

Is Peace in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip Possible? A Historical and Comparative Analysis

Aeshna Jain

Student at Pathways School, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52403/gijash.20250314>

ABSTRACT

This essay explores the complex question of whether peace in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is possible by tracing the historical, religious, and political roots of the Israel–Palestine conflict. It outlines competing territorial claims, beginning with ancient Jewish ties to the land, through the partition of 1948, the Intifadas, and the rise of Hamas, to the present-day war. Beyond history, the essay emphasizes the role of religion, nationalism, extremism, and third-party mediation in either exacerbating or attempting to resolve the conflict. Proposed solutions – such as the two-state, one-state, or three-state models – are critically examined through comparisons with other nationalist conflicts, including Cyprus, Kashmir, Syria, and Northern Ireland. While the Good Friday Agreement demonstrates that long-term peace is theoretically possible, the vested geopolitical interests of regional and global powers make such stability unlikely in the Israel–Palestine context. Peace, therefore, may only be temporary.

Keywords: Israel-Palestine conflict, West Bank, Gaza Strip, peace process, comparative conflicts

Two different national identities exist in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Palestinian and Israeli. Both argue for land and have claims to territory, for a state of no war and tranquillity in the “landlocked territory near the coast of the Mediterranean Sea in the

Levant region of West Asia and the Gaza Strip, (Gaza)” (CIA, 2025). This nationalist dispute necessitates thorough historical consideration, careful examination of potential solutions, and an analysis of the success of resolving parallel situations throughout history. Ultimately, peace in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is possible but only for a temporary period. This paper analyses the possibility of peace in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip by examining the history of the region, observing parallel situations and taking a comparative look at the same.

Israel’s historical claim dates back to 1000 B.C.E., when King Saul established the Israelite monarchy as a result of the Old Testament telling Abraham and his people to settle in a land called Canaan, which is in the approximate region of modern-day Israel (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2019). This monarchy continued, with Solomon building the first Jewish temple in Jerusalem (Cataliotti & Lutz, 2023). This historical claim became part of the Jewish claim to the land of Israel. “This land would continue to be conquered and ruled by various groups. It would become home to many sites considered sacred by Jews, Muslims, and Christians alike” (Encyclopedia.com, 2025). During these times, Jews were forced to flee from their homes, creating a diaspora. In Europe, Jews would continue to face oppression. In the 1880s, many started immigrating back to their homeland, to the currently Ottoman-controlled Palestine. In 1917, the League of

Nations recognised a British declaration promising a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine (the Balfour declaration). With WW2, more and more Jews fled to Palestine for refuge from their oppression. In 1946, the United Nations planned to partition Palestine into 2 independent states: The Jewish state of Israel and the Arab state of Palestine. With international recognition of the Jewish state of Israel's creation in 1948, "The Law of Return" was passed, an essential part of the Zionist movement that allowed immigration into Israel (if you had Jewish ancestry) (History.com Editors, 2018).

When the partition of the 2 states occurred, many Arabs disagreed with the territory lines and thought the Jewish state was unfairly favoured. As a result, violence soon broke out and the Arab League, an alliance of the neighbouring Arab states of Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Syria and Saudi Arabia, was formed, rejecting the partition of the 2 states and attacking. Israel fought back and, after 9 months, had occupied much of the land intended for Palestine (Frisch and Sandler, 2004). While Egypt took control of the Gaza Strip and Jordan took control of the West Bank. This historic event was marked by the fleeing or expulsion of more than 720,000 Arabs. Many of which take residence in the Gaza Strip or the West Bank. This tension between Arabs and Jews would continue for decades and would result in many armed disputes and recurring violent rioting between the two populations. Such as the 6-day war, resulting in Israel gaining significant territory, and the first Intifada, resulting in hundreds of deaths.

After the first Intifada, Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) created the Oslo Accords, a "timetable for peace" mediated through US involvement. The Oslo Accords led to "self-governance for Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip through creation of the Palestinian Authority" (Britannica, 2020). The accords called for an end to hostilities between Israel and the Palestinians by May 1999, but the complexity that had underpinned decades of

disputes ultimately caused the process to break down, leaving the most difficult issues to fester into the year 2000. In 2000, further peace talks were unsuccessful as solutions could not be agreed upon for core disagreements like the status of Jerusalem, the rights of refugees, and increased Jewish settlements in Palestinian lands. Violent attacks, rioting, and suicide bombings broke out in response. This period of violence would later be called "The second Intifada", lasting 5 years, and marking the end of any peace as a result of the Oslo Accords. This period ended in 2005, when Israel withdrew from Gaza. In 2006, "a militant Sunni group, called Hamas, won the Palestinian legislative elections"; this result was met with violence as many considered Hamas a terrorist group due to their methods, suicide bombings and calls for the destruction of Israel. Hamas and Israel continued to clash violently. In 2017, Hamas called for the creation of the Palestinian state using the 1967 borders, as they did not recognize Israel as a state; Israel rejected. Rioting, violence and tense situations between the Arab and Jewish populations continued until the deadly Hamas attack on October 7th, 2023.

