

United States Economic Interest in the Middle East and the Resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Otu Eugene Chukwu, PhD

Department of Political Science, Ebonyi State University Abakaliki
eugene.otu@ebsu.edu.ng; otuchukwueugene@gmail.com

Abstract

This study interrogates United States Economic Interest in the Middle East and the Resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. The aim of the study is to find out United States Interest in the Middle East States and its effect on the Resolution of the Israeli Palestinian Conflict. The researcher adopted intractable conflict theory for the explanation of Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The researcher adopted qualitative research methodology which involves the use of secondary data. The researcher made the following findings, that the Economic interest of United States of America in the Middle East is oil. With the relationship existing between United States and Israel especially in the area of security, they want Israel's head to remain high in the Middle East which will give them smooth ride in achieving their economic growth. The researcher recommended that United States of America should stay away from Middle East Politics if they can't play neutral role, United Nations and other relevant international organisations should help curtail the military alliance between United States of America and Israel.

Keywords: Conflict, Israel, Middle East, Palestine, United States of America Resolution, United Nations Organisation.

Introduction

According to Arthur (2005), Middle East oil has enchanted global power since 20th century; its allure has been particularly powerful for the United States. The United States romance began in earnest in 1930s when geologists working for standard oil of California discovered commercial quantities of oil in the Eastern shores of Saudi Arabia. In the years that followed, enchantment turned to obsession. Shortly after World War II, it became clear that oil was more than a merely industrial commodity. The most visible and celebrated event in the history occurred when Franklin D. Roosevelt hosted Abd al Aziz Ibn Saud, the founding Monarch of Saudi Arabia aboard the US Quincy on Egypt's Great Bitter Lake in February 1945. The meeting permanently linked Middle East oil to United States of America national security. It also helped forge one of the 20th century's most important strategic relationships in which the Saudis will supply cheap oil to global markets in exchange of American protection. A bargain was made and so too was a future tinderbox. Over the course of the 20th century preserving the security not just of Saudi Arabia but of the entire Persian Gulf region and the flow of Middle East oil were among the United States' chief political-economic concerns.

The relationship existing between United States of America and Israel has affected the resolution of Israeli-Palestinian conflict. According to Abo-Sak (2002), the majority of countries in the Middle East have been U.S. allies throughout the Cold War to the present, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, the UAE, Oman, pre-Khomeini Iran, Pakistan,

Yemen, Turkey, Morocco, Tunisia, Sudan, Somalia, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt. Not only is the US heavily dependent upon the region's oil, but it has also used the territory of these countries as strategic American bases. Most Islamic nations have shared in the US goal of opposing communism, and the 1991 Gulf War demonstrated the willingness of the Middle Eastern nations to work with the United States, proving that the U.S. can operate in the Middle East without Israeli land, equipment, or personnel. Because of the intimate relationship between United States and Israel, it will be very difficult for United States of America to withdraw their support from Israel and this is why it is difficult to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Since World War II, the US has vied to achieve two main foreign policy objectives in the Middle East: Control the region and its resources and prop-up its allies (often dictators), while maintaining a degree of "stability" so that the US is able to conduct its business unhindered. Nevertheless, Israel remained on the warpath. Wars that Israel couldn't fight on its own required American intervention on Israel's behalf, as was the case in Iraq. The outcome was disastrous for US foreign policy. Even hardened military men began noticing the destructive path their country had chosen in order to defend Israel. (Agha 2003)

The United States was the first country to recognize Israel as a state in 1948, and the first to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in 2017. Israel has long been, and remains, America's most reliable partner in the Middle East. Israel and the United States are bound closely by historic and cultural ties as well as by mutual interests. Israel's founding was preceded by more than 50 years of efforts to establish a sovereign state as a homeland for the Jewish people. The 1917 Balfour Declaration asserted the British Government's support for the creation "in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people." Following the end of World War I (1914-1918), the League of Nations entrusted Great Britain with the Mandate for Palestine. Immediately after the end of British mandate on May 14, 1948, the State of Israel was proclaimed, and the U.S. recognized Israel that same day. Arabs in the Mandatory and neighboring Arab states rejected a 1947 UN partition plan that would have divided the Mandatory into separate Jewish and Arab states, and the area has seen periods of invasions and armed conflict since 1948.

United States military alliance with Israel and the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

According to Bassam (2007), the military alliance of United States of America and Israel exposed America to the conflict between Israel and Palestine making it difficult for the conflict to be resolved. United States interest in the Middle East is very clear and has favoured Israel immensely. United States of America has military pact with Israel. The Strategic Cooperation Agreement was concluded on November 30, 1981 between the United States and Israel during the first Reagan administration and coincided with an official visit of Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. The agreement was signed by Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon and American Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and pledged specific actions from both parties to increase strategic cooperation between them. The main objective was to deter Soviet threats and 'Soviet controlled forces' in the Middle East. Israel had aimed for some time at the creation of a more formal bond which would commit the United States to a closer military cooperation. The signing marked the beginning of close security cooperation and coordination

between the American and Israeli governments. It was formally reconfirmed at the time of Reagan's second peace initiative, on April 21, 1988.

The agreement took the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and was an act of the executive branch not subject to Senate ratification. Therefore, it was not a treaty, which requires Senate ratification. Formally, it did not constitute an official alliance. Frequent references of the President and political leaders to Israel as an ally, did not carry with them the weight of a legal commitment to declare or enter a war on Israel's side in the sense envisioned by the U.S. Constitution. Politically, the strategic cooperation agreement represented a major policy shift toward Israel regarding American involvement in the Middle East. Since there was no corresponding pact signed with any Arab state, the United States could no longer claim to act as an impartial mediator or arbiter in the Arab Israeli conflicts. Military relations between Israel and the United States have been consistently close, reflecting shared security interests in the Middle East. A major purchaser and user of U.S. military equipment, Israel is also involved in the joint development of military technology and regularly engages in joint military exercises involving United States and other forces. The relationship has deepened gradually over time, though, as Alan Dowty puts it, it was "not a simple linear process of growing cooperation, but rather a series of tendentious bargaining situations with different strategic and political components in each."

U.S. President Obama's former Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates categorized the relationship between U.S. and Israel with the following: "I cannot recall a time during my public life when our two countries have had a closer defense relationship. The U.S. and Israel are cooperating closely in areas such as missile defense technology, the Joint Strike Fighter, and in training exercises such as Juniper Stallion...our bilateral relationship and this dialogue is so critical because Israel lives at the focal point of some of the biggest security challenges facing the free world: violent extremism, the proliferation of nuclear technologies, and the dilemmas posed by adversarial and failed states. And I think it important, especially at a time of such dramatic change in the region, to reaffirm once more America's unshakable commitment to Israel's security."

United States financial aid to Israel and the resolution of Israeli/Palestinian conflict

According to Abu (2008), the U.S.-Israel bilateral relationship is strong, anchored by over \$3 billion in Foreign Military Financing annually. In addition to financial support, the U.S. participates in a high level of exchanges with Israel, to include joint military exercises, military research, and weapons development. Through the Joint Counterterrorism Group and a semi-annual Strategic Dialogue, the U.S. and Israel have enhanced their cooperation in fighting terrorism. The United States is Israel's largest single trading partner. The top five U.S. exports to Israel are: diamonds, semiconductors, civilian aircraft, telecommunications equipment, and agricultural products. The top five U.S. imports from Israel are: diamonds, pharmaceutical products, semiconductors, medicinal equipment, and telecommunications equipment. U.S. direct investment in Israel is primarily in the manufacturing sector, as is Israeli investment in the United States. The United States and Israel have had a free trade agreement since 1985, serving as the foundation for expanding trade and investment between the two countries by reducing barriers and promoting regulatory transparency. To facilitate economic cooperation, the two countries convene a Joint Economic Development Group each year to discuss

economic conditions in both countries and possible economic reforms for the coming year. The U.S. and Israel also coordinate scientific and cultural exchanges through the Binational Science Foundation, the Binational Agricultural Research and Development Foundation, and the U.S.-Israeli Education Foundation. Washington has maintained its large-scale military, financial, and diplomatic support for the Israeli occupation in the face of unprecedented violations of international law and human rights standards by Israeli occupation forces.

