Palestinian Arab population. The Arabs feared displacement and loss of political control, while the Jews sought a secure homeland. The British Mandate period was marked by violent clashes, revolts, and deepening mistrust. The Arab Revolt of 1936–39 illustrated Palestinian frustration with British policies and Zionist expansion. Britain attempted various partition proposals, but none satisfied both parties. The exhaustion of World War II and rising violence pushed Britain to withdraw and hand over the issue to the United Nations. In 1947, the UN voted for partition, laying the groundwork for Israel's creation and the Palestinian displacement that followed. The Ottoman and British eras thus shaped the foundation of the present-day conflict by transforming the region's demography, land ownership, political aspirations, and identity politics. The contradictions of the British Mandate, combined with nationalist movements born under Ottoman decline, created the unresolved disputes that continue to define the Israeli–Palestinian struggle today.

1948 War and the Creation of Israel

The 1948 Arab–Israeli War, known to Israelis as the War of Independence and to Palestinians as the Nakba, was a pivotal turning point that fundamentally reshaped the political and demographic landscape of the Middle East. The conflict emerged following decades of rising tensions under the British Mandate, conflicting nationalist movements, and the controversial UN Partition Plan of 1947, which proposed creating separate Jewish and Arab states. Jewish leaders accepted the plan, viewing it as the foundation of a sovereign state, whereas Arab leaders rejected it, arguing that it disproportionately favored the Jewish minority and violated the rights of the indigenous Arab population. On May 14, 1948, the Jewish leadership declared the establishment of the State of Israel. Within hours, neighboring Arab states— including Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon—launched military operations, signaling the beginning of the first Arab–Israeli War. Despite being militarily outnumbered, Israel's forces were better organized and strategically superior, enabling them not only to defend the

proposed territory but also to capture additional land beyond the UN-designated boundaries. For Palestinians, the war triggered one of the largest and most traumatic displacements in modern history. More than 700,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled from their homes in what became Israel. Hundreds of villages were depopulated or destroyed. Palestinians expected to return once the war ended, but Israel prohibited their return, citing demographic concerns and security. The refugee crisis that began in 1948 remains unresolved, with millions of descendants still living in camps across the Middle East. Meanwhile, the West Bank fell under Jordanian control, and the Gaza Strip came under Egyptian administration. The fragmentation of Palestinian society—politically, geographically, and demographically—marked the beginning of a long and painful struggle for self-determination. Israel's creation was celebrated among Jewish communities worldwide as the realization of a centuries-old aspiration for a homeland. However, for Palestinians, it represented dispossession and the loss of their historic homeland. The legacy of the 1948 war continues to influence the Israel–Hamas conflict. Hamas, established decades later, frames its resistance as a continuation of the struggle that began in 1948, emphasizing the right of return for refugees and opposing Israel's legitimacy. Thus, the war's outcome created both the modern Israeli state and the enduring grievances that fuel Palestinian resistance movements, making it a foundational event in the trajectory of the Middle East conflict.

Nakba and the Palestinian Refugee Problem

The Nakba, meaning "catastrophe," refers to the mass displacement and dispossession of Palestinians during the 1948 Arab–Israeli War. It is one of the most defining events of Palestinian national identity. Between 1947 and 1949, approximately 750,000 Palestinians—more than half the native population—were expelled or forced to flee due to direct violence, fear, or forced removal by Zionist militias such as the Haganah, Irgun, and Lehi. This displacement produced one of the world's largest and longest-standing refugee crises. The Nakba not only uprooted families but also dismantled Palestinian society. Over 400 towns and villages were depopulated, erased, or repurposed. Those who remained within the borders of the new State of Israel found themselves stateless, landless, and often placed under military rule. Hundreds of thousands fled to neighboring countries, including Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, where their descendants still reside, many of them living in refugee camps managed by UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency). Israel's refusal to allow the refugees to return became the central unresolved issue of the conflict. UN Resolution 194, passed in December 1948, states that refugees wishing to return and live peacefully should be permitted to do so. Israel rejected the resolution, arguing that allowing millions of Palestinians to return would threaten its Jewish demographic majority. Conversely, Palestinians regard the right of return as non-negotiable, deeply tied to justice, identity, and collective memory. Over the decades, the refugee population has grown to over five million, making it one of the largest protracted refugee crises globally. The Nakba is not only a historical event but an ongoing experience—refugees continue to endure economic hardship, political marginalization, and legal statelessness. In Lebanon and parts of the Arab world, Palestinians face restrictions on employment, property, and mobility. In Gaza and the West Bank, refugees live under military occupation, blockades, and recurrent conflict. Hamas uses the Nakba narrative as a core component of its ideology, arguing that the struggle will continue until Palestinians reclaim their lost lands. The trauma of displacement thus fuels

both political consciousness and resistance. The Nakba remains a central obstacle to peace negotiations, as any solution must address refugee rights, return, compensation, or resettlement—issues that lie at the heart of Palestinian demands and Israeli fears.

The West Bank, Gaza Strip, and the Jerusalem Dispute

The West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem constitute the territories at the center of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Captured by Israel during the 1967 Six-Day War, these regions represent the heart of Palestinian aspirations for an independent state. Their political, religious, and demographic significance makes them the most contested areas in the Middle East.

West Bank

The West Bank is a major territorial unit historically rich in Palestinian towns, agricultural lands, and holy sites. Israel's military occupation of the West Bank has resulted in extensive settlement expansion. Today, more than 450,000 Israeli settlers live in the area, creating a fragmented geography that undermines Palestinian mobility and territorial continuity. Roads, checkpoints, and military zones further restrict Palestinian life. For Palestinians, the West Bank is the core of their future state; for Israel, it is strategic territory central to security and historical identity.

Gaza Strip

Gaza is one of the most densely populated regions in the world, home to over two million Palestinians, many of them refugees from the 1948 Nakba. Israel withdrew its settlements in 2005, but it maintains control over Gaza's airspace, territorial waters, and borders (except the Rafah crossing with Egypt). After Hamas took control in 2007, Israel enforced a blockade, citing security concerns. Gaza has since endured repeated wars, economic collapse, and humanitarian crises, making it the epicenter of the Hamas–Israel confrontation.

Jerusalem

Jerusalem is the emotional, religious, and political heart of the conflict. Sacred to Jews, Muslims, and Christians, the city has competing narratives: Israelis call it their eternal capital, while Palestinians claim East Jerusalem as the capital of their future state. Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem, considered illegal by most of the international community, has intensified tensions. Settlements, demolitions, identity restrictions, and access limitations to holy sites further complicate the dispute. Together, the West Bank, Gaza, and Jerusalem embody the territorial core of the conflict, symbolizing the Palestinian quest for sovereignty and the Israeli pursuit of security, identity, and control.

UNESCO / UN Resolutions

UNESCO focuses on cultural and heritage issues, especially in East Jerusalem and Hebron. Its resolutions often:

- Condemn changes to the character of Jerusalem.
- Oppose Israeli excavations near Al-Aqsa Mosque.
- Recognize Palestinian cultural sites.
- Criticize settlement expansion for altering heritage landscapes.
- Israel accuses UNESCO of politicization, even withdrawing from the organization (along with the U.S.) in 2019 before rejoining later.