Currently, Palestine continues to fight for statehood and violent clashes with Israel have led to the Palestine-Israel war. Thus, territorial historical claims in support of both Israel and Palestine are heavily disputed through historical precedence and past degrees, immensely complicating the possibility of a solution based on historical claims, despite many countries calling for peace and peace talks in the UN. The region continues to hold significant religious, historical, and geopolitical value to both sides.

History aside, there are religious considerations with Jerusalem hosting extremely important religious sites, making Jerusalem neutral territory despite territorial claims. Religion is a recurring catalyst in the conflict; "Much of the fighting over the decades has revolved around the establishment of a Jewish nation at the cost of resident Arabs". This has manifested in

extremist mindsets on both sides, leading to military aggression and recurring rioting. This extremism has further exacerbated the conflict, creating increasing difficulties in the possibility of peace. Extremist actions of both sides serve to prove the same; Hamas attack on 7th October, the militia burning of Palestinians dubbed “all eyes on Rafah”, combined with the conflict-heavy history of the region, leads to the need for deeply evaluated action that takes into consideration all of the delicate details surrounding the existing conflict as it can be argued that ‘both sides are in the wrong’ thus inflicting restrictions or other actions on only one side would lead to further conflict (Gendler, 2024). Further limiting the possibility of a long-term solution.

Some of the suggested solutions are: the 2-state solution, 1-state solution (binational), 1-state solution (Israel solution), and 3-state solution. Presently, there are many solutions, such as the 2-state solution, being suggested. Based on the history of this region and the present climate of these regions, it is improbable that these solutions will last long, and that peace will only be temporary. The success of these resolutions can be observed through the many parallel situations that have occurred throughout history; the ‘Troubles’ (Northern Ireland) (Al Tahhan, 2008), the Syrian Crisis, the Jammu and Kashmir conflict (Vox, 2016) and the Cyprus dispute, each of which having explored various forms of these solutions and having had different levels of success in their resolution helped understand the possibility of peace in the West bank and Gaza strip. The Cyprus dispute is an ongoing nationalist territorial conflict between Greece and Turkey (BBC News, 2018). Cyprus is an island country in the Middle East (International Crisis Group, 2023). The dispute has remained unresolved, with more and more calls for peace. It has been going on for over 6 decades. When Cyprus was annexed by the British (1914), a guerrilla organisation of right-wing nationalist Greek Cypriots who wanted Enosis (the unification of Cyprus and Greece) was created (EOKA) (French,

2015). This trend of a one-state solution continued. The Turkish Cypriots would later want unification with Turkey. In 1960, Cyprus gained independence, but soon violence ensued. In 1964, UN Peacekeeping forces were deployed and created the Green Line, a buffer zone for the violence. In 1983, Turkish intelligence got information saying a Greek coup was about to occur, breaking the mutual agreement between the 2 states for lack of interference in Cyprus. As a counterattack, Turkish forces gained control of Northern Cyprus and created the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) (Türkiye MFA, 2022). The TRNC was only recognised by Turkey, and is still not internationally recognised. Currently, the green line separates the TRNC and the Republic of Cyprus, and Cyprus is considered a nation in a state of war. Their current state is similar to the 3-state solution; it has had minimal success with residents of Cyprus now vying for an undivided Cyprus. While there have been periods of peace in this region, these periods are always short-lasting and lead to eventual conflict, influenced by several external factors such as the vested interests of third parties. Hence, some argue for a third-party mediator. The question arises: who should be the mediator? In the case of a “backdoor mediator” (someone in the region who is close to both sides acting as a mediator), there is conflict because seemingly all countries have a history of support or vested interest towards one side or the other. Many countries in the region took part/were involved in the Arab-Israeli war (i.e. Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon, Saudi-Arabia and Transjordan) and/or in the 6 day war (i.e. Egypt, Syria, and Jordan), impacting the neutrality of these possible ‘backdoor mediators’ and that of possible others in the region, due to their vested interests regarding these countries. The concept of “Ummah”, the idea that there is an overarching Muslim caliphate, allying Muslim dominated countries, further complicates the neutrality of a backdoor mediator.

Whereas a third-party mediator from an external region would have vested interests. In the Jammu and Kashmir conflict (Center for Preventive Action, 2025), the USA offered to act as a mediator, which India rejected (BBC, 2025). This offer was due to the USA's vested interest in a geopolitical stronghold near China. Similarly, in this parallel situation, the USA (as a superpower) cannot act as an arbitrator because of its vested interest in Israeli secret intelligence, geopolitical stronghold in the Middle East, and Zionism (for its demographic Jewish majority). The Israeli secret intelligence, Mossad, has been reputed as one of the most efficient and powerful secret services in the world, a power its allies take advantage of. Israel rests in the centre of the Middle East, giving it a geopolitical advantage. "The two countries with the greatest shares of the world's Jewish population are the United States (7.3 million) and Israel (7.18 million)." These factors eliminate the U.S. as a mediator and with the complicated considerations of a back-door mediator, there are several challenges to the possibility of a mediator.