Agha (2003) stated that the close relationship between the U.S. and Israel has been one of the most salient features in U.S. foreign policy for nearly three and a half decades. The well over \$3 billion in military and economic aid sent annually to Israel by Washington is rarely questioned in Congress, even by liberals who normally challenge U.S. aid to governments that engage in widespread violations of human rights—or by conservatives who usually oppose foreign aid in general. Virtually all Western countries share the United States' strong support for Israel's legitimate right to exist in peace and security, yet these same nations have refused to provide arms and aid while the occupation of lands seized in the 1967 war continues. None come close to offering the level of diplomatic support provided by Washington—with the United States often standing alone with Israel at the United Nations and other international forums when objections are raised over ongoing Israeli violations of international law and related concerns. Although U.S. backing of successive Israeli governments, like most foreign policy decisions, is often rationalized on moral grounds, there is little evidence that moral imperatives play more of a determining role in guiding U.S. policy in the Middle East than in any other part of the world. Most Americans do share a moral commitment to Israel's survival as a Jewish state, but this would not account for the level of financial, military, and diplomatic support provided. American aid to Israel goes well beyond protecting Israel's security needs within its internationally recognized borders. U.S. assistance includes support for policies in militarily occupied territories that often violate well-established legal and ethical standards of international behavior.

Were Israel's security interests paramount in the eyes of American policymakers, U.S. aid to Israel would have been highest in the early years of the existence of the Jewish state, when its democratic institutions were strongest and its strategic situation most vulnerable, and would have declined as its military power grew dramatically and its repression against Palestinians in the occupied territories increased. Instead, the trend has been in just the opposite direction: major U.S. military and economic aid did not begin until after the 1967 war. Indeed, 99% of U.S. military assistance to Israel since its establishment came only after Israel proved itself to be far stronger than any combination of Arab armies and after Israeli occupation forces became the rulers of a large Palestinian population.

Similarly, U.S. aid to Israel is higher now than twenty-five years ago. This was at a time when Egypt's massive and well-equipped armed forces threatened war; today, Israel has a longstanding peace treaty with Egypt and a large demilitarized and internationally monitored buffer zone keeping its army at a distance. At that time, Syria's military was expanding rapidly with advanced Soviet weaponry; today, Syria has made clear its willingness to live in peace with Israel in return for the occupied Golan Heights—and Syria's military capabilities have been declining, weakened by the collapse of its Soviet patron. Also in the mid-1970s, Jordan still claimed the West Bank and stationed large numbers of troops along its lengthy border and the demarcation line with Israel; today, Jordan has signed a peace treaty and has established fully

normalized relations. At that time, Iraq was embarking upon its vast program of militarization. Iraq's armed forces have since been devastated as a result of the Gulf War and subsequent international sanctions and monitoring. This raises serious questions as to why U.S. aid has either remained steady or actually increased each year since.

In the hypothetical event that all U.S. aid to Israel were immediately cut off, it would be many years before Israel would be under significantly greater military threat than it is today. Israel has both a major domestic arms industry and an existing military force far more capable and powerful than any conceivable combination of opposing forces. There would be no question of Israel's survival being at risk militarily in the foreseeable future. When Israel was less dominant militarily, there was no such consensus for U.S. backing of Israel. Though the recent escalation of terrorist attacks inside Israel has raised widespread concerns about the safety of the Israeli public, the vast majority of U.S. military aid has no correlation to counterterrorism efforts. In short, the growing U.S. support for the Israeli government, like U.S. support for allies elsewhere in the world, is not motivated primarily by objective security needs or a strong moral commitment to the country. Rather, as elsewhere, U.S. foreign policy is motivated primarily to advance its own perceived strategic interests (Devon 2003)

Broad view of Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Hams (2001) stated that the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is the ongoing struggle between Israelis and Palestinians that began in the mid-20th century. The origins to the conflict can be traced back to Jewish immigration, and sectarian conflict in Mandatory Palestine between Jews and Arabs. It has been referred to as the world's most intractable conflict, with the ongoing Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip reaching 51 years. Despite a long-term peace process and the general reconciliation of Israel with Egypt and Jordan, Israelis and Palestinians have failed to reach a final peace agreement. The key issues are: mutual recognition, borders, security, water rights, control of Jerusalem, Israeli settlements, Palestinian freedom of movement, and Palestinian right of return. The violence of the conflict, in a region rich in sites of historic, cultural and religious interest worldwide, has been the object of numerous international conferences dealing with historic rights, security issues and human rights, and has been a factor hampering tourism in and general access to areas that are hotly contested.

Many attempts have been made to broker a two-state solution, involving the creation of an independent Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel (after Israel's establishment in 1948). In 2007, the majority of both Israelis and Palestinians, according to a number of polls, preferred the two-state solution over any other solution as a means of resolving the conflict. Moreover, a majority of Jews see the Palestinians' demand for an independent state as just, and thinks Israel can agree to the establishment of such a state. The majority of Palestinians and Israelis in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have expressed a preference for a two-state solution. Mutual distrust and significant disagreements are deep over basic issues, as is the reciprocal scepticism about the other side's commitment to upholding obligations in an eventual agreement. Within Israeli and Palestinian society, the conflict generates a wide variety of views and opinions. This highlights the deep divisions which exist not only between Israelis and Palestinians, but also within each society. A hallmark of the conflict has been the level of violence witnessed for virtually its entire duration. Fighting has been conducted by regular

armies, paramilitary groups, terror cells, and individuals. Casualties have not been restricted to the military, with a large number of fatalities in civilian population on both sides. There are prominent international actors involved in the conflict (Yakira, 2005).

The two parties engaged in direct negotiation are the Israeli government, currently led by Benjamin Netanyahu, and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), currently headed by Mahmoud Abbas. The official negotiations are mediated by an international contingent known as the Quartet on the Middle East (the *Quartet*) represented by a special envoy that consists of the United States, Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations. The Arab League is another important actor, which has proposed an alternative peace plan. Egypt, a founding member of the Arab League, has historically been a key participant. Jordan, having relinquished its claim to the West Bank in 1988 and holding a special role in the Muslim Holy shrines in Jerusalem, has also been a key participant.

According to Elgindy (2011), since 2006, the Palestinian side has been fractured by conflict between the two major factions: Fatah, the traditionally dominant party, and its later electoral challenger, Hamas. After Hamas's electoral victory in 2006, the Quartet conditioned future foreign assistance to the Palestinian National Authority (PA) on the future government's commitment to non-violence, recognition of the State of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements. Hamas rejected these demands, which resulted in the Quartet's suspension of its foreign assistance program, and the imposition of economic sanctions by the Israelis. A year later, following Hamas's seizure of power in the Gaza Strip in June 2007, the territory officially recognized as the PA was split between Fatah in the West Bank, and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The division of governance between the parties had effectively resulted in the collapse of bipartisan governance of the PA. However, in 2014, a Palestinian Unity Government, composed of both Fatah and Hamas, was formed. The latest round of peace negotiations began in July 2013 and was suspended in 2014.

Account of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict

Following the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel on 14 May 1948, the Arab League decided to intervene on behalf of Palestinian Arabs, marching their forces into former British Palestine, beginning the main phase of the 1948 Arab–Israeli War. The overall fighting, leading to around 15,000 casualties, resulted in cease fire and armistice agreements of 1949, with Israel holding much of the former Mandate territory, Jordan occupying and later annexing the West Bank and Egypt taking over the Gaza Strip, where the All-Palestine Government was declared by the Arab League on 22 September 1948.