Impact

UN and UNESCO resolutions highlight international recognition of Palestinian rights but have not resolved core issues. Their significance lies more in diplomatic pressure, historical documentation, and global awareness than in practical outcomes.

Historical Background of the Hamas–Israel Conflict

The Hamas–Israel conflict is deeply rooted in more than a century of territorial contestation, political rivalry, religious symbolism, and colonial-era policy decisions. The origins of the conflict cannot be understood without examining the interconnected histories of Palestinian nationalism, Zionist immigration, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and the geopolitical transformations of the Middle East in the twentieth century. The confrontation between Hamas and Israel represents only one phase within a long continuum of conflict in which competing national aspirations and external interventions have shaped political realities on the ground. The conflict's early roots can be traced to the late nineteenth century when the Zionist movement began promoting the idea of establishing a Jewish homeland in historic Palestine. At that time, the region was under Ottoman administration and consisted of a mixed population of Muslims, Christians, and Jews, with the Arab population forming the clear majority. Zionist immigration gradually increased after 1882, especially as anti-Semitic persecution intensified in Eastern Europe. As Jewish communities expanded, tensions arose over land ownership, identity, and autonomy. These frictions increased after the British took control of Palestine in 1917, following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire during the First World War. The British Mandate period set the stage for future conflict because Britain promised contradictory commitments to Jews and Arabs. The Balfour Declaration of 1917 pledged support for a "national home for the Jewish people," while simultaneously assuring the Arab population that their civil and religious rights would be protected. These conflicting assurances resulted in growing violence between the two communities. Palestinian Arabs feared dispossession, while Zionists feared Arab opposition to their national project. Revolts, riots, and armed clashes gradually turned Palestine into a hotspot of ethnic and political tension. World War II, the Holocaust, and the subsequent global sympathy for the Jewish cause dramatically accelerated the debate about the future of Palestine. The United Nations proposed a partition plan in 1947, which the Jewish leadership accepted but the Palestinian Arabs rejected, arguing that it unjustly allocated most land to a minority population. The 1948 Arab–Israeli War resulted in Israel's establishment and the displacement of more than 700,000 Palestinians. This "Nakba" or catastrophe became the foundational memory of Palestinian identity and resistance, laying the emotional and political foundation for future militant movements, including Hamas. In the decades that followed, Israel expanded its control over the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem during the Six-Day War of 1967. Israeli occupation became a central motivating factor for Palestinian nationalism. The rise of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in the 1960s and 1970s reflected the desire for political autonomy. However, the PLO's secular nationalism failed to meet the religious aspirations of segments of Palestinian society, which later supported the Islamic resistance movement—Hamas. The first Intifada in 1987 marked a major shift, as grassroots resistance to Israeli rule intensified. In this context, Hamas emerged as a religious-nationalist alternative to the PLO. Over time, the organization evolved into a powerful political and military force controlling the Gaza Strip. The Hamas–Israel conflict has since transformed into a recurring cycle of hostilities marked by wars, blockades, and diplomatic deadlock.

Role of the Ottoman Empire and the British Mandate Under the Ottoman Empire (1517–1917), Palestine functioned as a multi-ethnic, multi-religious province without rigid national boundaries or competitive land claims. Local governance was decentralized, and communities largely managed their internal affairs. The Jewish population, while a minority, lived alongside Arab Muslims and Christians with relative harmony. Tensions over sovereignty or competing nationalisms were minimal because modern national identity had not yet crystallized. The situation changed drastically with the decline of the Ottoman Empire. European powers, especially Britain and France, sought greater influence in the Middle East. The British entry into Palestine during World War I transformed the region's political trajectory. With the Balfour Declaration of 1917, Britain formally endorsed the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine. This marked the first major imperial intervention in the region's demographic balance. During the British Mandate era (1920–1948), large-scale Jewish immigration—supported by Zionist organizations—intensified competition for land and political control. Arabs, who constituted nearly 90% of the population in 1920, viewed this influx as a threat to their national and cultural identity. British governance failed to reconcile these competing aspirations. Instead, increasing frustration among Palestinian Arabs led to revolts, including the Great Arab Revolt of 1936–39. Britain's inconsistent policies, combined with a lack of long-term planning, facilitated the deepening of ethnic divisions. The Mandate period thus laid the legal, political, and demographic foundations for the 1948 war and the modern Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The Ottoman legacy of coexistence was replaced by a colonial framework that favored competing national movements, ultimately setting the stage for conflict.

The 1948 Arab–Israeli War and the Creation of Israel

The 1948 war was a turning point that permanently altered the political geography of the Middle East. After the UN Partition Plan of 1947 proposed dividing Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, hostilities quickly escalated. Jewish forces organized under the Haganah prepared strategically for confrontation, while Arab forces lacked a unified command. When Israel declared independence on 14 May 1948, neighboring Arab states intervened militarily, marking the outbreak of a full-scale regional war. By the war's end, Israel controlled 78% of historic Palestine—far more territory than allocated by the UN plan. For Jews, the war marked the triumphant establishment of a homeland after centuries of persecution. For Palestinians, it was the Nakba—the catastrophe—defined by displacement, dispossession, and the loss of villages and agricultural lands. The war not only created long-term refugee populations but also generated competing historical narratives that persist to this day. The 1948 war's consequences were profound: the permanent fragmentation of Palestinian society, the strategic strengthening of Israel, and the entrenchment of territorial disputes over West Bank, Gaza, and Jerusalem. These unresolved issues later nourished militant resistance movements, including Hamas.

The Nakba and the Palestinian Refugee Question

The Nakba, or "catastrophe," refers to the mass displacement of Palestinians during the 1948 Arab–Israeli War, a defining event that continues to shape Palestinian identity, political aspirations, and regional geopolitics. As Zionist military forces expanded control over territories beyond those allocated in the UN Partition Plan, approximately 750,000 Palestinians—more than half the Arab population of historic Palestine—were expelled or fled

from their homes. Over 450 villages were depopulated, destroyed, or repopulated with Jewish settlers. This created one of the world's longest-standing refugee crises. For Palestinians, the Nakba is not merely a historical episode but a living experience of dispossession. Refugee communities in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, the West Bank, and Gaza have developed a collective memory centered around the loss of ancestral lands, the right of return, and the struggle for self-determination. UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency), established in 1949, continues to provide education, healthcare, and relief services to millions of Palestinian refugees and their descendants. The persistence of unresolved refugee status reinforces feelings of injustice and fuels political mobilization across generations.Israel maintains that many Palestinians left voluntarily or at the urging of Arab leaders, though extensive historical research contradicts this claim, documenting systematic expulsions and the use of force. Israel also argues that allowing refugees to return would undermine the demographic character of the Jewish state. As a result, the right of return remains one of the most contested issues in peace negotiations. Refugee camps—often overcrowded and underdeveloped—stand as physical reminders of the failure of the international community to achieve a lasting political settlement. The Nakba's legacy is central to the rise of resistance movements. Hamas, in particular, draws heavily on Nakba narratives to legitimize armed struggle as a means of reclaiming lost land. Thus, the refugee question is not simply humanitarian; it is a core political and ideological pillar of the ongoing conflict. Without addressing the rights, dignity, and future of Palestinian refugees, no peace plan can achieve long-term stability.