Despite the Cyprus dispute and Jammu and Kashmir conflict having limited success, the Troubles, as a parallel situation, have had high success in resolution, with the Good Friday agreement (1998) being one of the most successful resolutions to nationalistic and territorial disputes in history. The Troubles refer to a period of conflict in and around Northern Ireland from 1969 to the late 1990s and early 2000s. It was a nationalistic territorial dispute, parallel to the Israel-Palestine conflict, regarding "who should run and own Northern Ireland". The demographic majority of Protestants previously revelled in controlling the state's institutions (often discriminating against the Catholic minority), a liberty that the Roman catholic minority found unfair. The resolution of this dispute is one of the most successful in the world, called 'The Good Friday Agreement' (GFA). The GFA was an agreement between the Loyalist British government and the Republican Irish

government that agreed upon a new government for Northern Ireland (ABP News Bureau, 2023). It brought an end to decades of violence. The GFA is, to an extent, a 3-state solution. With a new, autonomous government being formed for Northern Ireland, it was agreed to consist of both loyalists and republicans. The 3-state solution, in this scenario, attempted to eliminate the nationalistic dispute by creating a separate state for the territory. The GFA has led to 25 years of lasting peace and was a successful resolution to the situation. The success of its resolution suggests that peace in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip may be possible, but the vested geopolitical regional interests suggest that peace will not be long-lasting.

Declaration by Authors

Acknowledgement: None

Source of Funding: None

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

1. ABP News Bureau. (2023, April 7). *What Is Good Friday Agreement? Peace Deal That Ended 3 Decades of Conflict In Northern Ireland 25 Yrs Ago*. ABP Live; ABPLive. <https://news.abplive.com/explainers/good-friday-agreement-peace-accord-ended-three-decades-of-conflict-in-northern-ireland-in-1998-1593992>
2. Al Tahhan, Z. (2018, November 2). *More than a Century on: The Balfour Declaration Explained*. Aljazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2018/11/2/more-than-a-century-on-the-balfour-declaration-explained>
3. BBC. (2025, May 7). Kashmir: Why India and Pakistan fight over it. *BBC*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c30q09638n8o>
4. BBC News. (2018, November 12). Cyprus country profile. *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17217956>
5. Britannica. (2020). Oslo Accords | Palestinian Liberation Organization-Israel [1993] | Britannica. In *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Oslo-Accords>
6. Cataliotti, J., & Lutz, A. (2023). *1948 Arab-Israeli War of Independence*. Study.com. <https://study.com/academy/lesson/israeli-statehood-and-the-arab-israeli-war-of-1948.html>
 7. Center for Preventive Action. (2025, May 12). *Conflict between India and Pakistan*. Global Conflict Tracker; Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-between-india-and-pakistan>
 8. CIA. (2025). *West Bank - The World Factbook*. Wwww.cia.gov. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/west-bank/>
 9. Encyclopedia.com. (2025). *Arab-Israel War (1948)* | Encyclopedia.com. Wwww.encyclopedia.com. <https://www.encyclopedia.com/politics/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/arab-israel-war-1948>
 10. French, D. (2015). *Fighting EOKA: the British Counter-Insurgency Campaign on Cyprus, 1955-1959*. Oxford Univ. Press.
 11. Frisch, H., & Sandler, S. (2004). Religion, State, and the International System in the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict. *International Political Science Review*, 25(1), 77–96. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512104038168>
 12. Gendler, A. (2024). *Israel & Palestine: Weighing the solutions*. Projects.voanews.com. <https://projects.voanews.com/israel/palestine/solutions/>
 13. History.com Editors. (2018, May 11). *Six-Day War*. HISTORY. <https://www.history.com/articles/six-day-war>
 14. International Crisis Group. (2023, April 17). *An Island Divided: Next Steps for Troubled Cyprus*. Wwww.crisisgroup.org; International Crisis Group. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/cyprus/268-island-divided-next-steps-troubled-cyprus>
 15. The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. (2019). West Bank | Definition, History, Population, Map, & Facts. In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/place/West-Bank>
 16. Türkiye MFA. (2022). *Cyprus in the period 1571 - 1959*. Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs. <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/cyprus-in-the-period-1571---1959.en.mfa>
 17. Vox. (2016). The Israel-Palestine conflict: a brief, simple history [YouTube Video]. In *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRYZjOuUnlU&ab_channel=Vox
- How to cite this article: Aeshna Jain. Is peace in the West Bank and the Gaza strip possible? a historical and comparative analysis. *Galore International Journal of Applied Sciences & Humanities*. 2025; 9(3): 138-142. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52403/gijash.20250314>