Through the 1950s, Jordan and Egypt supported the Palestinian Fedayeen militants' cross-border attacks into Israel, while Israel carried out reprisal operations in the host countries. The 1956 Suez Crisis resulted in a short-term Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip and exile of the All-Palestine Government, which was later restored with Israeli withdrawal. The All-Palestine Government was completely abandoned by Egypt in 1959 and was officially merged into the United Arab Republic, to the detriment of the Palestinian national movement. Gaza Strip then was put under the authority of Egyptian military administrator, making it a de facto military occupation. In 1964, however, a new organization, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), was established by Yasser Arafat. It immediately won the support of most

Arab League governments and was granted a seat in the Arab League. The 1967 Six-Day War exerted a significant effect upon Palestinian nationalism, as Israel gained military control of the West Bank from Jordan and the Gaza Strip from Egypt. Consequently, the PLO was unable to establish any control on the ground and established its headquarters in Jordan, home to hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, and supported the Jordanian army during the War of Attrition, most notably the Battle of Karameh. However, the Palestinian base in Jordan collapsed with the Jordanian–Palestinian civil war in 1970. The PLO defeat by the Jordanians caused most of the Palestinian militants to relocate to South Lebanon, where they soon took over large areas, creating the so-called ‘Fatahland’. (Morgan, 2015)

Palestinian insurgency in South Lebanon peaked in the early 1970s, as Lebanon was used as a base to launch attacks on northern Israel and airplane hijacking campaigns worldwide, which drew Israeli retaliation. During the Lebanese Civil War, Palestinian militants continued to launch attacks against Israel while also battling opponents within Lebanon. In 1978, the Coastal Road massacre led to the Israeli full-scale invasion known as Operation Litani. Israeli forces, however, quickly withdrew from Lebanon, and the attacks against Israel resumed. In 1982, following an assassination attempt on one of its diplomats by Palestinians, the Israeli government decided to take sides in the Lebanese Civil War and the 1982 Lebanon War commenced. The initial results for Israel were successful. Most Palestinian militants were defeated within several weeks, Beirut was captured, and the PLO headquarters were evacuated to Tunisia in June by Yasser Arafat's decision. However, Israeli intervention in the civil war also led to unforeseen results, including small-scale conflict between Israel and Syria.

By 1985, Israel withdrew to a 10 km occupied strip of South Lebanon, while the low-intensity conflict with Shia militants escalated. Those Iranian-supported Shia groups gradually consolidated into Hizbullah and Amal, operated against Israel, and allied with the remnants of Palestinian organizations to launch attacks on Galilee through the late 1980s. By the 1990s, Palestinian organizations in Lebanon were largely inactive. The first Palestinian uprising began in 1987 as a response to escalating attacks and the endless occupation. By the early 1990s, international efforts to settle the conflict had begun, in light of the success of the Egyptian–Israeli peace treaty of 1982.

Eventually, the Israeli–Palestinian peace process led to the Oslo Accords of 1993, allowing the PLO to relocate from Tunisia and take ground in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, establishing the Palestinian National Authority. The peace process also had significant opposition among radical Islamic elements of Palestinian society, such as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, who immediately initiated a campaign of attacks targeting Israelis. Following hundreds of casualties and a wave of radical anti-government propaganda, Israeli Prime Minister Rabin was assassinated by an Israeli fanatic who objected to the peace initiative. This struck a serious blow to the peace process, from which the newly elected government of Israel in 1996 backed off (Abbas, 2011).

Following several years of unsuccessful negotiations, the conflict re-erupted as the Second Intifada on September 2000. The violence, escalating into an open conflict between the Palestinian National Security Forces and the Israel Defence Forces, lasted until 2004/2005 and led to approximately 130 fatalities. In 2005, Israeli Prime Minister Sharon ordered the removal of Israeli settlers and soldiers from Gaza. Israel and its Supreme Court formally declared an end to occupation, saying it "had no effective control over what occurred" in Gaza. However,

the United Nations, Human Rights Watch and many other international bodies and NGOs continue to consider Israel to be the occupying power of the Gaza Strip as Israel controls Gaza Strip's airspace, territorial waters and controls the movement of people or goods in or out of Gaza by air or sea. In 2006, Hamas won a plurality of 44% in the Palestinian parliamentary election. Israel responded it would begin economic sanctions unless Hamas agreed to accept prior Israeli-Palestinian agreements, forswear violence, and recognize Israel's right to exist, which Hamas rejected. After internal Palestinian political struggle between Fatah and Hamas erupted into the Battle of Gaza (2007), Hamas took full control of the area. In 2007, Israel imposed a naval blockade on the Gaza Strip, and cooperation with Egypt allowed a ground blockade of the Egyptian border. The tensions between Israel and Hamas escalated until late 2008, when Israel launched operation Cast Lead upon Gaza, resulting in thousands of civilian casualties and billions of dollars in damage. By February 2009, a ceasefire was signed with international mediation between the parties, though the occupation and small and sporadic eruptions of violence continued.

In 2011, a Palestinian Authority attempt to gain UN membership as a fully sovereign state failed. In Hamas-controlled Gaza, sporadic rocket attacks on Israel and Israeli air raids still take place. In November 2012, the representation of Palestine in UN was upgraded to a non-member observer State, and its mission title was changed from 'Palestine (represented by PLO)' to 'State of Palestine' (Zerak, 2004).

Israeli military occupation of the West Bank

Occupied Palestinian Territory is the term used by the United Nations to refer to the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip—territories which were captured by Israel during the 1967 Six-Day War, having formerly been controlled by Egypt and Jordan. The Israeli government uses the term *Disputed Territories*, to argue that some territories cannot be called occupied as no nation had clear rights to them and there was no operative diplomatic arrangement when Israel acquired them in June 1967. The area is still referred to as Judea and Samaria, based on the historical regional names from ancient times. This is also the name used on the 1947 UN Partition Plan. In 1980, Israel annexed East Jerusalem. Israel has never annexed the West Bank, apart from East Jerusalem, or Gaza Strip, and the United Nations has demanded the termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect and acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force and that Israeli forces withdraw from territories occupied in the recent conflict – the meaning and intent of the latter phrase is disputed. See Interpretations (Abu 2008).

It has been the position of Israel that the most Arab-populated parts of West Bank (without major Jewish settlements), as well as the entire Gaza Strip, must eventually be part of an independent Palestinian State; however, the precise borders of this state are in question. At Camp David, for example, then-Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak offered Arafat an opportunity to establish a non-militarized Palestinian State. The proposed state would consist of 77% of the West Bank split into two or three areas, followed by: an increase of 86–91% of the West Bank after six to twenty-one years; autonomy, but not sovereignty for some of the Arab neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem surrounded by Israeli territory; the entire Gaza Strip;

and the dismantling of most settlements. Arafat rejected the proposal without providing a counter-offer. A subsequent settlement proposed by President Clinton offered Palestinian sovereignty over 94 to 96 percent of the West Bank but was similarly rejected with 52 objections. The Arab League has agreed to the principle of minor and mutually agreed land-swaps as part of a negotiated two state settlement based on June 1967 borders. Official U.S. policy also reflects the ideal of using the 1967 borders as a basis for an eventual peace agreement. Some Palestinians claim they are entitled to all of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. Israel says it is justified in not ceding all this land, because of security concerns, and also because the lack of any valid diplomatic agreement at the time means that ownership and boundaries of this land is open for discussion. Palestinians claim any reduction of this claim is a severe deprivation of their rights. In negotiations, they claim that any moves to reduce the boundaries of this land is a hostile move against their key interests. Israel considers this land to be in dispute, and feels the purpose of negotiations is to define what the final borders will be. Other Palestinian groups, such as Hamas, have in the past insisted that Palestinians must control not only the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem, but also all of Israel proper. For this reason, Hamas has viewed the peace process 'as religiously forbidden and politically inconceivable'.

