

“The core of the Arab-Israel Conflict is territorial, it’s all about land.” How far do you agree with this statement? Explain this answer.

I agree with the statement to a large extent. The core of the Arab-Israel Conflict is indeed a tormenting struggle over land; however, there are also other contributing complexities such as religion, namely, that played an ample role in its escalation.

It is obvious that what both parties have in common is what lies at the heart of the conflict. The complications arise because both actors have long-term, historical ties to the disputed land that neither side is willing to abnegate. Although there are constantly copious issues arising throughout the lifespan of the conflict, the debates fundamentally boil down to who possesses the claimed right to the Holy Land, which would result in the control of Jerusalem.

The battle for sovereignty over the city and the status of the holy place is contested formerly by two national groups, the latter by three religions. The complexity of the issue is the result of three factors: the city is holy for the devotees of Christianity, Islam and Judaism, namely. Because of the heterogeneous population, achieving a viable and durable amount of peace within the city is a continually tedious task due to the common cases of riots, protests and the general discrepancy of opinions and religious sensitivities. This taxonomy Jerusalem is run with is unrealistic and this causes both geopolitical and religious problems. What instigates the Jerusalem problem even further is that fact that there is no straight forward answer to it. Yet the potential damage the city

would face without a sound solution is too serious to permit it to be aggravated while unattended to. Although suggestions for an overall settlement ideas such as dual sovereignty, cantonization, or even a full scale repartition have been contributed, many deemed them too idealistic and from the 1967 U.N Resolution- which stated that Israel was to withdraw from all of the territories it had occupied in the June War and there was to be a 'termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the area and their right to live in peace' imposed, it is blatant that such a proposal is arduous to implement given the disparities in opinions. Furthermore, despite the fact that the national leaders of Jerusalem, namely Meron Benvenisiti, have tried time and time again to declare a 'peace plan treaty', the PLO has not officially given their consensus to any one of the plans, leaving it unresolved.

Another example of an unanswered land problem is one centered on the Gaza Strip and West Bank. In 1993, the Israel-PLO Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (DOP) or the Oslo Accords, was signed. This agreement allowed for a transitional period of less than five years, for Palestinian interim governance in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Under this compromise, Israel agreed to dismantle their settlements and also handed over certain responsibilities to the Palestinian Authority, such as the lucrative hot house industry, to assist economic development. Despite most of the strip's control being put in the hands of the Palestinian government, the DOP maintained that Israel would still be honored with the responsibility of security (both internal and external), for public order of settlements and also be accountable for the well-being of the Israeli citizens.

The West Bank is another pertinent focal point in the conflict. It contributes greatly in the journey towards peace between Israel and its neighbors, the political status of several Arab states, the reliability of the American regime to exercise its international political power and the accuracy of their policies. Throughout the political debates sparked off by the West Bank, it has brought about prominent issues that support the stand of land disputes being the trigger of the entire conflict. Examples of such are the clash between Zionism and Palestinian nationalism, the question of territorial parameters of both Palestinian and Zionist nationalisms, the impact the Palestinian problem would cause internationally and the unbalanced demography between the Jews and Arabs in the region.

The on-going direct negotiations to determine the permanent status of Gaza and West Bank, which began in September 1999, were brought to a startling halt due to a second intifada that broke out one year later. In a bid to restart the peace process, the Quartet, comprising of the US, EU, UN and Russia, designed a blue print to finalize the conclusion of the conflict by 2005 based on steps by the two parties leading to two states, Israel and a democratic Palestine.

However, the proposed date for a permanent status agreement is uncertain due to violence and scanty allegations that both parties did not oblige to their agreed commitments. In September 2005, Israel withdrew all its citizens and dismantled its military facilities in the Gaza Strip and four northern West Bank settlements. Nonetheless, Israel controls maritime, airspace, and most access to the Gaza Strip. The peace process has been a slow-moving one due to the misinterpretation and miscommunication brought

about by the agreement, implying that this long-standing arbitration is indeed one of the perpetrators for the entire Arab-Israeli conflict.

Still, there are secondary factors that incited the conflict, one of them being religion. There is a substantial amount of intolerance between the Muslims, Jews and Christians. Throughout centuries, the Arabs have continuously persecuted the Jews and Christians, resulting in the mass emigration of believers in the latter sects. Some infer that the Islamic religion is being contorted into a ideology and a strategy to force the non-Muslims out of Arab. Islamism is a staunch and powerful religious denomination. These Islamic countries are proven to have owned the largest tract of land ever dominated by a single empire worldwide, thus, to the Muslims, the infringement of a Jewish state smack in the center of their land serves as none other but an obstacle that would impede their success as a religion.

What remains certain is that the principal cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict is deeply rooted in territorial debates, because it is what connotates religious and political influences. None the less, it is inevitable that the conflict of interests of the Arabs and the Israelis is induced by the tussle over sovereignty of land and the discrepancies that it uproots in the negotiation process.

References:

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