

The Arab-Israeli Conflict

Have powers from outside the Middle East helped or hindered in the search for a resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict since 1948?

The history of the Arab-Israeli conflict has always been an international one. It has never been simply a local problem. Foreign powers have been involved since 1914, and, since 1973, the whole world has been affected by the rise in oil prices, which are a consequence of the Yom Kippur War.

The first sign of trouble between the two religious groups came just after the First World War when tension between the two groups grew when some Jews migrated to Palestine. In 1921 there were violent clashes between the Jews and the Arabs this was caused by the influx of Jewish immigrants. All the while from 1933 to 1948 many Jews fled persecution in Nazi Europe to Palestine. British intervention causes more revolts; therefore the UN took control of Palestine in 1947. They decided that it should become a Jewish Homeland.

In 1948 the Jewish State of Israel was set-up with the wishes of the UN but to the obvious dismay of the Palestinians. The first of several wars within the Middle East took place in the first established year of the Jewish State, the UN set up a truce between the Arabs and Israelis in June. The Israelis refuted this plan. However in October of the same year a UN negotiator agreed an armistice between both nationalities. This armistice didn't help the 700 000 Palestinian Arabs who became refugees as they were forced out of Israel. The war was overshadowed by the assassination of the UN ambassador Count Folke Bernadotte. I believe this course of action just added to the problems that were already apparent in the Middle East. The Jews may have been satisfied by the proclamation of the piece of land being declared a Jewish State but to every gain there is a loss. The losers in this treaty were the Palestinian Arabs who were confined to refugee camps which were inhumane and became the breeding grounds for the acts of terrorism you see and hear of today.

In 1956 the Suez crisis involved two of Europe's major powers France and Britain who were at war with Egypt over the Suez Canal and Israel joined with the British and French, however the worlds leading power the USA opposed the war and the Soviet Union threatened military action upon the three countries if they didn't pull out of the war. Again after the intervention and action taken by the British and French it was left to the UN to pick up the pieces and resolve the hatred caused by this war between Israel and Egypt. I believe that Britain and France should not have allowed Israel to join in the war because the gulf between Jews and Arabs was widening daily.

So to be aware of this fact it wasn't surprising that the Egyptians and the Jews were at war again. In 1967 there was the infamous six-day war between Israel and Egypt, the Jews defeated the Egyptians in the June of 1967. The UN was called upon again and they passed Resolution 242 to try to solve the rising hatred felt between the Arabs and the Jews. I believe the Middle Eastern countries were becoming too reliant on foreign intervention to solve problems that they caused or they were apart of it.

So great was the hatred between Arabs and the Jews the Egyptians and the Syrians declared war upon the Jews just six years after the six-day war. They struck when it was the Jewish New Year and the Jews were on holiday. So it became known as The Yom Kippur war in 1973 was the pivotal war because it really alarmed the West and the rest of the world. Egypt and Syria invaded Israel when it was the Jewish Holiday for the New Year. The significant increase in oil prices (rose by 70%) and in turn the USA USSR and UN pressured Syria, Egypt and Israel to end the war. Eventually they

reached a ceasefire on 24th October the UN passed another resolution to hope that this was the answer to curb rising tensions in the Middle East. They passed the Resolution 338. I believe that the UN didn't realise that the last resolution they passed wasn't honoured and therefore what would another one do? From 1973 onwards the Middle East was becoming uncontrollable as terrorism and wars were becoming routine. The US National Security Advisor to President Nixon Henry Kissinger aimed to bring peace to the turbulent Middle East. In the December of 1973 he arranged ceasefires and began peace talks at Geneva. In the January of 1974 the Jews and Egyptians agreed to withdraw troops from and surrounding the Suez Canal, Israel also agreed with Syria to separate the forces on the Golan Heights. The UN drafted in troops to supervise the area. This time the USA was the main force trying to solve the crisis in the Middle East I believe that this intervention was needed because Israel was expanding and surpassing the limit of land requested by the UN but Israel weren't content with what they had got had been allocated. The expansion of Israel caused major problems because the Arab states surrounding the area were suffering.

The USA were again involved but this time President Carter was aiming sympathy towards the Palestinian Refugees in 1977 the Egyptian Prime Minister Sadat had decided to make peace with Israel and met their Government this was a pivotal moment as he was the first Arab leader to visit Israel. A year later peace talks took place at Camp David in the USA, between Sadat and Begin they signed the Camp David Accords. I believe this was a brave and courageous decision by Sadat however I believe it was justified in order to allow the tension to disappear, if Egypt could do it sent a message to all the other Arab Nations that peace with Israel was possible.

However trouble was now spread across the Middle East as Muslims and Christians clashed in Lebanon. The UN soldiers were forced to keep and bring peace to Lebanon however the situation was uncontrollable and a suicide attack on the US military headquarters pushed the UN forces out of Lebanon. This time the UN indicated that they can't control everything and hints of weakness were clearly visible. I believe this was good because it left the Middle East to sort its own problems out however the earlier intervention from the UN suggested that the Middle East couldn't control the militias that were in and began to surface in many Middle Eastern Countries.

A lack of control in the Middle East lead to many more wars infamously the 1st Gulf War in 1990. After the UN resolved the conflict a conference was held in Madrid and the US President George Bush stated that the previous resolutions passed by the UN 242 and 338 were the basis of this peace settlement. The Norwegian Foreign Minister Johan Jorgen Hold held talks in Oslo between the Israeli Government and the PLO. I believe that this curbed tensions in the Middle East for a while, however it really didn't change much because it was just refreshing the previous resolutions passed by the UN.

The Oslo Declaration of Principles was agreed in the October of 1993 this involved a five-year interim period for negotiations, which would lead to a permanent agreement again based on the Resolutions 242 and 338. I believe the Oslo declaration wasn't as concrete as it liked to be. The interim period doesn't sound to promising and didn't really breathe hope into the crisis in the Middle East.

On the 28th September 1995 the PLO and Israeli Prime Minister signed the Middle Peace Accord in Washington in the USA. However shortly after this Accord was signed Rabin was assassinated. So although the leaders had settled their differences it was clear that the two nationalities were still miles apart from peace. Therefore this agreement didn't really affect the Middle East because the problems were escalating not decreasing as they had hoped.

Toni Lowery

The series of wars within a short space of time in the Middle East were fought with weapons that were sold or given to both sides by foreign powers. Israel bought or was given artillery by Britain, France, USA and Germany; the Arabs were sold weapons and were being trained by the USSR. Egypt were really close with the USSR and in turn received extensive military aid and training. They were also given surface to air missiles (SAMS) by the USSR. I believe that the foreign powers were driven by greed and that is the outstanding reason that forced them to sell weapons to these countries. However I believe they acted irresponsibly because these wars could have been prevented with the selling of artillery to Israel and the Arab countries. Then the weapons that fought the wars wouldn't have existed.

So considering all of the information above the intervention of foreign powers hindered the search for peace within the Middle East. Many may argue the fact that they stopped many of the wars but the factor that crushes these arguments is the selling of artillery to these countries. This gave them the equipment to fight with where as before they may have only protested but not violently. The morals of the foreign powers have been damaged because they caused the wars (Britain separating the land) but the actions for wealth were inexplicable. They did help to end wars such as the Yom Kippur war; this was a pivotal war because it made the whole world take notice of the trouble in the Middle East. However many countries didn't intervene this is were Britain, France, USA and the USSR stepped in to stop the wars. I think that was a brave decision and they had seen that intervention was needed. Even though they had supplied artillery I believe they were strong enough to resolve the situation with passing the two resolutions 242 and 338 that the Middle East is still working towards today.