

## “SACRED WARS: HOW RELIGION SHAPES THE MAP OF THE MIDDLE EAST”

**Jahan Bakht**

English Language Instructor, Bloomfield Halls School, Multan, Pakistan.

### **Abstract**

*A rather much unpopular belief, though pertinent enough to highlight is how religion is the epicenter of the façade which has been hovering over the land of Palestine since the last seven decades and counting. From the mass genocide of unarmed Jews during Nazi rule to butchering of the innocent Muslim Palestinians, nothing has changed over the course of history. (Mike Corder, 2025) A particular group of people dictate their self-proclaimed right over a territory and citing religion being the driver of their action. No religion is greater than humanity and if someone is too blind to see it he is a coward person. (Uloyol, 2021)*

*An unaddressed aspect of this conflict is; rise in xenophobia and intolerance worldwide along with the blatant violation of human rights. The shameful silence of United Nation along with eminent developed countries like Germany, USA, Australia and their allies shows how a certain mindset of 'superior ones' pertains and how such response to a mass genocide is unveiling them (Safdar, 2021). As the quote by Louis Farrakhan goes "They call them terrorists, I call them freedom fighters." It's high time a tentative end to this cul-de-sac situation is brought about in the Middle East in order to avoid another World War brewing into the polarized world.*

**Keywords:** conflict, genocide, religion, violation, politics, xenophobia, territory, legitimacy, arbitrator, compliant

### **1. Introduction**

For quite a long time, Jews and the Ottoman Empire lived on lands with no proper boundaries, each co existing peacefully. The shift in the relations of Jews, Muslims and Christians began in 1920 when British mandate for Palestine was established. In this time, certain fundamental decisions shaped the sour route of the relations between Jews and Muslims which has recently culminated into Israel's barbaric attack on Palestinians despite the UN resolutions for settling peace back.

In the beginning of the 20th century, group of young socialist revolutionaries including founders of the future state of Israel, like David Ben-Gurion immigrated in waves from Russia and Eastern Europe. They came here fleeing ghettos, facing impoverishment and the violence of pogroms, they believed that the only answer to the global affliction of antisemitism was Zionism. (Bazelon, 2024)

Now the biggest thing that is curbing the peace resolution for Muslim Palestine's is the weak position of all the Muslim countries in the world. OIC which was formed as to the response of Al Aqsa mosque in 1969 has failed to bring any tangible results for this plight. Among the several factors of how OIC has failed are the internal clashes of the member Muslim states such as Saudi and Iran. Unlike organizations such as the United Nations or NATO, the OIC lacks the ability to exert significant pressure on Israel or simply put its desired needs in meaningful manner. With absence of a collective military capability and various economic sanctions on it, its impact has been left to only symbolic gestures. (Shah, 2024)

It's important to analyze why the rest of the world is also a silent spectacle of all such atrocities. The remorseful response of west to Palestine plight has caused the already tenuous moral credibility of West in front of the entire world. If the West had nipped the bud in the starting, the fanaticism of Israel would have been put to an end and Oct. 7 might never have happened. Instead the US has used its veto in the UN 45 times since 1972 to protect Israel and help her continue the sinister agenda. Moreover, in the US, Germany and the UK, anti-Semitism has been weaponized to shun the pro-Palestinian voices. A lot of reporters have also been fired for offending the pro-Israel sentiments. It's high time to realize the impacts of Western biasness to the future geopolitical landscape of the world. (Narine, 2024)

**a) Problem Statement**

The Middle East is a landscape where frontiers and faith recurrently collide with each other turning certain sacred beliefs into political boundaries. In older times, religion used to be a source of unity, however, in present times it has become intertwined with geo-political ambition and violence. The enduring contest over territory and its rightful claim, points towards a rivalry holding deeper meaning which is the tussle over identity and divine claim. It is pertinent to understand that how sacred narratives help in shaping territorial conflicts, which are essential for region's future stability and pathway towards a viable peaceful solution.

**b) Research Questions**

One of the main aspects this research will seek to look how is the western world slowly cutting down the roots of Muslims and strategically spreading Islamophobia and relating radical ideas to it. (Lindsay, 2025) Moreover, the plight of women and children in war-torn areas shovel deep down and with the momentary aid their sufferings are done and dusted. PTSD and Women health is rarely brought to light. For generations, Palestine has been systematically targeted. Economic dependence, political alliances, trade deals, defense contract and many cobwebbed treaties of numerous Muslim majority countries with the economic giants, makes it "inconvenient" to speak out against injustice. Instead of vocalizing for moral charge for justice, these nations protect their interests and turn blind eye to injustices that prevail just to appease the powerful allies and maintaining a "neutral" image. (Umar, 2025)

**c. Objectives**

The primary objective of research is to identify the workable solution to end such ethnic cleansing of Palestinians at the hands barbaric Israelis. This shall include the list of events where flawed diplomacy of Muslim leaders swayed away the chances of peaceful negotiation. Along with that this research aims to identify the 'humanitarian crisis' which has emerged in Palestine and a remorseful fact that Palestine has dropped Batch 2024-2025 because there is no youth left. The dual face of UN and other peace organization being unmasked by the recent biasness would be a part of research too.