Israeli settlements in the West Bank

According to the Arizona Department of Emergency and Military Affairs (DEMA) (n.d), in the years following the Six-Day War, and especially in the 1990s during the peace process, Israel re-established communities destroyed in 1929 and 1948 as well as established numerous new settlements in the West Bank. These settlements are, as of 2009, home to about 301,000 people. DEMA added, 'Most of the settlements are in the western parts of the West Bank, while others are deep into Palestinian territory, overlooking Palestinian cities. These settlements have been the site of much inter-communal conflict.' The issue of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and, until 2005, the Gaza Strip, have been described by the UK and the WEU as an obstacle to the peace process. The United Nations and the European Union have also called the settlements "illegal under international law. However, Israel disputes this; several scholars and commentators disagree with the assessment that settlements are illegal, citing in 2005 recent historical trends to back up their argument. Those who justify the legality of the settlements use arguments based upon Articles 2 and 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, as well as UN Security Council Resolution 242. On a practical level, some objections voiced by Palestinians are that settlements divert resources needed by Palestinian towns, such as arable land, water, and other resources; and, that settlements reduce Palestinians' ability to travel freely via local roads, owing to security considerations (Nagris, 2016).

In 2005, Israel's unilateral disengagement plan, a proposal put forward by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, was enacted. All residents of Jewish settlements in the Gaza strip were evacuated, and all residential buildings were demolished. Various mediators and various proposed agreements have shown some degree of openness to Israel retaining some fraction of the settlements which currently exist in the West Bank; this openness is based on a variety of considerations, such as, the desire to find real compromise between Israeli and Palestinian territorial claims. Israel's position that it needs to retain some West Bank land and settlements as a buffer in case of future aggression, and Israel's position that some settlements are

legitimate, as they took shape when there was no operative diplomatic arrangement, and thus they did not violate any agreement.

Former US President George W. Bush has stated that he does not expect Israel to return entirely to the 1949 armistice lines because of 'new realities on the ground.' One of the main compromise plans put forth by the Clinton Administration would have allowed Israel to keep some settlements in the West Bank, especially those which were in large blocs near the pre-1967 borders of Israel. In return, Palestinians would have received some concessions of land in other parts of the country. The current US administration views a complete freeze of construction in settlements on the West Bank as a critical step toward peace. In May and June 2009, President Barack Obama said, 'The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements,' and the Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, stated that the President wants to see a stop to settlements—not some settlements, not outposts, not 'natural growth' exceptions. However, Obama has since declared that the United States will no longer press Israel to stop West Bank settlement construction as a precondition for continued peace-process negotiations with the Palestinian Authority (Enejere 2000)

Gaza Blockade

The Israeli government states it is justified under international law to impose a blockade on an enemy for security reasons. The power to impose a naval blockade is established under customary international law and Laws of armed conflict, and a United Nations commission has ruled that Israel's blockade is both legal and appropriate. The Israeli Government's continued land, sea and air blockage is tantamount to collective punishment of the population, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The Military Advocate General of Israel has provided numerous reasoning for the policy: The State of Israel has been engaged in an ongoing armed conflict with terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza strip. This armed conflict has intensified after Hamas violently took over Gaza, in June 2007, and turned the territory under its de facto control into a launching pad of mortar and rocket attacks against Israeli towns and villages in southern Israel.

According to Oxfam, because of an import-export ban imposed on Gaza in 2007, 95% of Gaza's industrial operations were suspended. Out of 35,000 people employed by 3,900 factories in June 2005, only 1,750 people remained employed by 195 factories in June 2007. By 2010, Gaza's unemployment rate had risen to 40% with 80% of the population living on less than 2 dollars a day.

In January 2008, the Israeli government calculated how many calories per person were needed to prevent a humanitarian crisis in the Gaza strip, and then subtracted eight percent to adjust for the culture and experience of the Gazans. Details of the calculations were released following Israeli human rights organization Gisha's application to the high court. Israel's Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories, who drafted the plan, stated that the scheme was never formally adopted, this was not accepted by Gisha. Starting 7 February 2008, the Israeli Government reduced the electricity it sells directly to Gaza. This follows the ruling of Israel's High Court of Justice's decision, which held, with respect to the amount of industrial fuel supplied to Gaza, that, The clarification that we made indicates that the supply of industrial diesel fuel to the Gaza Strip in the winter months of last year was comparable to the amount

that the Respondents now undertake to allow into the Gaza Strip. This fact also indicates that the amount is reasonable and sufficient to meet the vital humanitarian needs in the Gaza Strip.

Palestinian militants killed two Israelis in the process of delivering fuel to the Nahal Oz fuel depot. With regard to Israel's plan, the Court stated that, "calls for a reduction of five percent of the power supply in three of the ten power lines that supply electricity from Israel to the Gaza Strip, to a level of 13.5 megawatts in two of the lines and 12.5 megawatts in the third line, we [the Court] were convinced that this reduction does not breach the humanitarian obligations imposed on the State of Israel in the framework of the armed conflict being waged between it and the Hamas organization that controls the Gaza Strip. Our conclusion is based, in part, on the affidavit of the Respondents indicating that the relevant Palestinian officials stated that they can reduce the load in the event limitations are placed on the power lines, and that they had used this capability in the past.

On 20 June 2010, Israel's Security Cabinet approved a new system governing the blockade that would allow practically all non-military or dual-use items to enter the Gaza strip. According to a cabinet statement, Israel would expand the transfer of construction materials designated for projects that have been approved by the Palestinian Authority, including schools, health institutions, water, sanitation and more – as well as (projects) that are under international supervision. Despite the easing of the land blockade, Israel will continue to inspect all goods bound for Gaza by sea at the port of Ashdod. Prior to a Gaza visit, scheduled for April 2013, Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan explained to Turkish newspaper *Hürriyet* that the fulfilment of three conditions by Israel was necessary for friendly relations to resume between Turkey and Israel: an apology for the May 2010 Gaza flotilla raid (Prime Minister Netanyahu had delivered an apology to Erdogan by telephone on 22 March 2013), the awarding of compensation to the families affected by the raid, and the lifting of the Gaza blockade by Israel. The Turkish prime minister also explained in the *Hürriyet* interview, in relation to the April 2013 Gaza visit, "We will monitor the situation to see if the promises are kept or not. At the same time, Netanyahu affirmed that Israel would only consider exploring the removal of the Gaza blockade if peace (quiet) is achieved in the area (Aja-Akpuru, 2007)

Agriculture

Since the beginning of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the conflict has been about land. When Israel became a state after the war in 1948, 77% of Palestine's land was used for the creation on the state. The majority of those living in Palestine at the time became refugees in other countries and this first land crisis became the root of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Because the root of the conflict is with land, the disputes between Israel and Palestine are well-manifested in the agriculture of Palestine. In Palestine, agriculture is a mainstay in the economy. The production of agricultural goods supports the population's sustenance needs and fuels Palestine's export economy. According to the Council for European Palestinian Relations, the agricultural sector formally employs 13.4% of the population and informally employs 90% of the population. Over the past 10 years, unemployment rates in Palestine have increased and the agricultural sector became the most impoverished sector in Palestine. Unemployment rates peaked in 2008 when they reached 41% in Gaza. Palestinian agriculture suffers from numerous problems including Israeli military and civilian attacks on farms and farmers, blockades to exportation of produce and importation of necessary inputs, widespread confiscation of land

for nature reserves as well as military and settler use, confiscation and destruction of wells, and physical barriers within the West Bank.

U.S Role in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Historically, Washington has viewed Israel as a crucial political and economic ally in the oil-rich Middle East, and has provided Israel with the highest amount of financial and military assistance of any other foreign country. These days, however, the United States has used its leverage to urge Israel to resolve the Palestinian issue and move forward on plans for an autonomous Palestinian state. Since the end of World War II, the United States has been one of the leading nations to encourage, facilitate, and arbitrate cease-fire accords between Israelis and Palestinians.

