

ISRAEL PALESTINE CONFLICT A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

From the colonial period to the present day, this article examines important stages in the involvement of European nations in the Israel-Palestine conflict, both historically and currently. It analyses the origins of the conflict and the complex role of European countries by looking at the Balfour Declaration, the mandate period, and the dynamics after WWII. During the Cold War, European attitudes and actions were shaped by the confluence of global geopolitics and the Middle East. Europe has shown its dedication to promoting a peace process, overcoming obstacles, and contributing to diplomatic and economic solutions through the Oslo Accords and following diplomatic endeavours. The role of the European Union becomes increasingly important, underscoring the importance of a two-state solution and the potential to use economic might to advance peace. The complex interplay between historical links, security concerns, and commitment to human rights and international law is on full display in Europe's nuanced reactions to challenges including regional upheavals, uprisings, and planned annexation. The essay explores recent events, UN engagement, international law, and Europe's role in tackling the conflict through the

BDS movement. It is difficult to create a cohesive approach due to the different viewpoints inside Europe. Recognising the shared responsibility for promoting peace and stability in the Middle East, European nations continue to play a crucial role in the fight for a comprehensive and fair resolution to the Middle East crisis, even as the area navigates changing geopolitical landscapes.

Keywords: *European Nations, Israel, Palestine, Conflict, diplomatic ,economic solutions.*

INTRODUCTION

Since the inception of the State of Israel in 1948 and the subsequent emergence of the Palestinian refugee issue, Europe has endeavoured to uphold its role as a prominent intermediary and arbiter in the region. Throughout a significant portion of this time frame, there was a lack of a unified European strategy towards the region. Various countries exhibited a tendency to alter their positions based on unique political and temporal circumstances. In recent years, the European Union (EU) has made significant progress towards the adoption of a unified policy pertaining to the conflict.

After the establishment of the State of Israel, Germany and Britain emerged as significant sources of concern for the majority of Israelis. Germany was viewed unfavourably due to its association with the Holocaust, while Britain faced criticism for its efforts to impede the establishment of the State and its refusal to admit refugees and immigrants during the period spanning from 1945 to 1948. In the initial ten years of its independence, France emerged as a significant ally of Israel and was often regarded by foreign policy leaders as its closest European counterpart. During the 1956 Sinai war, France and Britain collaborated with Israel in opposition to the Egyptian nationalisation of the Suez Canal. In contrast, Germany maintained a state of abnormal diplomatic relations.

By the 1960s, a significant shift occurred in the situation when Germany initiated the establishment of diplomatic ties with the State of Israel. Over the course of the last four decades, Germany has emerged as Israel's primary European ally. However, Israeli leaders consistently employ tactics that evoke feelings of guilt among German governments whenever their leaders make statements that could be perceived as overly supportive of the Palestinian cause and insufficiently supportive of Israel.

The Six Day war in 1967 is widely seen as a significant turning point, not only in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but also in shaping the European perspective towards the region. The current era is distinguished by European initiatives that specifically target the political leadership of the parties involved in the dispute. The aforementioned obligatory modes of intervention are frequently perceived as comprising the incentives and deterrents wielded by a prosperous and influential external actor. The level of European support for Israel experienced a decline, as the persistence of the occupation caused a shift in European sympathies from the pre-1967 disadvantaged party (Israel) to the post-1967 disadvantaged party (the Palestinians).

It is widely acknowledged that the Balfour Declaration of 1917 was a defining point in the Israel-Palestine conflict. This declaration marked a key chapter in the history of the region, and its effects have been felt for a long time. The proclamation,

which was issued by the British government, stated support for the formation of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine, which was ruled by the Ottomans at the time. This proclamation, which was motivated by a variety of geopolitical and imperial motives, sparked a complex web of tensions and struggles with its announcement. From a European point of view, the Balfour Declaration was a reflection of the evolving dynamics of World War I. During this time, the British government was attempting to garner support from Jewish communities, particularly in the United States and Russia. At the same time, it was a sign that imperialistic policies would continue to be implemented in the Middle East, as European countries sought to remake the terrain that had been left behind by the Ottoman Empire. The vague language used in the proclamation planted the seeds for future disputes and created the conditions for competing national aspirations and territorial claims. As a result of European intervention in the aftermath of the Balfour Declaration, the course of the Israel-Palestine conflict would be shaped. This involvement would have an impact on the mandate period and would lay the framework for a bitter struggle over the territory that continues to reverberate to this day.