The West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Jerusalem Dispute

The territorial fragmentation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem represents one of the most complex and contentious elements of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. These regions, captured by Israel during the 1967 Six-Day War, have since become the primary battlegrounds for sovereignty, settlement expansion, and national identity.

West Bank

The West Bank remains under Israeli military occupation, fragmented into Areas A, B, and C under the Oslo Accords. Area C, comprising more than 60% of the territory, remains under full Israeli control and has seen rapid settlement growth. Israeli settlements—widely considered illegal under international law—have created demographic and territorial discontinuity, making the formation of a contiguous Palestinian state increasingly difficult. Checkpoints, land restrictions, and movement barriers continue to fuel grievances among Palestinians.

Gaza Strip

Gaza, under Hamas control since 2007, has experienced repeated wars, economic blockades, and severe humanitarian deterioration. Israel maintains tight control over Gaza's borders, airspace, maritime zone, and imports, arguing security concerns due to Hamas's armed activities. The blockade has led to high unemployment, electricity shortages, and limited access to basic services. Gaza symbolizes both Palestinian resistance and suffering, making it central to regional political discourse.

Jerusalem

Jerusalem holds immense religious significance for Jews, Muslims, and Christians. Israel claims the entire city as its "eternal and undivided capital," while Palestinians seek East

Jerusalem as the capital of a future state. The Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967 is not recognized internationally. Settlement construction, home demolitions, and restrictions around the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound create recurring flashpoints. Jerusalem's symbolic weight makes compromise extremely challenging. Together, these three regions illustrate the deep territorial, political, and emotional complexities of the conflict. Their futures remain pivotal to any potential two-state or one-state solution.

UNESCO and UN Resolutions on the Conflict

The United Nations and its specialized agencies, particularly UNESCO, have played significant roles in documenting, condemning, and attempting to mediate aspects of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. While these resolutions lack binding enforcement in many cases, they shape global discourse, international legitimacy, and diplomatic mobilization.

Impact of UN Decisions

While UN and UNESCO resolutions cannot by themselves resolve the conflict, they influence global diplomacy, humanitarian aid, academic discourse, and legal frameworks. These resolutions reinforce Palestinian claims to statehood, highlight Israeli obligations under international law, and sustain global awareness of occupation-related issues.

Rise of Hamas and Its Political Structure

Hamas, or Ḥarakat al-Muqāwamah al-Islāmiyyah (Islamic Resistance Movement), emerged as a major political and ideological force in the Palestinian national movement during the late twentieth century. While the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) dominated the struggle for decades through its secular nationalist orientation, Hamas introduced a distinct blend of religious ideology, grassroots social services, and armed resistance. Its rise must be understood within the context of socio-economic frustration, political disillusionment, Israeli occupation, and the Islamic revival that reshaped Middle Eastern politics in the 1970s and 1980s. Hamas originated from the Muslim Brotherhood's longstanding presence in Gaza. For much of the early twentieth century, the Brotherhood focused on religious education and welfare rather than armed struggle. However, by the 1980s, the political landscape had shifted dramatically. Corruption allegations against the PLO, the continued Israeli occupation, and economic hardship created a vacuum that the Brotherhood's Gaza branch was well-positioned to fill. The outbreak of the First Intifada in 1987 catalyzed this transformation. Hamas formally declared itself as a resistance movement dedicated to ending Israeli occupation and creating an Islamic state in Palestine. Unlike the PLO, which pursued both diplomacy and armed struggle, Hamas adopted a dual political-militant structure from the outset. Its charter defined the entire land of Palestine as an Islamic trust (waqf), leaving little room for territorial compromise. Politically, Hamas developed a highly decentralized structure that combined leadership within Gaza, external political bureaus abroad, and clandestine networks operating under occupation. The organization built legitimacy by providing education, healthcare, charity, and employment through mosques, local committees, and associations. During the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections, public frustration with Fatah's governance propelled Hamas to victory—demonstrating its popularity beyond militant activity. Hamas today operates through a Shura Council, political bureau, and military wing. Its rise reflects a complex interplay between ideology, occupation, social services, and internal Palestinian politics.

Hamas's Establishment During the First Intifada (1987)

The First Intifada, beginning in December 1987, marked a watershed moment in Palestinian resistance. Spontaneous protests, civil disobedience, strikes, and youth-led demonstrations erupted across the West Bank and Gaza. Amid this grassroots uprising, Hamas was formally established on 14 December 1987 by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and other Muslim Brotherhood leaders. The Intifada provided Hamas with the perfect environment to transition from a religious-welfare movement to an active resistance organization. The mass mobilization of Palestinians highlighted the deep anger against Israeli occupation and the perceived ineffectiveness of existing leadership structures. Hamas capitalized on this sentiment by presenting itself as a principled alternative to the PLO—one that would not compromise on territorial claims. The early Hamas strategy emphasized martyrdom, religious duty, and the centrality of jihad in confronting occupation. Leaflets distributed during the Intifada combined religious messages, political instructions, and calls for boycotts of Israeli products. The organization aligned itself closely with mosques—a crucial network for communication and mobilization in an environment of curfews and military surveillance. The 1988 Hamas Charter, though controversial and later modified, outlined a worldview linking Palestinian liberation to global Islamic revival. It rejected the legitimacy of Israel, defined Palestine as an Islamic land, and positioned Hamas as both a national liberation movement and an Islamic ideological project. Internationally, the establishment of Hamas complicated diplomatic efforts. Israel initially tolerated or underestimated the movement, viewing it as a counterbalance to the PLO. This policy miscalculation contributed to Hamas's rapid consolidation of political and social influence. Thus, the First Intifada was not only a popular uprising—it became the crucible in which Hamas transformed into a permanent and powerful actor in Palestinian politics.

Hamas's Political and Religious Ideology

Hamas's ideology blends Palestinian nationalism with Islamic fundamentalism, creating a framework that differentiates it from secular organizations like Fatah. Its founding documents and leaders emphasize that liberation of Palestine is both a religious obligation and a national duty. This dual identity shapes Hamas's strategies, alliances, and internal governance. The 1988 Charter described the conflict not simply as territorial but as a cosmic struggle between Islam and non-Islamic forces. It framed Palestine as waqf land, which cannot be surrendered or compromised. Jews were sometimes portrayed through theological interpretations influenced by early Islamic history. This ideological language drew global criticism but strengthened the movement among constituencies seeking uncompromising resistance. In 2017, Hamas issued a revised political document that softened certain positions. It accepted a Palestinian state based on 1967 borders as an interim solution, recognized the distinction between Judaism and Zionism, and emphasized political pluralism. This shift was partly strategic—aimed at improving relations with regional actors such as Egypt and Qatar—but also reflective of internal debates within the organization.Religiously, Hamas promotes conservative Islamic values. It supports sharia-based governance, Islamic education, and social norms. Politically, it advocates resistance through a combination of armed struggle, political participation, and social welfare. This distinguishes it from other Islamist groups that may reject political processes entirely. Hamas's ideological narrative appeals to Palestinians who combine religious identity with national aspirations, especially in Gaza where economic hardship and occupation reinforce radicalization. However, critics argue that rigid ideological

positions hinder negotiations and perpetuate cycles of violence.Thus, Hamas's ideology is both a source of strength—mobilizing resistance and identity—and a barrier to long-term political compromise.