Other countries, notably France, Russia, Norway, Jordan, and Egypt, participate extensively in peace efforts, often working in concert with the United States and the United Nations. The United States has pointed to its large financial assistance Israel and Egypt as evidence of its commitment to secure a lasting peace and foster democracy and economic growth in the region. U.S. financial and military assistance quadrupled after Syria and Egypt, supported by the Soviet Union invaded Israel on Oct. 6, 1973. Prime Minister Golda Meir asked U.S. President Nixon for immediate military assistance for her army that had been decimated in the 1973 Yom Kippur War and the 1967 Israeli war against the Egyptian and Syrian armies.

According to Clotilde (2014), following the 1973 war, Egypt and Israel began to quietly explore the possibility of a diplomatic peace. Under the guidance of U.S. President Carter, cease-fire talks between Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat opened five years later at Camp David, in the Catoctin Mountains of Maryland. The meetings ended with the Camp David peace accords, based on U.N. resolutions 242 and 338, which stipulated that Israel would relinquish territory to neighbouring Arab nations in exchange for recognition of Israel's national sovereignty and security. The Camp David accords ended the war between Egypt and Israel and laid the foundation for the so-called "land-for-peace" deals between Palestinians and Israelis. During the 1980s, Washington continued to dispatch high-level officials, such as secretaries of state George Shultz and James Baker and Ambassador Philip Habib, to the region in attempt to initiate serious discussions between the Israelis and Palestinians. During this time, Shultz reopened communication channels between U.S. and Palestinian governments for the first time in more than 13 years. During the Persian Gulf War, relations between the United States and the Palestine Liberation Organization soured when PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat supported Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and its threat to attack Israel.

Following U.S victory in the Persian Gulf War, U.S. President George H.W. Bush and Soviet President Michael Gorbachev sponsored a peace conference in Madrid to address the conflict between Israel and Palestine. The conference in 1991 rejuvenated the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Over the next two years, the United States and other nations moderated discussions between Israeli and Palestinian leader Rs, and, in 1993, at the 11th round of peace talks, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres announced that Israel and the PLO reached a land-for-peace deal in Oslo (Bishara, 2001).

That fall at the White House, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat oversaw the signing of the agreements reached at Oslo.

Under the so-called Oslo accords, Arafat recognized Israel's right to exist and renounced the use of violence against the Jewish state. In return, Israel promised to allow for Palestinian self-rule in sections of the Gaza Strip and West Bank. In 1995, Israeli and Palestinian leaders met again in Washington, D.C with President Clinton to discuss specific steps to gradually transfer autonomy to the newly formed Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. However, the United States lost a key ally when an Israeli extremist opposed to the Oslo accords assassinated Rabin in November 1995. After a year of frequent talks and increasing violence in the Middle East, President Clinton led a face-to-face meeting between Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the Wye River Conference Centre in Maryland to press for the implementation of the final elements in the Oslo accords. The leaders, meeting in the fall of 1998, reaffirmed their commitment to the obligations as set forth in the Oslo settlement.

Additionally, in an effort to improve U.S. relations with the Palestinian government, President Clinton spoke to the Palestinian Legislative Council in the Gaza Strip, the first time a U.S. president addressed the council. As Israeli and Palestinian peace efforts waned amid increasing outbursts of violence, President Clinton, at the end of his second term, assigned former Sen. George Mitchell to head a fact-finding mission to investigate roots of the conflict. The administration of President George W. Bush endorsed the Mitchell Report on Mideast violence and, as evidence of its commitment to securing peace between Israelis and Palestinians, maintained its traditional role of sending high-level officials to push for a lasting truce. Indeed, in February 2001 President Bush signalled continued high-level U.S. engagement when he sent his top diplomat, Secretary of State Colin Powell, to the Middle East to meet another new leader, the freshly anointed Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat. By November of that year, President Bush became the first U.S. president to publicly call for two states, Israel and Palestine, existing side by side. But violence had already begun to creep back into the landscape of the Palestinian-Israeli relationship, and by early 2002 it had grown such that it had a name the second intifada. It witnessed an Israeli reoccupation of Palestinian West Bank and Gaza towns and villages, in response to attacks by Palestinians on Israeli targets, and the deaths of dozens of civilians on both sides. A major by-product of the renewed strife was a significant shift in U.S. policy toward the Palestinians, specifically their leader. Arafat, one of the most frequent visitors among foreign leaders to the Clinton White House, became unwelcome in Washington, perceived by the Bush administration as the Israelis saw him a terrorist (Yakiri, 2009).

On June 24, 2002 President Bush went a step further, calling on Palestinians "to elect new leaders, leaders not compromised by terror," a thinly veiled call for Arafat's ouster. The president also detailed steps he saw as necessary for a return to peace between the two parties; chief among them a Palestinian renunciation and cessation of terrorism, and the end to Israeli settlement expansion. Those steps were codified in the so-called road map to peace, released as a formal plan in April 2003. Within a month, the Palestinians had named a new prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas, or Abu Mazen, one of the top Oslo negotiators, paving the way to a major summit of Palestinian, Israeli, U.S. and Jordanian leaders in the Jordanian port city of Aqaba. But the hope that accompanied those events faded quickly, and the road map became the target of Palestinian criticism, perceived as yet another U.S. effort that pressured Palestinians for Israeli benefit. By September 2003, Abbas had resigned a victim partly of

clashes with Arafat over the control of Palestinian security forces. But Palestinians also saw in him a leader handicapped by and unable to counter the strong Bush-Sharon relationship, therefore unable to improve daily Palestinian life. It would not be until early 2004 that any real energy was injected back into the quest for a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. When it did come, it took the form of a U.S.-backed plan announced by Sharon to withdraw all Israeli settlers and supporting military personnel from Gaza and four West Bank villages.

The plan had undergone public debate for months. But with little direct U.S. involvement or Israeli coordination with Palestinians, Palestinians ultimately judged it to be a unilateral effort by Israel to force a settlement on Israeli terms. When President Bush wrote Sharon in support of the plan in April 2004, he urged all parties to consider that in light of new realities on the ground, including already existing major Israeli population centres, it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the borders before 1967. Palestinians interpreted that as U.S. sanctioning of an Israeli annexation of parts of the West Bank. By the time the plan began to grow into reality, the United States was fighting an insurgency in Iraq, leaving little time or energy to devote to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. That remained the case when, in November 2004, Yasser Arafat, the man who put the Palestinian cause on the public agenda but failed to secure its spot on the map died from an unidentified disease. President Bush called on the Palestinians once again to choose a leader who rejected violence as a successor to Arafat. Palestinians did just that when they elected Abbas in January 2005, and preparations soon gave way to another White House visit amid hopes of a breakthrough in the conflict. But hopes began to fade as violence perpetrated by Palestinians and Israelis continued that summer.

However, in a series of historic events, Israel in August made good on its commitment to withdraw all its settlers and troops from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank, and Sharon left his right-wing Likud Party to form a new, more moderate one called Kadima. His new party was based on the premise that the Israeli public favored further disengagements from Palestinian territories as long as there was, in their opinion, no Palestinian negotiating partner. The move was largely welcomed by the Bush administration, as an acknowledgement of Sharon's pursuit of an end to the stalemate. But the administration also shared Palestinian concerns that the Gaza, West Bank and any future unilateral Israeli withdrawals would force a non-negotiable settlement on the Palestinians. By January 2006, Sharon had faded from the political scene, felled by a massive stroke that left him permanently incapacitated. Later that month, a fractured Palestinian ruling class, Fatah, saw its defeat at the hands of a disciplined political effort by the militant group Hamas, whose charter calls for Israel's destruction, and who won parliamentary elections on an anti-corruption and social services platform. The victory brought calls, led by Israel and the United States, for the diplomatic and financial isolation of any new Hamas-led government, and essentially put an end, for the time being, to any contacts between the Palestinians and the United States and Israel. That sentiment continued after the March 2006 election victory by Sharon's Kadima Party, and the selection of his successor, Ehud Olmert, who pledged to complete Israel's withdrawal from most of the West Bank by 2010.