**d. Significance of Study**

This study is significant as it offers a comprehensive analysis of the arbitrators of such genocide, the states who are complaint with the mala fide actions of Israel. This research will contribute to a deeper understanding of how media tends to dissect the actual news and presents this humanitarian violation as a mere political tussle. This study helps to examine how state-religion policies shape the militarization of territorial conflicts and investigates the geopolitical competition.

**2. Discussion and Findings:**

In the convoluted Israel-Palestine conflict, the status of Jerusalem continues being the enduring disagreement between the two. There are several religious apocalyptic narratives and sanctity of holy sites which continues to brew the tension between the Jews and Muslims. Moreover, rumors propagated by the extremists factions in social media such as 'Jewish Plan' or the destruction of Al-Aqsa mosque and building a Jewish third temple on its remnants. All of this collectively hurts the sentiments of Muslims. The worsening socio-economic conditions of the Arab countries and Muslim world have contributed to the growth of religious radicalism, which has attracted youth towards fanaticism, and religion-inspired politics. Similarly the Muslim ideology propagated mostly by the Hamas, seeks to revive Islam and re-establish the historical Islamic Caliphate by seizing power. Muslims They Israel to be a "foreign object" in the way of establishing a potential Islamic Caliphate and for that they continue justifying the use of violence. (Mostafa, 2018)

**Historical Relevance:**

More than a century ago, the seeds of this conflict were sown with a letter known as 'Balfour

Declaration'. Foreign Secretary of Britain in 1917; Arthur Balfour wrote a letter to Lionel Walter Rothschild who was the figurehead of the British Jewish community. The British government committed to the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and assisting in making it a reality. As a result with the assistance of European powers the slow immigration of the Jews started into the Palestinian land where Palestinians were 90% of the population. With the help of a British Mandate in 1923 which lasted until 1948, British facilitated mass Jewish immigration. Most of the new residents were the ones who were fleeing Nazism in Europe and facing protests and strikes. (Alsaffin, 2023)

### **2.1. Villainizing Hamas – State sponsored agenda of Islamophobia:**

All the studies imply to discuss the atrocities inflicted on the Palestinians and how Muslim world is strong enough to take stance over it. It has been more than 10 years since a meaningful attempt was made to get Palestinians and Israelis to discuss the future, together or apart. Within the Palestine there is division in political leadership; on one side is Hamas in Gaza and the Palestinian Authority on the West Bank. Both of them are able to make or deliver any sort of deal. Therefore, life in Gaza is controlled by Israel in a more indirect way. While Hamas rules inside Gaza, Israel (in partnership with Egypt) tightly controls exit and entry.

The hope of 'two state solution' is a dead concept now. The Israeli blockade has in theory designed to limit Hamas's ability to arm itself, has destroyed ordinary Gazans' ability to build a functional and healthy society. All of this has culminated to affect the GDP of Palestine and rose to human miseries and poverty. (Beauchamp, 2023).

### **2.2. Theoretical Framework**

The theory that best suits Israel is Social Identity theory (SIT) which explains how individuals' self-concepts and interactions with others are significantly influenced by their membership in social groups. 'Power Elite Model' explains Israel's stance as best too where elite members of Jewish community with the help of European powers continue to inflict their might on the Palestinian land. 'Hegemonic stability theory' also fits perfectly to this conflict where Israel is the hegemon.

The Power Elite Model provides insight into Israel's political structure and its enduring dominance in the region. It argues that how a small group of interconnected elites with socio-economic and military control, navigate into national and international decision-making. In case of fascist state like Israel, this concentration of power within elite circles of the Jewish establishment has solidified over the years with alliances with Western powers, particularly the United States and Britain. Scholars such as Pappé (2004) and Chomsky (2015) clearly narrate that this alignment assists Israel to maintain its military and political leverage with crushing the sovereignty of Palestinians. The elite's influence extends beyond national boundaries, it shapes the global narratives, tames the political discourses around and legitimacy in such a way that always puts the Israeli interests ahead of any humanitarian crisis.

### **3. Methodology**

My approach to delve deep into the statistics of this issue will be selecting a particular time frame first. My research will be from 2010 onwards and analysis of the contemporary situation. The data I will study will be from the quantitative analysis of research journals, academic books and newspaper. Moreover, the Twitter trends and the role of social media in reshaping the war domain will also be analyzed.

Interviews and talk shows discussing this matter can be a vital source for deciphering the jest of conflict. With the collective collection of all the data, I will scrutinize what deems fit to my research and add my own perception of this conflict too.

