ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT: CHALLENGES TO INTERNATIONAL POLICY

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The conflict that had been shaped by the international policy of expansion and colonialism, now in turn affects the international policy itself substantially. Israel-Palestine conflict was once used by the major powers as the controlling weapon of the middle east region, but has now turned the tables other way around. It has been overshadowing the whole politics of the Middle East. As Abdullah II of Jordan has rightly said that, no matter what's happening in the Middle East - the Arab Spring, etc, the economic challenges, high rates of unemployment - the emotional, critical issue is always the Israeli-Palestinian one. Now, the Israel-Palestine conflict is affecting the international politics at several levels.

Before understanding the complexities of the Israel-Palestine issue, it is important that we must accustom ourselves with the root cause of the issue. The seeds of this conflict have been sown by the western powers with the establishment of the state of Israel, with bitter fruits had and still claiming the lives of innumerable people in both the states.

One of the major precursors of Israeli–Palestine conflict was the Jewish migration to Palestine. After the World Wars, and the Holocaust, the Jewish population began migrating (not all of them) to their homeland in Palestine, due to their holy connection to the land. For Jews, only by achieving majority status could they fulfil the 2000 year old dream; any circumscription on Jewish immigration was too much. For Arabs, the ultimate nightmare was losing the majority status in their own land; any Jewish immigration was too much. This was authentically a zero sum confrontation; no compromise would gratify either side. The Palestinians considered themselves to be the indigenous inhabitants of the land, whereas Israelis claimed the same piece of land on the basis of their historical and holy allegiance to the same. On 29 November 1947, the General Assembly adopted a resolution recommending the adoption and implementation of the Plan as Resolution 181, for the creation of Israel within the territory (former) of Palestine. Determinately, on May 14, 1947 a provisional state council of Jewish leader declared the independence of the Jewish nation, to be named Israel. Since then, there was no turning back to peace in the Israel-Palestine conflict. The issue further led to the 1967 war, terrorism, water disputes and the major issue of refugees in Israel-occupied area of West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Clashing policies

Like any other state, both Israel and Palestine have formulated their policies on the basis of their past and the primary objective. For Israel, it was quite simplistic, since the state was formulated after the decades of the atrocities on jews, the primary goal was to preserve the identity of the Jewish state. Secondly, the geographical position of Israel endangers its existence as it was placed right in the middle of several Arab states. Moreover, the 1967 Arab-Israel war made it clear to Israel that it is not going to get the support of its neighbouring states, which led to the third policy. Thirdly, it has aimed to ensure that at least one major power supports Israel and other do not actively oppose it. Thus, from the very beginning Israel held USA close to it for its own security.

Whereas the situation was completely different for the Palestinians, which has the support of the neighbouring states, but no state to live in. It refuted the idea of the Jewish state and sought recognition of a state for itself through any means. Secondly, it tried to unite the Muslims to undo the justice that they have faced at the hands of the western imperial powers. And, finally its immediate objective was the rehabilitation of refugees stuck in the Israel occupied territories.

These policies in turn created allies and enemies for both the state, and further, shape the policies of several states towards both of them. Both state and non-state actors played a vital role in the formulation of the regional as well as international scenario. First and foremost important actor in the Israel –Palestine conflict is none other than the USA. USA provides abundant support to Israel through the thick and the thin, no matter how offensive Israel's activities became. USA with others such as the UN, EU, and Russia or known as Middle Quartet has recommended peaceful resolution to the conflict. But, as been observed the reports are bunch of repetitive recommendation, thus no substantial step has not been taken so far. In fact, even an actor such as the UN has failed miserably to bring peace between the two states. So far, the UN has introduced one of the highest number of resolutions for Israel-Palestine conflicts, but they remain mere words on the piece of paper. It is primarily the involvement of the USA, which obstructs the liberty of the UN.

Further, the Israel-Palestine conflict has also included the illlegitimate non-state actors such as terrorist groups, whose policies clash with the external state's policy of peaceful resolution of the issue. Under the veil of nationalism, two names gained weight: World Zionist Organization (Israeli) and Palestinian Liberation Organization (Palestinian). There were two major violent upsurges took place, intifadas I and II, where several terrorist groups came into being such as Hamas. Thus, it led to addition of terrorism in the conflict and strengthened it in the whole of the middle east region, where already several states were struck with other terrorist groups. Along with states, these non-state actors collaborate with each other to influence the world system.

Challenges to the international policies

At present, Israel and Palestine are facing the most gory upsurge since the second intifada. On 8 July 2014, an escalation of the Gaza–Israel conflict began when Israel launched Operation Protective Edge in the Palestinian unity-governed Gaza Strip. The stated aim was to stop rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip, which several non-Hamas affiliated groups had engaged in launching in June in response to an Israeli crackdown on Hamas members in the West Bank. After an Israeli Air Force air strike killed 7 Hamas members, Hamas itself fired rockets into Israel. Since then it has been more than a month the war between Hamas and Israeli troops has not been terminated.

First of all, the policy of humanitarian assistance and international law has been overlooked. The United Nations has been severely criticized for its minute involvement at this movement. On the former basis, even after a month of continuous violence, the UN or any other member has not initiated the implementation of RTP (Responsibility to Protect) in the Gaza strip. On the basis of the latter, the international forum has consistently overlooked the violation of international law under the shield of self-defence. But, what is worth noting is that there is a clause in the self-defence regarding the usage of proportionate force, which has been violated by Israel, and thus doesn't provide it the protection of self-defence.

After the political policies, now we must look at the economic policies, which have been disrupted by this conflict. The ongoing conflict has adversely affected the resources, both natural and human to a great extent. There has been a humongous loss of fields and lives of the people, which in turn affects the trade of both the countries and at large the GDP. Finally, for the first time there has been pressure from international communities, not just states or NGOs, but the civilians who are protesting against the violence in the Gaza which will influence their respective countries to take the necessary steps in this scenario.

The Israel-Palestine conflict at large has affected the world system at several levels. Firstly, it has brought the revival of the direct confrontation of a state and the non-state actors. Secondly, it has brought back the realist world where the superpowers will wait for the halt of the destruction of smaller powers for their material gains. Thirdly, with the continuity of this conflict, the liberal world of cooperation and obedience of law and statute, seems a far fetched dream.

This conflict has proved that we are still living in a hawkish environment. Moreover, it has proved that time is not a great healer in this case, but provides a greater time to prepare for even a greater war. As Shira Tamir said, "Hit the "snooze" button on the Israel-Palestine situation enough times, and eventually the clock becomes a time-bomb."

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