According to Silas (2014), since 1967 it has been plain that Israel is by a long shot the strongest military power in the region contrary to what people believe it is one of the richest countries in the region in terms of the GNP Per capital. Though not as rich as the oil emirates,

It is richer than most of the oil producing nations. Furthermore, it is an advanced technological society. Its wealth and economic strength are not just contingent on some depreciable resources.

American planners have regarded Israel as a barrier to Russian perpetration, and have assumed that “the demise of Israel likely would increase Soviet influence. Israeli power protected the monarchical reigns of Jordan and Saudi Arabia from a militarily strong Egypt in the 1960s, thus securing American interests in the major oil producing regions. The senate’s ranking oil expert, Senator Henry Jackson is one of those who have emphasized “the strength and western orientation of Israel on the Mediterranean and Iran on the Persian gulf “two” reliable friends of the United States who along with Saudi Arabia have served as to inhabit and contain those irresponsible and radical elements in contain Arab States who would pose a grave threat indeed to our principal sources of petroleum in the Persian gulf.

For such reasons the United States has tacitly supported the Israeli occupation of surrounding Arab territories as well as the force able takeover of Arab Island by Iran in 1971. The Irano – Israeli alliance not only protects reactionary Arab States allied with the United States but also stands as a constant threat to them should they make unwelcome moves. More generally it is argued that “the Israeli-Iranian interrelationship willingly or unwillingly has contributed to the stability of the Indian ocean basin.

American oil companies are linked with Egyptian explorations and lifting, and Israel is simply taking over part of the area that they regard as theirs. The thing is pretty small- at the moment and it doesn’t involve any major oil resources so the US is not pressing very hard. But they have always described Israelis actions there as illegal and they simply reiterated it at this point. Of course what “legality” means is what the big powers determine it is another rhetorical term. On 14 July 2006 the US congress was notified of a potential sale of \$210 million worth of jet fuel to Israel. The Defence security cooperation Agency noted that the sale of the JP-8 fuel should it be completed will “enable Israel to maintain the operational capability of its aircraft inventory”, and the jet fuel will be consumed while the aircraft is in use to keep peace and security in the region. It was reported in 24 July that the United States was in the process of providing Israel with bunker buster bombs which would allegedly be used to target the leader of Lebanon’s Hezbollah group and destroy its ranches.

The effect on Israel will be very corrosive, but economically and psychologically. There is a tremendous economic drain into military expenditure and that is only going to increase. Furthermore a commitment to military production is becoming a larger and larger element in the Israeli economy both in eternally and for export, and the tie with the US is a story pant of that. This drain of resource in the military means that they can’t face internal social problems which are very serious, such as the problem of the Sephardic oriental Jewish community, that is never going to be faced as long as there is a militarized economy. It will become an economy sharply along class lines with an extremely rich sector connected to advanced technology, and commerce and the rest of the population will be suppressed. The psychological effect will be harder to estimate, but it is very significant. As long as the occupation persists, there will be an unconquerable temptation to use cheap Arab labour which is with is happening. Israel will inevitably move towards a kind of South African situation in which there is a very cheap labour

force which is Otomized and cannot be organize. They will take over a good part of the productive labour of the country. This is already starting to happen, it can only have the effect of encouraging racism and all kinds of attitudes that come along with exploiting a cheap labour force which is totally under control (Carment, 1998)

The Invaluable U.S.-Israeli Alliance

Both Washington and Jerusalem have reaped huge dividends from their longstanding partnership and those ties are about to grow even stronger. According to Bashara (2001), Israel and the United States are putting the finishing touches on an agreement that will cement their alliance for years to come. The latest Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), set to go into effect in 2018, will provide Israel with about \$3.9 billion a year in military aid for 10 years. The real value of this agreement, however, isn't in the dollar amount, but in the defense technology that Israel will receive and the depth of the security cooperation between the two countries. This agreement is critical to Israel's security and the safety of its citizens. The agreement is also part of a deep and long-standing strategic alliance between Israel and the United States. The foundations of the alliance are emotional and moral. In the two great struggles the West has faced since World War II, the Cold War and the war on terror. The United States Foreign policy has grossly favoured Israel against Palestine in the following ways as identified by Silas (2014).

- (a) Security Cooperation
- (b) U.S. – Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2013
- (c) Preserving Israel's Qualitative Military Edge (QME)
- (d) U.S Aid and Arms Sales to Israel

The Present nature of Israeli-Palestinian conflict

According to Hassasian (1997), the Israeli government continued to enforce severe and discriminatory restrictions on Palestinians' human rights; restrict the movement of people and goods into and out of the Gaza Strip; and facilitate the unlawful transfer of Israeli citizens to settlements in the occupied West Bank. Punitive measures taken by the Palestinian Authority (PA) exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in Gaza caused by the closure enforced by Israel. The PA in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza escalated crackdowns on dissent, arbitrarily arresting critics, and abusing those in their custody. In February, 2017 the Knesset, Israel's parliament, passed the Regularization Law, which allows Israel to retroactively expropriate private Palestinian land on which settlements have been built, though the High Court of Justice issued an injunction freezing its implementation in August. Between July 2016 and June 2017, Israeli authorities authorized construction work on more than 2,000 new housing units for settlers in the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem. Israel operates a two-tiered system in the West Bank that provides preferential treatment to Israeli settlers while imposing harsh conditions on Palestinians. While settlements expanded in 2017, Israeli authorities destroyed 381 homes and other property, forcibly displacing 588 people as of November 6, in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as part of discriminatory practices that reject almost all building permit applications submitted by Palestinians. Israel continued to maintain its decade-long effective closure of Gaza, exacerbated by Egypt's keeping its own border with Gaza largely sealed, and to impose restrictions that limit supply of electricity and water, restrict access to medical care

and educational and economic opportunity, and perpetuate poverty. Approximately 70 percent of Gaza's 1.9 million people rely on humanitarian assistance.

Periodic shutdowns of Gaza's only power plant, a result of a dispute between Fatah and Hamas over who should pay for fuel needed to operate the plant, and the decision by the Israeli government in June to accede to a PA request to cut the electricity it sells to the PA for use in to Gaza, significantly reduced electricity supply in Gaza, leaving households for stretches with four hours or less of electricity a day. Power outages jeopardize water supply, interfere with sewage treatment, and cripple hospital operations. Tensions around the Al-Aqsa/Temple Mount compound in July-August 2017 triggered an escalation in violence. Israeli security forces used lethal force against demonstrators and against suspected attackers in the West Bank and at the Gaza border. Palestinian assailants, most of them apparently acting without the formal sponsorship of any armed group, carried out stabbings and occasional shootings against Israelis.

Between January 1 and November 6, 2017, Israeli security forces killed 62 Palestinians, including 14 children, and injured at least 3,494 Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza and Israel, including protesters, suspected assailants or members of armed groups, and bystanders. Palestinians killed at least 15 Israelis during this same time, including 10 security officers, and injured 129 in conflict-related incidents in the West Bank and Israel. In April and May, hundreds of Palestinian prisoners spent 40 days on hunger strike seeking better conditions. As of November 1, Israeli authorities incarcerated 6,154 inmates on what they consider security grounds, the overwhelming majority Palestinian, including 3,454 convicted prisoners, 2,247 pretrial detainees and 453 administrative detainees held without charge or trial, according to the Israel Prison Service. The PA and Hamas arrested activists who criticized their leaders, security forces, or policies, and mistreated and tortured some in their custody. The Independent Commission for Human Rights in Palestine (ICHR), a statutory commission charged with monitoring human rights compliance by the Palestinian authorities, received 205 complaints of torture and ill-treatment by PA security forces and 193 such complaints against Hamas security forces as of October 31. Hamas authorities executed six people during this same period following trials that lacked appropriate due process protections (Halib 2017).