The post-World War II era emerged as a critical juncture in the Israel-Palestine conflict, with European powers navigating the complex aftermath of the war and contributing to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. The horrors of the Holocaust had a profound impact on international opinion, compelling the world community to address the question of Jewish statehood. In this context, the United Nations proposed the partition plan in 1947, recommending the division of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem as an international city. European powers, scarred by the recent war and grappling with their own geopolitical interests, played a decisive role in shaping the discourse around the partition plan. While some nations, haunted by guilt over the Holocaust, supported the establishment of a Jewish state, others were cautious about potential consequences for regional stability. The subsequent declaration of the State of Israel in 1948 triggered a series of regional conflicts, leading to the Arab-Israeli War. European powers found themselves entangled in the unfolding events, with varying degrees of recognition and support for the newly established state. The post-World War II period thus marked a crucial chapter in the Israel-Palestine conflict, where European decisions and actions continued to influence the trajectory of a complex and enduring struggle for sovereignty and self-determination in the Middle East.

The Israel-Palestine conflict was notably impacted by the Cold War era, as the geopolitical conflicts between the Soviet Union-led Eastern Bloc and the Western Bloc, which included European nations, unfolded in the Middle East. The region's strategic significance, located at the intersection of Asia, Africa, and Europe, has amplified its relevance in the global contest for dominance. The European countries were confronted with the complexities of the Israel-Palestine dispute throughout the Cold War era, as they had to manage their colonial histories, economic pursuits, and alliances while navigating this geopolitical situation.

During the period of rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, European nations such as the United Kingdom and France encountered the task of upholding a precarious equilibrium in the region. The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 had already resulted in tense relations with Arab nations that were

affiliated with the Soviet Union. The Suez Crisis of 1956 serves as a notable illustration of the complex diplomatic manoeuvring undertaken by European nations, when the United Kingdom and France formed an alliance with Israel in opposition to Egypt, a country aligned with the Soviet Union. The exacerbation of pre-existing tensions in the region was a direct result of the competition during the Cold War, as the two superpowers aimed to extend their domains of influence by either siding with or opposing the newly established state of Israel, or by providing support to Arab nationalist organisations.

The Six-Day War, which took place in 1967, represented a significant milestone as Israel achieved a rapid triumph that resulted in a fundamental reconfiguration of the geopolitical terrain. The European countries, including the Soviet Union, shown diverse levels of support for either side in response to the conflict. The Yom Kippur War that took place in 1973 and the accompanying peace efforts brought attention to the lasting legacy of Cold War dynamics. The involvement of superpowers played a significant role in shaping diplomatic endeavours and regional alliances.

During the Cold War era, European nations were confronted with the complex Israel-Palestine problem, which was intricately intertwined with the overarching East-West geopolitical dynamics. The attempt to preserve a fragile equilibrium demonstrated an awareness of the intricate geopolitical intricacies of the region and the influence of global power dynamics on the course of events in the Middle East. The fighting during the Cold War era had a lasting impact on various aspects, such as alliances, armament transfers, and diplomatic strategies. These effects still resonate in the intricate geopolitical environment of the region at present.

The Oslo Accords, which were launched during the early 1990s, represent a pivotal milestone in the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict, symbolising the commencement of a fresh phase characterised by diplomatic involvement and the prospect of achieving a durable resolution. The participation of European actors in the Oslo peace process was of paramount importance in helping the negotiation process and influencing the course of the peace talks. As the United States took on a pivotal role in facilitating negotiations between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), European countries, both collectively and individually, endeavoured to make contributions to the peace process and assist in the pursuit of a comprehensive resolution to the enduring conflict.