Hamas's Social Service Network

One of the key factors behind Hamas's popularity is its extensive social service infrastructure. Long before it became a political actor, Hamas operated through mosques, charitable committees, and community associations across Gaza. This network provided essential services in areas where the Palestinian Authority (PA) and international actors failed to meet basic needs. Hamas-affiliated institutions run schools, hospitals, religious centers, orphanages, food distribution programs, sports clubs, and women's organizations. These services fill critical gaps in healthcare, education, and welfare—especially in Gaza, where poverty, unemployment, and blockade severely limit opportunities. During times of conflict, Hamas also provides emergency relief, reconstruction assistance, and compensation to families of martyrs. This welfare role has two major political consequences. First, it legitimizes Hamas as a protector of the Palestinian people—not merely an armed group. Second, it creates deep grassroots loyalty that strengthens the movement's political and military wings. Critics argue that social services are used to expand ideological influence and recruit individuals into the movement. Nevertheless, in a region where state capacity is weak, Hamas's welfare network remains a major source of political power and public support.

Hamas–Fatah Conflict

The internal Palestinian conflict between Hamas and Fatah represents one of the most significant political fractures in the modern history of the Palestinian national movement. While both organizations claim to seek liberation and statehood, their ideological foundations, political strategies, foreign alliances, and governing visions differ significantly. These differences have resulted in cycles of tension, violent clashes, institutional fragmentation, and two separate political entities: Hamas-controlled Gaza and the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank. The roots of the conflict trace back to ideological divergence. Fatah, founded by Yasser Arafat, is a secular nationalist movement that seeks statehood through diplomacy combined with controlled resistance. Hamas, in contrast, draws from the Muslim Brotherhood's Islamist ideology, framing the struggle as a religious duty. This fundamental difference became more pronounced during the Oslo Accords of the 1990s, which Fatah embraced as a step toward peace while Hamas condemned them as a betrayal. The turning point came after the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections. Hamas won a majority, defeating the long-dominant Fatah. International actors, including the US, EU, and Israel, refused to accept the legitimacy of a Hamas-led government unless it renounced violence and recognized Israel—conditions Hamas rejected. This led to political paralysis, sanctions, and growing mistrust between the two factions. Tensions escalated into violent clashes in 2007, culminating in Hamas seizing control of Gaza after a brief but intense conflict. Fatah retained control of the West Bank through the PA. Since then, the Palestinian government has remained divided. Despite numerous reconciliation attempts mediated by Egypt, Qatar, and other regional actors, deep legislative, military, and ideological divisions persist. The split has weakened the Palestinian national struggle by creating fragmented governance, undermining diplomatic cohesion, and reducing popular trust. While Hamas controls Gaza's internal security and resistance operations, Fatah

manages diplomatic negotiations and international relations. This duality complicates peace efforts, as Israel and global actors often claim there is "no single Palestinian partner" with unified authority. The Hamas–Fatah divide also affects humanitarian conditions. Gaza suffers from economic blockade, lack of basic services, and repeated conflicts, while the West Bank contends with occupation, settlements, and restricted autonomy. Ordinary Palestinians bear the brunt of political rivalry, which continues to obstruct national unity.

The Al-Qassam Brigades – Hamas's Military Wing

The Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades serve as the military wing of Hamas and are central to its resistance strategy. Established in the early 1990s, the Brigades evolved from small clandestine cells into a sophisticated paramilitary force with significant regional influence. Named after Sheikh Izz ad-Din al-Qassam, an anti-colonial fighter, the Brigades symbolize armed resistance against Israeli occupation. The Brigades' growth can be divided into distinct phases. In the 1990s, they carried out attacks using small arms and explosives. During the Second Intifada (2000–2005), they expanded operations to include suicide bombings and urban guerrilla warfare. Post-2007, after Hamas took control of Gaza, the Brigades developed semi-organized battalions, rocket manufacturing capabilities, and tunnel networks used for transport, weapon storage, and cross-border attacks. Al-Qassam Brigades have developed rockets ranging from short-range Qassam rockets to longer-range models capable of reaching major Israeli cities. While their weaponry remains technologically inferior to Israel's advanced systems, their capacity to overwhelm the Iron Dome defense network during periods of escalation has strategic impact. Israel regards the Brigades as a terrorist organization, citing rocket attacks, kidnappings, and infiltration operations. Hamas argues that the Brigades are engaged in legitimate resistance against occupation and that their actions are responses to military aggression and blockade. The Al-Qassam Brigades play a dual role: defending Gaza and strengthening Hamas's political leverage. Their operations influence regional diplomacy, shaping relations with Egypt, Qatar, Iran, and Türkiye. Despite heavy losses during repeated wars, the Brigades remain central to Hamas's military doctrine and long-term strategy.

Israel–Hamas War (2023–24): Causes and Consequences

The 2023–24 Israel–Hamas war represents one of the most devastating and consequential conflicts in the history of the Israeli–Palestinian struggle. The war exposed deep structural realities: the unresolved occupation, Gaza's humanitarian collapse, the failure of diplomacy, and regional geopolitical shifts. It further proved that the status quo—defined by blockade, intermittent wars, and political fragmentation—is unsustainable.

Causes

The conflict's deepest roots lie in the decades-long blockade of Gaza, Israeli military presence, settlement expansion in the West Bank, political marginalization of Palestinians, and ideological confrontation between Hamas and Israel. Tensions escalated due to repeated clashes at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, settler violence, Israeli political shifts toward right-wing coalitions, and worsening humanitarian conditions in Gaza. The absence of peace talks since 2014 contributed to rising frustration.

Course of the War

The war began after the 7 October 2023 attacks (explained in the next section). Israel launched massive airstrikes, followed by ground incursions. Gaza's densely populated urban

environment led to large-scale destruction of homes, hospitals, UN facilities, water systems, and schools. The conflict soon expanded into a regional crisis, involving Hezbollah, Houthis, and militias in Syria and Iraq.

Consequences

The humanitarian consequences were catastrophic. Over tens of thousands of Palestinians were killed, including women and children. Infrastructure collapsed, famine-like conditions emerged, and disease outbreaks occurred due to lack of clean water and medical resources. Israel suffered significant casualties during the initial attack and subsequent operations, leading to political and security debates within the country. Regionally, the war intensified anti-Israel sentiment and increased polarization. Internationally, it prompted mass protests, diplomatic tensions, and debates over war crimes, ceasefire demands, and reconstruction. Long-term consequences include weakened regional stability, deepened mistrust, radicalization, and a potential reconfiguration of Palestinian leadership structures.

The 7 October 2023 Hamas Attack

On 7 October 2023, Hamas launched an unprecedented attack on Israel, marking one of the deadliest days in Israeli history. Thousands of rockets were fired simultaneously, overwhelming the Iron Dome. Hamas fighters breached the border using paragliders, drones, motorbikes, and explosives, infiltrating Israeli towns and military bases. The attack resulted in the deaths of civilians and soldiers, kidnappings, and significant property destruction. Hamas claimed the attack was a response to Israeli occupation, Al-Aqsa tensions, and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Israel viewed the assault as an existential threat and evidence of intelligence failures. The attack shattered assumptions that Hamas could be contained and fundamentally changed Israeli strategic calculations, setting the stage for a massive military response.