Gaza Strip Closure

Israel's near-total closure of the Gaza Strip, particularly restrictions on movement of people and on outgoing goods, together with Egypt keeping its border with Gaza mostly closed, continued to have severe consequences for the civilian population. Travel through the Erez Crossing, Gaza's passenger crossing to Israel, the West Bank, and the outside world, is limited to what the Israeli military calls "exceptional humanitarian cases," meaning mostly medical patients, their companions, and prominent businesspersons. In the first 10 months of 2017, an average of about 230 Palestinians exited Erez each day, compared to the average of more than 24,000 Palestinians who crossed each day in September 2000, just before the second 'Intifada' or Palestinian uprising, began. Outgoing goods in the same period averaged 207 truckloads per month, mostly produce to be sold in the West Bank and Israel, just 19 percent of the average 1,064 truckloads per month that existed prior to the June 2007 tightening of the closure. Israeli restrictions on the delivery of construction materials to Gaza and a lack of funding have impeded reconstruction of the 17,800 housing units severely damaged or destroyed during

Israel's 2014 military operation in Gaza. About 29,000 people who lost their homes remain displaced. The Israeli government sought to justify the restrictions by saying that construction materials can be used for military purposes, including fortifying tunnels; it allowed only limited quantities to enter, under the supervision of international organizations. Measures taken by the PA to pressure Hamas further exacerbated the impact of the closure. Its decision in January to stop buying fuel from Israel that it had been supplying to Hamas authorities and its request in May for Israel to cut the electricity the Israeli government sells to the PA for use in Gaza significantly reduced already limited electricity supply, imperiling critical health, water, and sanitation services (Bassam, 2007).

Patients in Gaza seeking treatment outside Gaza faced lengthening delays in obtaining approvals from the PA. While the PA approved 99 percent of applications within seven days of submission between January and May, that number dropped to 36 percent between June and August and 32 percent in September, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). In addition, in September, Israel authorities denied or delayed permits with no response by the time of the appointment to 45 percent of patients seeking treatment outside Gaza. As of August, 40 percent of medications on the "essential drug list" were at zero stock in Gaza, according to the WHO. Egypt also blocked all regular movement of people and goods at the crossing with Gaza that it controls, with narrow exceptions mostly for medical patients, those holding foreign passports, residencies or visas, including students, and pilgrims to Mecca. Between January and October, an average of about 2,766 persons monthly crossed through Rafah in both directions, compared with an average of 40,000 per month in the first half of 2013, prior to the overthrow of Egyptian President Mohamed Morsy.

As of November 6, lethal force by Israeli forces resulted in the killing of 17 and injuring of at least 215 Palestinians in Gaza, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported. The Israeli authorities have declared an area inside Gaza near the border with Israel to be a "no-go" zone, justifying it as a means to prevent cross-border attacks. Israeli soldiers fire at people who enter that zone and at fishermen who venture beyond six nautical miles from the shore the area to which Israel restricts Gaza fishing boats. Israel temporarily expanded the fishing zone to nine miles between May and June and again between October and December. Israel says it restricts access to the sea to prevent the smuggling of weapons into Gaza (Enyinla1989)

Hamas and Palestinian Armed Groups

In 2017, Palestinian armed groups launched 10 rockets into Israel from Gaza as of October 31, causing no casualties but generating fear and disruption in affected cities and towns. These rockets cannot be accurately aimed at military objectives and amount to indiscriminate or deliberate attacks on civilians when directed at Israeli population centres. Hamas, which has internal control over Gaza, is responsible for policing the border and the territory it controls and acting to ensure that unlawful attacks do not take place. Hamas authorities arrested scores of protesters following demonstrations in January related to the electricity crisis in Gaza as well as activists, journalists, and critics throughout the year. In addition, Gaza's civilian authorities executed three men in April convicted of collaboration with Israel and three men in May convicted of killing a Hamas leader after trials rife with due process violations, including reliance on confessions in a system where coercion and torture

are prevalent. In Gaza, where laws differ somewhat from those in the West Bank, having ‘unnatural intercourse’ of a sexual nature, understood to include same-sex relationships, is a crime punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

Freedom of Movement

Israel maintained onerous restrictions on the movement of Palestinians in the West Bank, including checkpoints and the separation barrier, a combination of wall and fence in the West Bank that Israel said it built for security reasons. Israeli-imposed restrictions designed to keep Palestinians far from settlements forced them to take time-consuming detours and restricted their access to agricultural land. Israel continued construction of the separation barrier, 85 percent of which falls within the West Bank rather than along the Green Line separating Israeli from Palestinian territory, cutting off Palestinians from their agricultural lands and isolating 11,000 Palestinians on the western side of the barrier who are not allowed to travel to Israel and must cross the barrier to access their own property as well as services in the West Bank.

Arbitrary Detention and Detention of Children

Israeli military authorities detained Palestinian protesters, including those who advocated nonviolent protest against Israeli settlements and the route of the separation barrier. Israeli authorities try the majority of Palestinian children incarcerated in the occupied territory in military courts, which have a near-100 percent conviction rate. Israeli security forces arrested Palestinian children suspected of criminal offenses, usually stone-throwing, often using unnecessary force, questioned them without a family member present, and made them sign confessions in Hebrew, which most did not understand. The Israeli military detained Palestinian children separately from adults during remand hearings and military court trials, but often detained children with adults immediately after arrest. As of June 30, Israeli authorities held 315 Palestinian children in military detention (Morgan 2015)

As of October 2017, Israel held 453 Palestinian administrative detainees without charge or trial, based on secret evidence, many for prolonged periods. Israel jails many Palestinian detainees and prisoners inside Israel, violating international humanitarian law requiring that they not be transferred outside the occupied territory and restricting the ability of family members to visit them.

Palestinian Authority

Palestinian Authority security services arrested dozens of journalists, activists and opposition members. In September, the PA detained for seven days human rights defender Issa Amro over a Facebook post. Amro also faces charges in Israeli military court for his role in a protest. In June, the PA issued a new cybercrime law, granting the government vast authority to control online activity and blocked access in the West Bank to at least 29 news websites affiliated with Hamas and Fatah factions opposed to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. Complaints persisted of torture and ill-treatment carried out in the West Bank by PA security services. Arbitrary arrests and torture violate legal obligations that the state of Palestine assumed after it ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture in 2014.

Theoretical Framework

Intractable Conflict Theory

The researcher adopted intractable conflict theory for the explanation of Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As noted in Onuoha (2008), intractable conflict theory can be used in analysing conflicts bordering on land, religion and culture. This is applicable in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is imperative to state that none of the Parties is ready to surrender for peace in the region. The conflict has lasted for years without the arbitrators finding lasting solution to resolve or manage it. The theory was made popular by Northrup (1989) in an article entitled 'The dynamic of identity in personal and social conflict'. Northrup argues that identity is always an important factor in relationships, as threats to identity can cause conflict or contribute to its intractability. As Burgess (2005) noted, intractable conflicts are those conflicts that stubbornly seem to elude resolutions, even when the best available techniques are applied. Essentially, intractable conflicts are ones that remained unresolved for long periods of time and then become stuck at a high level of intensity and destructiveness.

Application of the Theory to the Study

Since intractable conflicts are immense disagreements that have had a long history, an inability to resolve issues over time, high stakes, and can result in violence, either physical or emotional. The Israeli – Palestinian conflict can be categorized under this since the conflict has lasted for a very long time. The practical relevant of this theory to the analysis of Israeli-Palestinian conflict lies on the fact that the issue(s) under contention is that of values which the disputants regard as crucial to their survival. Of course, it is obvious that, the core issues in the Israeli Palestinian conflict is land and land issues are always intractable.

According to Silas (2014), the complexity of the issue lies in the fact that the problem in question cannot be resolved in a win-win situation. As a matter of fact, if one party controls, the other will not. While sharing may seem possible in theory, contending side usually regard compromise as a loss. This is the case in the Middle East where palpable fear and hatred is so ingrained that opponent cannot imagine living with the other side. Instead, they are willing to take whatever means necessary to ensure group survival and protect their way of life and this account for the continuous bombing by suicide bombers here and there in the region and this is why intractable theory becomes sine-qua non in the analysis of this protracted conflict. There is a nexus between this theory and the present study as the theory enables us to understand the motivational propensities that gingered the lingering conflict between Israel and Palestine. The theory also exposes us to the yardstick behind the intractability of the conflict and further suggest how it can be managed since it cannot be resolved.