The involvement of European actors in the Oslo Accords exhibited a multifaceted nature. The European Union (EU) has played a significant economic role in giving financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority, thereby helping to the advancement of infrastructure and the establishment of institutions essential for self-governance. European nations were active participants in the Multilateral Working Groups that were established under the scope of the Oslo process. These groups were dedicated to tackling several important matters, including but not limited to water management, refugee affairs, and economic development. The utilisation of a multilateral strategy emphasised the all-encompassing character of the peace process, acknowledging that the establishment of lasting peace necessitated the resolution of a variety of interrelated matters.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that other European nations, with Norway being particularly noteworthy, played pivotal roles in aiding the clandestine negotiations that ultimately resulted in the establishment of the Oslo Accords. The quiet and unbiased mediation efforts undertaken by Norway played a pivotal role in establishing the necessary conditions for the momentous handshake between Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat on the White House lawn in 1993, marking a significant milestone in Israeli-Palestinian relations. European governments have consistently provided support to the peace process in the following years, including diplomatic initiatives, expertise, and financial assistance to strengthen the delicate state of peace.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the early sense of hopefulness, the Oslo Accords encountered a multitude of obstacles, including persistent acts of aggression, conflicts over territorial claims, and discord regarding the execution of pivotal clauses. European powers were confronted with the task of managing these problems, endorsing a two-state resolution and encouraging both parties to uphold their obligations. The killing of Prime Minister Rabin in 1995 and following events served to exacerbate the complexities surrounding the peace process.

Upon reflection, the Oslo Accords can be seen as a noteworthy endeavour aimed at achieving a resolution to the Israel-Palestine issue, wherein European nations assumed a crucial role in providing support and facilitating the negotiation process. Although the achievement of the agreements' ultimate success remained elusive, the period in Oslo established the necessary foundation for further negotiations and exemplified the possibility for international cooperation in effectively addressing one of the most persistent conflicts in the world. The involvement of European actors in the Oslo peace process highlights the connectivity of the European region and emphasises the collective duty of the global community in pursuing an equitable and enduring resolution to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

The European Union (EU) has played a significant role in settling the Israel-Palestine issue by utilising its diplomatic clout and economic leverage to contribute to the ongoing peace process. The European Union's engagement in the region has exhibited a diverse range of approaches, demonstrating a dedication to achieving a comprehensive and enduring resolution to the long-standing conflict. The EU has consistently upheld the two-state solution as a fundamental principle, endorsing the creation of a self-governing and sustainable Palestinian state that coexists peacefully and securely alongside Israel. The European Union (EU) has actively pursued several diplomatic measures with the objective of fostering discussion and facilitating negotiations between the Israeli and Palestinian parties. The Quartet on the Middle East, which consists of the United Nations, the United States, the European Union, and Russia, has assumed a pivotal role in effectively coordinating global endeavours aimed at facilitating the peace process. The European Union (EU) has regularly expressed its support for United Nations (UN) resolutions that advocate for a fair and enduring conclusion to the war. The EU places significant emphasis on the importance of upholding international law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention.

From an economic standpoint, the European Union (EU) has played a substantial role as a benefactor to the Palestinian Authority. The EU has extended

financial aid and development assistance to facilitate the creation of essential institutions and infrastructure, with the ultimate objective of facilitating the construction of a prospective Palestinian state. The European Union (EU) has also enacted laws with the objective of distinguishing between Israel and the territories under occupation, thereby expressing its disapproval of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The aforementioned measures highlight the European Union's dedication to upholding principles of international law and its involvement in advancing a mutually agreed resolution that upholds the rights and aspirations of both involved parties.