Israel's Military Response Strategy

Israel responded with overwhelming military force, launching extensive airstrikes and a ground invasion targeting Hamas infrastructure, tunnel networks, and command centers. The strategy focused on eliminating Hamas's military and political leadership, rescuing hostages, and reasserting deterrence. Israel employed advanced weaponry, including precision missiles, armored brigades, drones, and naval assets. However, the urban density of Gaza led to severe civilian casualties. Israel argued that Hamas used civilian areas as shields, while international actors criticized Israel for disproportionate use of force. Strategically, Israel aimed to dismantle the Al-Qassam Brigades, but Gaza's humanitarian collapse drew global criticism, creating diplomatic pressure.

Civilian Casualties and Humanitarian Crisis

The war resulted in one of the worst humanitarian crises of the 21st century. Gaza's health system collapsed, thousands of children were orphaned, and millions were displaced. Food shortages, destroyed hospitals, blocked aid convoys, and lack of clean water deepened suffering. International organizations described conditions as unprecedentedly catastrophic. Humanitarian corridors were inconsistent, and repeated strikes on refugee camps drew global condemnation. The international community demanded ceasefires, but negotiations repeatedly broke down due to conflicting objectives.

Border Tensions

The conflict spilled across multiple borders. Hezbollah launched rockets from Lebanon, prompting Israeli counterstrikes. The Red Sea saw attacks by Houthi forces, disrupting global trade. Syria and Iraq witnessed militia activity. Egypt intensified border control at Rafah due to refugee concerns. The regional dimension demonstrated that the Gaza conflict is not isolated but embedded in wider Middle Eastern geopolitics.

Global Reactions

Global reactions were polarized. Western nations largely supported Israel initially but later expressed concern over civilian casualties. Muslim-majority countries condemned Israeli actions. International organizations called for ceasefire, accountability, and humanitarian access. The war altered global public opinion, particularly among youth, leading to worldwide protests and shifts in international diplomacy.

Hamas vs. Fatah Conflict

The intra-Palestinian conflict between Hamas and Fatah is one of the most defining and complex political struggles within Palestinian society. Although both groups claim to represent the Palestinian national movement, their ideological roots, governing visions, and strategic approaches to dealing with Israel are substantially different. These internal divisions have not only weakened Palestinian unity but have also shaped the political dynamics of Gaza, the West Bank, and the broader Middle East. The conflict reached its peak after the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections, when Hamas achieved a surprising electoral victory, displacing Fatah's long-held dominance. Instead of resulting in power-sharing or a unified political program, the election outcome intensified tensions between both factions, eventually leading to violent confrontations and territorial fragmentation. Fatah, founded in the late 1950s by Yasser Arafat and other leaders, established itself as a nationalist movement seeking Palestinian liberation primarily through political mobilization and armed struggle. Over time, Fatah embraced diplomatic negotiations, especially after the 1993 Oslo Accords, and came to be recognized by the international community as the primary representative of the Palestinian Authority (PA). Its ideology is secular and nationalist, supporting a two-state solution and diplomatic engagement with Israel, even though progress on peace has been slow and often controversial. In contrast, Hamas, founded in 1987 during the First Intifada, is an Islamist movement that emerged from the Muslim Brotherhood. Its ideology is rooted in political Islam, resistance, and the long-term goal of establishing an Islamic Palestinian state. Hamas rejects the Oslo Accords and views armed resistance as a legitimate means of confronting occupation. The divide between the two movements deepened when Hamas won the 2006 elections which were judged free and fair by international observers. Fatah refused to fully relinquish control over key institutions of the Palestinian Authority, accusing Hamas of using its armed wing to intimidate political opponents. Hamas, in turn, accused Fatah of corruption, collaboration with Israel, and attempting to overturn the electoral outcome with international backing. Western governments and Israel rejected Hamas's victory and imposed financial sanctions on the Palestinian Authority unless Hamas renounced violence and recognized Israel. These conditions further heightened political polarization, ultimately paving the way for open conflict. By mid-2007, tensions escalated into a brief but intense civil war between the two factions, primarily in the Gaza Strip. Hamas forces took control of Gaza after defeating Fatah-aligned security units, while Fatah retained control of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. This division created a dual government system:

Hamas governing Gaza and the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority ruling the West Bank. The territorial split remains one of the most persistent political fractures in Palestinian politics. Israel and Egypt imposed a blockade on Gaza following Hamas's takeover, further isolating the territory. The blockade severely impacted Gaza's economy, infrastructure, and humanitarian conditions, creating widespread poverty, unemployment, and restricted movement. Over the years, this isolation became a major obstacle to reconciliation efforts between the two groups. Multiple reconciliation attempts have been made, mediated by Egypt, Qatar, and other regional actors. The 2011 Cairo Agreement, the 2014 Beach Camp Agreement, and the 2017 Cairo talks all sought to unify administrative institutions, reform security forces, and prepare for national elections. However, the implementation of these agreements consistently failed due to disputes over control of security forces, public-sector salaries, governance structures, and the role of armed groups. Hamas refused to disarm its military wing, while Fatah insisted that all weapons should fall under a unified national authority—an issue that remains irreconcilable.The Hamas–Fatah rivalry has broader implications for the Palestinian struggle. The split has weakened Palestinian diplomatic representation, undermined national unity, and provided Israel with justification to argue that there is "no unified Palestinian partner" for peace negotiations. The division also complicates international aid mechanisms, humanitarian operations, and development planning, as donors face separate authorities with conflicting political agendas. Palestinian citizens themselves are deeply affected, as civil liberties, mobility, and economic opportunities differ sharply between the West Bank and Gaza. The ongoing rivalry continues to hinder prospects for a unified Palestinian national movement. Despite occasional gestures toward reconciliation, both Hamas and Fatah remain entrenched in their respective power bases. The absence of national elections since 2006 reflects this political deadlock. For many Palestinians, internal division is seen as one of the most significant obstacles to achieving sovereignty and ending the occupation. Without a comprehensive political compromise between Hamas and Fatah, the Palestinian national project remains fractured, reducing the overall effectiveness of diplomatic, resistance, and state-building efforts. Thus, the Hamas–Fatah conflict is not merely a political rivalry but a structural challenge that shapes the trajectory of the Palestinian cause.