Research Findings

The researcher made the following findings, that the Economic interest of United States of America in the Middle East is oil. With the relationship existing between United States and Israel especially in the area of security, they want Israel's head to remain high in the Middle East which ill give them smooth ride in achieving their economic growth.

Conclusion

Strong relations between the United States and Israel have led to bilateral cooperation in many areas. Matters of particular significance to U.S.-Israel relations include:

- (a) Israel's ability to address the threats it faces in its region.
- (b) Shared U.S.-Israel concerns about Iran and its allies on the nuclear issue and in Syria and Lebanon.
- (c) Israeli-Palestinian issues.
- (d) Israeli domestic political issues, including elections scheduled for 2019.

Israel relies on a number of strengths to manage potential threats to its security and existence. It maintains conventional military superiority relative to neighboring states and the Palestinians. It also takes measures to deter attack and defend its population and borders from evolving asymmetric threats such as rockets and missiles, cross-border tunneling, drones, and cyberattacks. Additionally, Israel has an undeclared but presumed nuclear weapons capability. Against a backdrop of strong bilateral cooperation, Israel's leaders and supporters routinely make the case that Israel's security and the broader stability of the region remain critically important for U.S. interests. A 10-year bilateral military aid memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed in 2016—commits the United States to provide Israel \$3.3 billion in Foreign Military Financing annually from FY2019 to FY2028, along with additional amounts from Defense Department accounts for missile defense. All of these amounts remain subject to congressional appropriations.

Israeli officials seek to counter Iranian regional influence and prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu released new Israeli intelligence on Iran's nuclear program in April 2018, days before President Trump announced the U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 international agreement that constrains Iran's nuclear activities. It is unclear whether Israel might take future military action in Iran if Iranian nuclear activities resume. Since 2018, Israel has conducted a number of military operations in Syria against Iran and its allies, including Lebanese Hezbollah. Israel and Iran also appear to be competing for military advantage over each other at the Israel-Lebanon border. Amid uncertainty in the area, in March 2019 President Trump recognized Israel's claim to sovereignty over the Golan Heights, changing long-standing U.S. policy that held—in line with U.N. Security Council Resolution 497 from 1981—the Golan was occupied Syrian territory whose final status was subject to Israel-Syria negotiation.

The prospects for an Israeli-Palestinian peace process are complicated by many factors. Palestinian leaders cut off high-level political contacts with the Trump Administration after it recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December 2017. U.S.-Palestinian tensions have since worsened amid U.S. cutoffs of funding to the Palestinians and diplomatic moves—including the May 2018 opening of the U.S. embassy to Israel in Jerusalem. Palestinian leaders interpreted these actions as prejudicing their claims to a capital in Jerusalem and to a just resolution of Palestinian refugee claims. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has welcomed these U.S. actions. The Trump Administration has suggested that it will release a proposed peace plan after Israeli elections, which are scheduled for April 9, 2019. Speculation continues about how warming ties between Israel and Arab Gulf states may affect Israeli-Palestinian

diplomacy, though Saudi Arabia said that the U.S. policy change on the Golan Heights would negatively affect the peace process. Bouts of tension and violence between Israel and Hamas in Gaza have continued reportedly accompanied by indirect talks between the two parties that are being brokered by Egypt and aim for a long-term cease-fire.

Recommendations

The researcher recommended that United States of America should stay away from Middle East Politics if they can't play neutral role, United Nations and other relevant international organisations should help curtail the military alliance between United States of America and Israel.

References

- Abbas, M.C. (2011). President of the Palestinian Authority and Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, said in his Sep. 23, 2011 address to the *UN General Assembly*.
- Abo-Sak, F. (2002). *US involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Solution or Complication*. New York: Oxford Publication.
- Abu, O. (2008). Nationalism, Religion, and the Breakdown of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process. Paper submitted to the *66th Annual Conference on Mid-Western Political Science Association*, in Chicago.
- Adams, M. (1988). What went wrong in Palestine Nigerian forum? *A Journal of Nigeria*. 1, (9): 10.
- Agha, H., & Shai Feldman, A.K. (2003). *Track- II Diplomacy: Lessons from the Middle East*. Cambridge: MA: MIT Press.
- Aja-Akpuru, A. (2009). *Policy and Strategic Studies: Uncharted Waters of War and Peace in International Relations*. Abakaliki: Willy Rose & Appleseed Publishing COY.
- Aronson, G. (2013). Policy Options in a Time of Transition: The US and the Israel-Palestine Conflict. *Middle East Journal*, 67, (7): 250-259.
- Arthur, L. (2005). Understanding the Palestinian-Israel Conflict. *Primer Publication*.
- Bassam, S.E. (2007). *American Policy and Middle East Conflict*. Lagos: Crown Publishers.
- Coleman, N. (2000). Israeli-United States Relations Alliance of policy issues.
- Condoleeza R (2002). Politics and Globe Dictionary. Enugu: Jamve Enterprises
- Crawford, J. (2012). The criteria for Statehood in international Law. *Journal de droit International*. (3). 256-88.
- David, S. (2008). *Paper Presentation, titled how Obama can resolve the Palestine-Israeli conflict*.

- Devon, P.O. (2013). United States Foreign Policy in the Middle East and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Kaduna: Trips Publishers.
- Dutta, B.M. (2006). U.S Public Diplomacy in the Middle East. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*. (30): 102-124.
- Elgindy, K. (2011). Palestine goes to the UN: understanding the new statehood strategy, *United Nations Foreign Affaires* 90.
- Enejere, N. (2000). *The Road to Jerusalem*. The making and implementation of Various Israel. Palestinian Peace Accords. An unpublished B.Sc. Research Project Submitted to the Department of Political Science Ago-Iwoye.
- Enyinla B. (1989). An Examination of the prospects for a Palestinian Home States, Nigerian Forum. *A Journal of Nigeria Institute of international Affairs (NUA)*. 9 &10.
- Hams, G. (2005). *The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: A basic Introduction*. Duala: Pluto Press.
- Handley, R. (2010). Cascading activation: Bush's war on terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. *Journalism*. (11): 445-461.
- Hassasian, S.J. (1997). United States Financial Commitment to Israel and the Resolution of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. Ibadan: Solar Publishers.
- Haward, L.C. (2008). Alternative Political Approaches to Israeli-Palestinian Coexistence.
- Jeff, H. Analysis of two State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. *Journal of International Studies*.
- Jeffrey .S. (2010). *American Zionism: Mission and politics*. New York: Oxford Publishers.
- John, N. (2011). *The Arab-Israeli conflict III. Documents American Society of International Law*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Khalidi, R., & Samour, S. (2011). Neoliberalism as Liberation: The Statehood Programme and the Remaking of the Palestine national Movement. *Journal of Palestine Studies*. (40): 6-25.
- Kothari, J. (2011). The right of the Palestinian people to Self-determination. *Russel Peace Foundation*. 4, (6): 201-235.
- Kriesberg, L. (1998). Intractable Conflicts their Transformation. [File://what%areintractable%20](#)
- Morgan A.N. (2015). International and Inter-State Drivers of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. Lagos: Verus Publishers.

Nargis M.K. (2016). *The Effects of United States Alliance with Israel on the Resolution of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*. Lagos: Figure Print Publishers.

Northrop. T. (1989) The dynamics of identity in personal and social conflict, in L. Kriesberg T.A Northrop & S.J. Therson (Eds.), *Intractable Conflict and their Transformation*. New York: Syracuse- University Press.

Silas O.N. (2014). *Negative Effect of America's Over Protectionism of Israel in the Israeli – Palestinian Conflict*. Lagos: Brikks Publishers.