The foremost ethical issue is 'humanitarian crises'. 2024 has witnessed jaw-dropping images of the cruelty inflicted in Gaza and the refugee camps. According to Palestinian health authorities more than 35000 people, mostly civilians have been killed and 77000 plus have been

wounded in Israeli attacks. The bias media campaign, Instagram Algorithm and attacking the protestors' worldwide shows how unfair this attack has been from the start. USA along with her allies has been arresting the protestors and chant at the same time for freedom of speech. The data of this will be taken from the newspaper and Instagram lives of the media people in that relevant area.

Lastly, the sociological perspective of an average Jew of Israel will be put to study that how inhumane can a man be to feel ease in butchering a kid. The kind of collateral damage this conflict has stirred in the region will continue to have ripple effects in the near future.

#### **4. Results**

This conflict would not have continued to sustain too long if it wasn't the weak representation of Muslim political world. Jews gained momentum in 1920's and so was the time when the Ottoman Empire declined. This research will continue to dig deeper into any apocalyptic events or prophecies which Jews might have felt too ardent to follow.

Similarly, post WW2 the gradual increase in the attack on Muslim dominated places like Iraq, Syria and Iran really rings a bell that a targeted religious group being hounded by western world whilst chanting about the Human Rights and World Peace. Over the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, few of the Arab states like UAE and Saudi have boomed in their economic success

Did the poor Gazan, Syrians or the attacked Muslim state's blood was the cost of their economic success?

Did the USA systematically plan to set up a stage for anti-Semitism and ignite social media warfare?

All of the above mentioned statements can be true as Islamic bloc representation went on a downward trajectory since 1950's.

My research will aim to look for the loopholes in this quagmire and inquire for a plausible end to the long-ignited war.

#### **5. Conclusion:**

The complex landscape of Middle East presents a clear depiction of how power tames the battle card of religion in territorial gain. It shows how patterns of conflict revolve around 'Might is Right'. It blurs out the common fallacies which United Nations and numerous peace treaties have been chanting for past half century. The Israeli Palestinian conflict is more of paradise fools as compared to discord on resources. Israeli fascists Jews have done the politicization of sacred sites such as Jerusalem's Temple Mount/Al-Aqsa compound and used it as a religious symbol and a prophecy of Promised Land. Whereas, the aboriginal of Palestine are being treated as slaves in their own land (Bar-Tal, 2013; Juergensmeyer, 2017).

Huntington (1996) and Fox (2001) argue that religious identity often transcends to being a perspective which nations and states use for themselves, and portray others as adversaries. Eventually leading to a conflict which isn't merely about specific chunk of land but about an existential belonging, a self-proclaimed right to inhabit, rule, and name a place. However, labelling religion as a sole catalyst for such chaos would be a narrow lensed argument. Religion has been always used for its dual nature, both a mobilizer of violence and a tool for moral transformation. It is high time that the scholars and policymakers move towards a more nuanced approach to acclimatize the norm of peace in the region. Therefore, such "sacred wars" use the pretext of religion and security risks to cohort their unlawful annexation of lands. Iraq-Iran war, Arab Spring, Fall of Dhaka, Soviet Disintegration and countless other intifadas in the last century, all point out towards the lust of power and control.

#### **6. Recommendations**

The challenge for the future does not lay in evicting religion from the socio-political spheres, but by reimagining how the moral implication of religion can be directed towards coexistence rather than blood thriving conquests.

## Bibliography

- Alsaifin, L. (2023). What's the Israel-Palestine conflict about? A simple guide. *ALJAZEERA*.
- Bazelon, E. (2024). The Road to 1948.
- Beauchamp, Z. (2023). In defense of the two-state solution.
- Lindsay, D. A. (2025). *The Political Ramifications of Rising Islamophobia in the West*. Muslim World Report.
- Mike Corder, M. Q. (2025). More experts say Israel's offensive in Gaza constitutes genocide.
- Mostafa, M. G. (2018). Religion and the Israel-Palestinian Conflict: Cause, Consequence, and Cure.
- Narine, S. (2024). Western moral credibility is dying along with thousands of Gaza citizens.
- Safdar, A. (2021). Corbyn-led tribunal accuses UK of complicity in Gaza genocide. *AL-JAZEERA*.
- Shah, S. A. (2024). Failure Of Organization Of Islamic Cooperation In Resolving Israeli-Palestinian Conflict – OpEd.
- Swaraj, S. (2023). A Comprehensive Analysis of the Israel-Palestine. Uloyol, B. (2021). Religion Above Humanity or Humanity Above Religion?
- Umar, U. a. (2025). The graveyard of dignity: 57 Muslim states and the silence over Gaza.
- Huntington, S. P. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. Simon & Schuster.
- Juergensmeyer, M. (2017). *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (4th ed.). University of California Press.