The European Union (EU) has encountered difficulties in upholding a cohesive stance among its member states regarding the Israel-Palestine issue. Nevertheless, the EU's engagement in this matter has showcased its acknowledgment of the broader regional and global ramifications associated with the conflict. The European Union's dedication to upholding a system of international norms and regulations, safeguarding human rights, and promoting equitable conflict resolution has established it as a prominent diplomatic entity in the peace process. Nevertheless, the persistent obstacles, such as the continual growth of Israeli settlements and sporadic instances of heightened aggression, highlight the intricate nature of the conflict and emphasise the necessity for continuous involvement by the international community.

The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign targeting Israel has generated significant controversy and division, eliciting differing levels of endorsement and resistance within European countries. The grassroots movement, initiated in 2005 by Palestinian civil society organisations, advocates for economic and cultural actions to be taken against Israel until it demonstrates compliance with international law and acknowledges the rights of the Palestinian people. The European engagement with the BDS movement has exhibited a multifaceted nature, displaying a diverse array of viewpoints across civil society, political establishments, and national administrations.

Civil society in multiple European nations has emerged as a significant catalyst for BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) endeavours. This phenomenon is indicative of the aspirations harboured by certain activists and advocacy organisations to employ nonviolent strategies in order to exert pressure on Israel, compelling it to address pertinent concerns including the occupation of Palestinian territories, expansion of settlements, and the treatment of Palestinian refugees. Grassroots initiatives, academic boycotts, and demands for divestment from corporations engaged in activities within Israeli settlements have garnered support throughout diverse European societies. Proponents assert that the implementation of these measures is important in order to ensure that Israel is held responsible for purported transgressions of both international law and human rights. Nevertheless, European governments have exhibited varying positions with relation to the BDS movement. Certain nations, predominantly those in Northern Europe, have exhibited greater openness towards aspects of the movement. Conversely, other countries like as Germany and France have adopted a more sceptical position. Numerous European governments and political figures have articulated apprehensions over the BDS

movement, frequently perceiving it as a potential impediment to the peace process or as a means of delegitimizing Israel. There are others who contend that the implementation of BDS measures carries the potential to impede the facilitation of productive discourse and discussions between the Israeli and Palestinian parties.

At the European Union (EU) level, there has been a concerted endeavour to establish a unified policy towards the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign. The European Parliament adopted a resolution in 2015 which expressed opposition towards the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement and provided endorsement for a two-state solution. The resolution underscored the European Union's dedication to recognising and upholding Israel's right to exist, while also highlighting the imperative of reaching a mutually agreed upon resolution to the Israel-Palestine conflict through diplomatic negotiations. The European Union's attitude exemplifies the difficulties associated with attaining a cohesive approach among member states that have various perspectives on the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement. The discourse surrounding the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement in Europe encompasses the wider conflict between individuals and groups campaigning for the rights of Palestinians and those who prioritise Israel's security considerations. European countries are confronted with the intricate challenge of reconciling the principles of freedom of expression and peaceful opposition with apprehensions over the potential consequences of BDS actions on diplomatic ties and regional stability. The ongoing dialogue highlights the intricate nature of the Israel-Palestine problem and the varied viewpoints within European cultures over the most efficacious methods for attaining a fair and enduring resolution.

The influence of European viewpoints on the international legal framework pertaining to the Israel-Palestine issue has played a crucial role in shaping diplomatic discussions and policy strategies in the region. European states have consistently placed significant emphasis on the significance of adhering to international law as a comprehensive framework for addressing long-lasting conflicts, particularly those related to territorial disputes and human rights issues.

The European participation has primarily revolved around territorial disputes, with particular emphasis on Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. European nations largely consider the creation and growth of settlements to be in violation of international law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention. This convention explicitly prohibits the transfer of civilian populations by an occupying power into the land it occupies. European nations, both as a collective entity and on an individual basis, have shown significant opposition to settlement initiatives, perceiving them as hindrances to the achievement of a two-state solution and as factors that contribute to the ongoing prolonging of the war.