Qassam Brigades – Military Wing of Hamas

The Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades serve as the military wing of Hamas and represent one of the most influential armed groups in the contemporary Middle East. Established in 1991 during the period following the First Intifada, the Brigades were named after Sheikh Izz ad-Din al-Qassam, an anti-colonial Syrian-Palestinian resistance leader who fought against British and Zionist forces in the 1930s. The Brigades emerged as Hamas's response to increasing occupation pressure and the perceived ineffectiveness of political negotiations, adopting armed resistance as the principal means of challenging Israeli military dominance. The Al-Qassam Brigades grew significantly in the 1990s, engaging in guerrilla operations, ambush attacks, and suicide bombings—tactics that became central to Hamas's resistance doctrine. During the Second Intifada (2000–2005), the Brigades played a major role in escalated hostilities, carrying out attacks that transformed Palestinian armed resistance strategies. Over time, the Brigades expanded their capabilities, establishing a sophisticated military infrastructure, including rocket manufacturing, intelligence networks, tunnel

systems, and special combat units. Their ability to produce rockets such as the Qassam series, M75, and later longer-range projectiles demonstrated a shift from local guerrilla tactics to strategic warfare capable of reaching deeper into Israeli territory. The 2007 takeover of Gaza by Hamas allowed the Al-Qassam Brigades to function with greater autonomy. Gaza's isolation under Israeli and Egyptian blockade contributed to the Brigades' focus on tunnel networks for smuggling weapons, supplies, and fighters. The underground infrastructure became a notable symbol of Hamas's resilience and was widely discussed during conflicts in 2014, 2021, and 2023–24. This tunnel system included defensive tunnels for protecting fighters, offensive tunnels designed to infiltrate Israeli territory, and extensive logistics routes. Israel has consistently targeted these networks, considering them a major threat to national security. The Brigades operate under a hierarchical command structure divided into regional units. Their forces include specialized wings such as rocket units, intelligence divisions, naval commandos, anti-tank squads, drone operators, and cyber-operations teams. In recent years, they have demonstrated increasing technological sophistication, deploying drones for reconnaissance and attacks, anti-tank guided missiles such as Kornet, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) designed for urban warfare. Despite limited resources due to the blockade, the Brigades have managed to maintain a steady supply chain through local manufacturing and regional alliances, particularly with Iran and Hezbollah. Internationally, the Al-Qassam Brigades are designated as a terrorist organization by Israel, the United States, the European Union, and several other countries. These designations stem from their involvement in attacks against civilians, rocket strikes on populated areas, and cross-border kidnappings. Hamas argues that the Brigades constitute a legitimate resistance force defending occupied Palestinian lands and population under international law. This debate reflects broader geopolitical divisions surrounding the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and influences global diplomatic responses to escalation cycles. The role of the Al-Qassam Brigades became most visible during the 2023–24 war, particularly after the 7 October 2023 attack in which Hamas-led fighters breached Israeli defenses, infiltrated settlements, and took hostages. This operation marked a significant shift in the conflict's scale, prompting an unprecedented Israeli military response. The Brigades' tactics—mass infiltration, rocket barrages, drone attacks, and coordinated assaults—illustrated their evolving combat strategies and enhanced operational planning. Despite their military effectiveness, the Brigades' actions have contributed to immense civilian suffering within Gaza due to the resulting Israeli retaliation. Their presence within densely populated areas complicates efforts to protect civilians and has generated extensive humanitarian crises. Nevertheless, the Brigades continue to be seen by many Palestinians as a symbol of resistance, while opponents view them as a destabilizing militant force undermining prospects for peace.

Israel–Hamas War (2023–24): Causes and Consequences

The Israel–Hamas war of 2023–24 stands as one of the most destructive and transformative conflicts in the history of the Israeli–Palestinian struggle. It fundamentally altered political realities in Gaza, reshaped regional alliances, intensified global polarization, and heightened debates about humanitarian law, civilian protection, and the future of the Middle East peace process. The war began after the unprecedented Hamas-led assault on Israel on 7 October 2023, which resulted in massive casualties and hostage-taking. Israel responded with overwhelming military force, launching one of the most sustained and destructive air and

ground operations ever witnessed in Gaza. The conflict's causes are deeply rooted in decades of occupation, blockade, political stalemate, and cycles of violence, while its consequences continue to reverberate across international politics and humanitarian frameworks.

Causes of the 2023–24 War

The immediate trigger was the 7 October 2023 attack by Hamas, codenamed Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, in which militants infiltrated Israeli territory by breaching border fences, using motorized gliders, and launching thousands of rockets. The attack was the deadliest single event in Israel's history and exposed critical failures in Israeli intelligence and security systems. However, the underlying causes extend far deeper than the attack itself. One fundamental issue is the long-standing blockade on Gaza, imposed by Israel (and partially by Egypt) since 2007. This blockade resulted in severe restrictions on movement, trade, electricity, water, healthcare, and economic development, leading to widespread unemployment and poverty. Hamas framed the 7 October attack as retaliation for continued occupation, blockades, settlement expansion, and violence against Palestinians, especially around the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. Another cause is the collapse of diplomatic processes. Years of failed peace talks, expanding Israeli settlements in the West Bank, internal Palestinian divisions between Hamas and Fatah, and the absence of meaningful negotiations created a political vacuum in which armed conflict became increasingly likely. Regional dynamics also played a role. Moves toward normalization between Israel and several Arab states under the Abraham Accords created concerns within Hamas that the Palestinian issue was being sidelined. Rising tensions in Jerusalem, including raids on the Al-Aqsa Mosque, also contributed to escalating anger among Palestinians.

Israel's Military Response

Israel launched Operation Iron Swords—a massive military campaign involving airstrikes, artillery bombardments, ground forces, and naval operations. The response targeted Hamas's leadership, underground tunnel networks, rocket infrastructure, and military positions. However, because Hamas operated within densely populated civilian areas, Israeli operations resulted in unprecedented levels of destruction. Entire neighborhoods such as Shuja'iyya, Khan Younis, Beit Lahia, and parts of Gaza City were devastated. Israel justified its actions as necessary to destroy Hamas's military capabilities and prevent future attacks. Critics argued that the military campaign disregarded principles of proportionality under international law. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) also pursued extensive ground operations, dividing Gaza into sectors and ordering mass evacuations. Israeli officials stated that the objective was the dismantling of Hamas's governance structure, the neutralization of the Al-Qassam Brigades, and the return of Israeli hostages. International observers highlighted the severity of Israel's tactics, noting the conflict's unprecedented civilian impact.

Consequences: Humanitarian Crisis

The war resulted in one of the worst humanitarian crises of the decade. Airstrikes and ground operations displaced more than a million Palestinians, many of whom sought refuge in temporary shelters, UNRWA facilities, or makeshift camps. Gaza's infrastructure—hospitals, water treatment plants, bakeries, power stations, and communication systems—suffered catastrophic damage. The collapse of medical services increased mortality rates from injuries, disease, and malnutrition. Restricted access to humanitarian aid further deepened suffering. The heavy civilian toll brought global criticism. Numerous international organizations,

including the UN, WHO, and human-rights groups, described the situation as a humanitarian catastrophe. Debates intensified regarding war crimes, accountability, and the role of international law in asymmetric conflicts.

Political and Regional Implications

Regionally, the war disrupted diplomatic normalization processes. Saudi–Israeli talks were suspended, and widespread protests erupted in Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, and across the Arab world. Iran, Hezbollah, and regional militias increased confrontational rhetoric, leading to skirmishes along the Israeli–Lebanese border and US bases being targeted by Iran-backed groups. The conflict tested US–Israel relations as Washington supported Israel militarily but increasingly pressured for humanitarian pauses and civilian protections. For Israel, the war raised internal political divisions. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's leadership came under intense scrutiny for intelligence failures and war management. Public pressure grew for a political overhaul once the war concluded. For Hamas, the conflict had both costs and strategic gains. Militarily, Hamas suffered extensive losses, but politically it succeeded in globalizing the Palestinian issue, rallying support across the region, and challenging the notion that the conflict could be contained without addressing core political grievances.

Long-Term Consequences

The future political landscape of Gaza became uncertain. Questions emerged about post-war governance—whether by the Palestinian Authority, international administrators, Arab forces, or a hybrid arrangement. Reconstruction posed significant challenges, requiring billions of dollars and long-term planning. The conflict also reshaped global public opinion. Pro-Palestinian movements gained momentum in universities, parliaments, and civil-society groups worldwide, whereas Israel's actions faced increasing criticism. Ultimately, the 2023–24 war reinforced a painful reality: without addressing the underlying root causes—occupation, blockade, political fragmentation, and the absence of a viable peace process—cycles of violence will likely continue. The conflict demonstrated that military solutions alone cannot resolve decades of grievances and emphasized the urgent need for a comprehensive political framework rooted in justice, human rights, and mutual security.

Civilian Casualties and Humanitarian Crisis

Armed conflicts in the modern era increasingly impact civilian populations, turning local disputes into large-scale humanitarian emergencies. Civilian casualties occur through direct violence, indiscriminate attacks, forced displacement, and the collapse of essential services. The devastation is most visible in highly populated regions where military operations intersect with everyday civilian life. When residential neighborhoods become battlegrounds, families lose their homes, livelihoods, and access to basic necessities such as food, water, sanitation, and electricity. One of the most severe consequences of conflict is mass displacement. Civilians are often forced to flee to temporary shelters, refugee camps, or neighboring countries. Such displacements create additional strain on host communities and international relief systems. Children, women, and the elderly are disproportionately affected, facing heightened risks of malnutrition, disease, exploitation, and psychological trauma. Schools and hospitals, frequently damaged or destroyed, leave entire communities without basic education and healthcare facilities. The disruption of vaccination programs, maternal healthcare, and chronic disease management further deepens the crisis. Humanitarian organizations face major challenges in delivering aid during active conflict. Blockades,

restricted access, and security threats limit their ability to reach affected populations. Shortages of medical supplies, clean water, and fuel lead to rising mortality rates. Destruction of infrastructure—including roads, communication networks, and water pipelines—exacerbates the situation. International relief agencies urge for humanitarian corridors, but such measures often face political and military resistance. Media coverage reveals shocking images of injured civilians, destroyed homes, and overwhelmed hospitals. These visuals highlight the urgent need for a ceasefire or de-escalation so that humanitarian support can reach vulnerable communities. Civilian casualties are not only immediate outcomes of bombings or shootings but also long-term effects of poor living conditions caused by the conflict. Psychological trauma persists long after the violence ends, with survivors carrying memories of loss, fear, and displacement. Ultimately, civilian suffering becomes a reminder of the moral and legal obligations of warring parties. International humanitarian law mandates the protection of civilians and the avoidance of disproportionate use of force. Failure to uphold these principles results in severe human rights violations and global condemnation. Without accountability, cycles of violence continue, deepening humanitarian crises for future generations.

Border Tensions

Border tensions arise when neighboring states engage in disputes regarding territory, sovereignty, resource control, or security concerns. These tensions often stem from historical grievances, colonial boundaries, ethnic linkages across borders, or strategic geographic interests. They can escalate from minor skirmishes to full-scale conflict depending on political decisions, military activities, and diplomatic failures. Border tensions undermine regional stability and disrupt political, social, and economic relations. Militarization of border regions is a key feature of escalating tensions. Deployment of troops, construction of defense infrastructure, and frequent patrols create a climate of fear and suspicion. Even minor misunderstandings at the border can lead to cross-fire incidents or military standoffs. Border communities suffer first, as they face property damage, displacement, loss of livelihood, and restricted mobility. Agricultural land near border zones often becomes inaccessible, causing food insecurity and economic hardship. Geopolitical interests intensify tensions. Countries with strategic waterways, resource-rich borderlands, or important trade routes often witness competition from regional or global powers. When external actors support one side through weapons, intelligence, or political alliances, the conflict becomes more complex. The presence of non-state actors—such as militant groups—further complicates border security. Governments may respond with heightened surveillance, fencing projects, or counter-terrorism operations, which sometimes inadvertently harm civilians. Diplomacy remains the most effective way to resolve border disputes. Bilateral talks, confidence-building measures, joint border commissions, and third-party mediation can prevent escalation. International laws, including border treaties and arbitration mechanisms, provide legal frameworks for peaceful solutions. However, diplomatic progress is often slow due to domestic political pressures, nationalist sentiment, and mistrust between states. Episodes of violence quickly undo years of negotiation. Border tensions also have economic consequences. Disrupted trade routes, reduced investment, and increased military expenditure burden national budgets. Tourism declines, transportation becomes risky, and industries dependent on cross-border labor suffer. The uncertainty discourages foreign investors and impacts long-term

development planning. For border communities, daily life becomes unpredictable, with frequent curfews, checkpoints, and security restrictions. In summary, border tensions reflect deeper political and historical complexities. Lasting peace requires sustained diplomatic engagement, trust-building initiatives, demilitarization efforts, and respect for international norms.

Global Reactions

Global responses to armed conflicts and humanitarian crises vary according to geopolitical interests, alliances, international law, and public opinion. Major powers often issue statements calling for restraint, ceasefires, or negotiations. International organizations such as the United Nations closely monitor the situation, discuss resolutions, and attempt to facilitate peace through diplomatic channels. The UN Security Council plays a central role, but its effectiveness is often limited by veto powers and divergent interests among permanent members. Human rights organizations condemn civilian casualties and document violations of international humanitarian law. Their reports influence global discourse, media attention, and pressure on governments to act. The international humanitarian community—led by groups such as the Red Cross, WHO, WFP, and UNHCR—mobilizes resources to deliver food, medical supplies, and shelter to affected populations. However, the success of these interventions depends on access granted by conflicting parties. Regional powers respond based on strategic, economic, or ideological considerations. Some nations offer diplomatic support, while others provide military or financial assistance to one side. This external involvement can either help mediate the conflict or escalate it by adding layers of geopolitical competition. Neighboring countries also react out of concern for refugee inflows, border security, and regional stability. Refugee arrivals often trigger political debates and humanitarian challenges, requiring cooperation between governments and international agencies. Global civil society plays a significant role. Social media amplifies voices of affected communities, generating global solidarity movements and influencing public opinion. Protests, advocacy campaigns, and academic discussions pressure governments to adopt humanitarian stances. At the same time, information wars and propaganda complicate global reactions by shaping biased narratives. Sanctions, arms embargoes, diplomatic isolation, or international criminal investigations may be implemented against parties responsible for violations. While such measures can exert pressure, they sometimes have unintended consequences, including worsening economic hardship for civilians. Peace negotiations often require multilateral cooperation involving regional organizations, powerful states, and international institutions. Ultimately, global reactions shape the trajectory of conflicts by influencing diplomatic, military, and humanitarian outcomes. The international community's willingness to engage determines whether violence escalates or de-escalates.