European opinions on the Israel-Palestine issue have likewise placed significant emphasis on human rights considerations. European countries have consistently advocated for the safeguarding of Palestinian rights, encompassing the entitlement to self-determination, unrestricted mobility, and the provision of essential services. The European Union, specifically, has placed significant emphasis on the imperative of upholding international human rights legislation when tackling the

conflict. The treatment of Palestinian civilians has raised concerns among European nations, particularly about issues such as house demolitions, limits on movement, and the use of force. As a result, these nations have been advocating for accountability and the respect to human rights standards.

The Israel-Palestine conflict has been a subject of intersection between European viewpoints on international law within the International Criminal Court (ICC). The European nations have exhibited diverse reactions to the International Criminal Court's investigation into purported war crimes in the region, so demonstrating the presence of nuanced stances within the European Union. While several countries demonstrate their endorsement of the International Criminal Court's (ICC) function in promoting accountability, there are opposing viewpoints, such as that of the United States, which contest the court's intervention in the Israeli-Palestinian situation.

European nations have significantly contributed to the United Nations (UN) efforts in addressing the Israel-Palestine issue. Their involvement has encompassed a wide range of actions, including the formulation of resolutions and participation in peacekeeping missions. The United states (UN) has served as a prominent platform for global dialogue over the crisis, with European states playing an active role in influencing the organization's reactions.

A significant element of European engagement inside the United Nations (UN) is to the formulation and endorsement of resolutions concerning the Israel-Palestine conflict. European nations have frequently endeavoured to strike a delicate equilibrium between their longstanding connections with Israel, apprehensions regarding security, and obligations towards international law and the rights of the Palestinian population. The discussion surrounding resolutions pertaining to topics such as settlements, the status of Jerusalem, and the right of return for Palestinian refugees has been a subject of extensive scholarly discourse, highlighting the wide range of opinions held by European stakeholders.

European involvement in peacekeeping missions has been a significant aspect of their participation within the United Nations framework. European nations have made significant contributions in terms of both personnel and resources to United Nations peacekeeping operations, with the primary objective of upholding stability within the region and creating an environment that is favourable to achieving a peaceful conclusion. The diverse nature of European involvement within the UN framework is exemplified by the obstacles encountered by these missions, including the navigation of intricate political landscapes and the management of conflict dynamics.

The diplomatic endeavours undertaken within the United Nations have played a crucial role in promoting and enabling constructive communication between parties involved in conflicts. European states, whether acting independently or as members of larger coalitions, have been actively engaged in suggesting and endorsing diplomatic initiatives with the objective of promoting the advancement of the peace process. These activities encompass endeavours to reinvigorate diplomatic talks, mediate truces, and tackle the humanitarian ramifications of the conflict. Notwithstanding these endeavours, obstacles endure inside the United

Nations structure. The role of the Security Council, namely the utilisation of the veto power by influential members, has occasionally impeded the approval of resolutions that could potentially influence the course of the conflict. Furthermore, the complex geopolitical dynamics of the Middle East have had an impact on the efficacy of initiatives led by the United Nations. European nations have had to navigate a multifaceted terrain characterised by regional alliances and disputes.

The European Union has consistently and prominently advocated for the two-state solution as a fundamental aspect of its strategy to resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict. The concept of establishing two separate and autonomous states, namely Israel and Palestine, coexisting together and safeguarded from harm, has received extensive support from European nations as the preferable approach for addressing the enduring territorial and political conflicts in the area.

The European endorsement of the two-state solution is based on the principles of international law, which encompass United Nations decisions, as well as a dedication to upholding the fundamental rights of both Israeli and Palestinian populations. European nations have persistently advocated for diplomatic negotiations between the involved parties, guided by the principles outlined in the Oslo Accords and the Road Map for Peace. The European Union (EU) has expressed a strong stance about the necessity of a comprehensive and equitable resolution that acknowledges the legitimate aspirations of both parties involved, while considering matters such as borders, refugees, and the status of Jerusalem.

European countries and the European Union have been actively involved in diplomatic endeavours aimed at promoting the two-state solution. This engagement encompasses the facilitation of talks, provision of assistance for peace initiatives, and active advocacy for the return of direct negotiations. The Quartet on the Middle East, consisting of the United States, the United Kingdom, the European Union, and Russia, has served as a pivotal tool for European states to synchronise global endeavours aimed at promoting the peace process.

Nevertheless, despite the prevalent rhetorical endorsement of the two-state option, the actual implementation of this concept has encountered various obstacles. The impediment of progress can be attributed to a number of intricate matters, including as the construction of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, the status of Jerusalem, and the right of return for Palestinian refugees. European nations have consistently voiced their apprehensions regarding trends that undermine the feasibility of a two-state solution and have actively advocated for actions to tackle these challenges.

Recent developments in the Israel-Palestine conflict have spurred varied reactions from European nations, reflecting the evolving nature of the geopolitical landscape and the ongoing challenges in the region. One significant focal point has been the proposed annexation plans by Israel, particularly in the West Bank. European countries, individually and through the European Union (EU), expressed deep concerns about the potential implications of such actions on the viability of a two-state solution. Several European leaders called for a negotiated resolution and underscored the importance of international law in determining the status of territories.

Protests and unrest in the region, triggered by issues such as access to

religious sites and contested territories, have also elicited responses from European nations. While emphasizing the right to peaceful assembly and expression, European leaders have called for restraint and dialogue to address underlying grievances. The EU, in particular, has reiterated its commitment to supporting efforts that lead to a comprehensive and just resolution of the conflict, emphasizing the importance of respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Regional geopolitical shifts have added complexity to European responses. The normalization agreements between Israel and some Arab nations, brokered by the United States, have been met with a mix of cautious optimism and calls for continued attention to the Palestinian question. European nations have stressed the need for any regional developments to contribute positively to the broader peace process and to address the legitimate concerns of both Israelis and Palestinians.

CONCLUSION

Europe has exerted significant influence in determining the course of the conflict by actively participating in several stages, spanning from the colonial period to the present-day geopolitical context. The Balfour Declaration, the time of mandate, and the dynamics following World War II have established a foundation for ongoing difficulties, prompting European nations to confront the ethical and diplomatic obstacles presented by the prolonged battle. During the Cold War era, the Israel-Palestine conflict became entangled with global power dynamics, as European states strategically manoeuvred within the broader East-West rivalry. The Oslo Accords represented a significant change in approach, as European participation demonstrated diplomatic efforts focused on promoting a process of reconciliation. Notwithstanding the early sense of hopefulness, persistent hurdles emerged, highlighting the nuanced character of the conflict and the intricate complexity inherent in attaining a sustainable resolution. The European Union (EU) has played a significant role in contemporary diplomacy, utilising its economic, diplomatic, and political clout to promote a fair and all-encompassing resolution. European nations, both collectively and individually, have made significant contributions to peacekeeping endeavours, diplomatic endeavours, and economic assistance provided to the Palestinian Authority. The European Union's dedication to the two-state solution highlights its aspiration for a harmonious cohabitation between the nations of Israel and Palestine. Nevertheless, persistent obstacles continue to exist, and subsequent developments have posed additional tests to the responses of European entities. The European nations are currently reevaluating their strategy due to the developing circumstances brought about by the projected annexation plans by Israel, ongoing protests, and regional geopolitical upheavals. The intricate equilibrium among historical connections, security factors, and a dedication to international law and human rights has grown progressively intricate, necessitating refined diplomatic strategies.

European nations persist in grappling with the complex geopolitical dynamics of the Middle East, with the objective of actively contributing to the attainment of a fair and enduring resolution to the Israel-Palestine issue. The continuous commitment of Europe to addressing the conflict is reflected by the BDS movement, considerations of international law, United Nations engagement, and reactions to

recent developments. The presence of various viewpoints within Europe serves to stress the difficulties in achieving a cohesive strategy, nevertheless, the continued involvement of the continent demonstrates its acknowledgement of the worldwide ramifications of the conflict and the collective duty to promote peace.



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