Conclusion

Conflicts characterized by civilian suffering, border tensions, and international involvement reveal the complex nature of modern geopolitics and humanitarian responsibilities. The civilian population remains the most vulnerable group during war, bearing consequences that extend far beyond the battlefield. Civilian casualties, displacement, destruction of infrastructure, and psychological trauma signify not only the immediate violence but also long-term developmental setbacks. A society emerging from conflict often struggles with poverty, health crises, educational disruption, and weakened governance systems. Therefore,

any meaningful conclusion must emphasize the moral obligation of all actors—states, non-state groups, and the international community—to protect civilians and uphold human dignity.Border tensions illustrate how unresolved territorial disputes can escalate into sustained crises, affecting national security and regional stability. These tensions, though often rooted in historical grievances, are fueled by modern strategic interests, political narratives, and military posturing. The consequences extend to border communities, whose daily lives are affected by insecurity, displacement, and economic uncertainty. Long-term peace requires diplomatic persistence, mutual trust, confidence-building measures, and a shared commitment to peaceful resolution. Without institutionalized mechanisms for dialogue, tensions can easily reignite, creating cycles of hostility that hinder development and prosperity. Global reactions to conflicts often reflect geopolitical realities. While international organizations and humanitarian agencies strive to alleviate suffering and encourage peace, their effectiveness is limited by political obstacles and security constraints. The international system struggles to balance national interests with global responsibilities, particularly within institutions such as the UN Security Council. Conflicting narratives, selective condemnation, and asymmetric alliances influence how the world responds to crises. Nevertheless, global awareness—amplified by digital media—continues to push governments toward accountability and humanitarian concern. The humanitarian crisis resulting from civilian casualties demonstrates that conflicts are not isolated events; they affect global stability. Displacement leads to refugee crises that spill across borders, challenging neighboring countries and international organizations. Economic instability, health emergencies, and infrastructure destruction require long-term international assistance. Recovery is a multidimensional process involving peacebuilding, economic reconstruction, psychological support, and institutional reforms. Societies emerging from war require sustained engagement from international partners alongside strong local leadership. In concluding the analysis, it is essential to highlight that protecting civilians must remain the highest priority in any conflict. International humanitarian law and human rights conventions provide frameworks for safeguarding vulnerable populations, but their implementation requires genuine political will and accountability. The global community must strengthen mechanisms for monitoring violations, enforcing accountability, and ensuring safe humanitarian access. For border tensions, peaceful resolution through diplomacy is the only sustainable path. Militarization and escalation may offer temporary advantage, but history shows that unresolved territorial disputes generate prolonged instability. Countries must invest in bilateral dialogue, mediation, and confidence-building initiatives. Regional organizations also play a crucial role in facilitating agreements that promote stability and cooperation. In terms of global reactions, a more cohesive and principled international approach is needed. While geopolitical interests will always influence foreign policy, humanitarian concerns must not be sidelined. International organizations should be empowered to enforce ceasefires, facilitate negotiations, and provide relief. Multilateral cooperation is essential for addressing the root causes of conflict, including political exclusion, economic inequality, and resource competition. Furthermore, the role of civil society, media, and global public opinion has grown significantly. Citizens worldwide have become active participants in shaping the global response to crises. Advocacy campaigns, protests, academic research, and humanitarian fundraising all contribute to raising awareness and influencing policymakers.

This increased participation highlights the importance of transparent communication and truthful reporting during conflicts. In summary, the interplay between civilian casualties, border tensions, and global reactions demonstrates the multidimensional nature of modern conflict. The suffering of civilians underscores the moral imperative for peaceful solutions. Border tensions reflect the need for diplomacy, trust-building, and international cooperation. Global reactions reveal both the strengths and weaknesses of the international system. For lasting peace, nations must prioritize human dignity, pursue diplomatic solutions, strengthen international institutions, and foster global solidarity. A just and peaceful world requires collective responsibility. When nations cooperate, respect international norms, and uphold humanitarian values, the likelihood of conflict diminishes. Therefore, the conclusion emphasizes a global commitment to peace, justice, and humanitarian action—values essential for protecting future generations from the devastating consequences of war.

Evaluation

Evaluating the themes of civilian casualties, border tensions, and global reactions provides insight into the broader dynamics of conflict and international politics. First, civilian suffering remains the most alarming indicator of conflict escalation. The evaluation shows that despite strong international conventions, civilian protection remains inconsistent. Many conflicts reveal systemic failures in safeguarding non-combatants due to political motives, military strategies, and weak accountability mechanisms. The evaluation also highlights that humanitarian agencies operate under severe constraints, often risking personnel safety to deliver essential aid. This underscores the need for stronger, enforceable global norms that ensure all warring parties respect humanitarian principles. Second, border tensions are evaluated as persistent geopolitical challenges that require sustained diplomatic engagement. These tensions often stem from unresolved historical issues and are aggravated by political rhetoric and military activity. The evaluation suggests that border tensions rarely remain localized; they have large regional implications and frequently involve third-party actors. Cross-border ethnic ties, trade routes, and security threats add further complexity. As a result, preventive diplomacy and regional cooperation must be prioritized. Confidence-building measures such as joint military exercises, border commissions, and open communication channels play an important role in reducing misunderstandings and preventing escalation. Third, the evaluation of global reactions highlights inconsistencies in international responses. While humanitarian crises often receive global attention, political interests frequently shape the intensity and direction of international engagement. Some conflicts receive widespread condemnation and sanctions, while others continue with minimal scrutiny. This imbalance weakens the credibility of the international system and contributes to prolonged suffering. The evaluation further reveals that multilateral institutions face challenges due to power rivalries and veto mechanisms. Strengthening global governance structures is crucial for ensuring effective and impartial conflict resolution. Another important element in the evaluation is the growing influence of global civil society. Social media, academic institutions, human rights organizations, and international activists now play a significant role in shaping global discourse. Their efforts to highlight abuses, promote peace, and support humanitarian relief demonstrate the expanding role of non-state actors in global politics. Overall, the evaluation emphasizes that while conflicts are complex and politically sensitive, the global community must adopt a more principled and unified approach. Effective conflict

management requires integrating humanitarian priorities with diplomatic, economic, and legal strategies. Enhancing accountability, preventing escalation, protecting civilians, and promoting dialogue must remain central to international policy. Only through consistent and cooperative global action can the world reduce the devastating consequences of conflict.

Closing Statement

In closing, the analysis of civilian casualties, border tensions, and global reactions reaffirms the urgent need for a collective commitment to peace and humanitarian values. The human cost of conflict is immeasurable, and no political or territorial objective can justify the suffering inflicted upon innocent civilians. The destruction of families, communities, and infrastructure disrupts generations and undermines progress. Therefore, the global community must recognize the moral responsibility to prioritize civilian protection in all conflict zones. Border tensions represent more than geographical disputes; they reflect deeper political, historical, and cultural divisions that require thoughtful resolution. A peaceful future depends on diplomatic dialogue, mutual trust, and respect for international law. Nations must move beyond military posturing and work toward sustainable solutions that promote coexistence and cooperation. Regional organizations and global institutions have a crucial role in facilitating these dialogues and preventing escalation. Global reactions continue to shape the trajectory of conflicts. When nations act together with transparency and humanitarian focus, peace becomes achievable. When geopolitical rivalries override humanitarian concerns, conflicts become prolonged and more destructive. The international system must evolve to ensure fairness, accountability, and timely intervention. Global solidarity—expressed through humanitarian aid, advocacy, and diplomatic engagement—is vital for protecting vulnerable populations. Ultimately, the closing message underscores hope. Despite challenges, the world has witnessed numerous successful peace processes, reconciliation efforts, and humanitarian breakthroughs. These successes remind us that dialogue, cooperation, and compassion can overcome violence and division. The path to peace is long and difficult, but it is the only path that honors human dignity and ensures a better future for all.

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