Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

# Issues: What is the conflict about?

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|  | **Arabs (Palestinians)** | **Zionist Jews (Israelis)** |
| History | The Crusades were a historical point of tension between Europe and the Muslim World, which impacted their relationship during colonization | Centuries of anti-Semitism—pogroms, the Inquisition and the Holocaust—convinced diaspora Jews of the necessity of establishing a separate home. |
| Political control: Colonial impact | British promise of an Arab state in return for support against the Ottoman Empire during WWI. The Sykes-Picot Treaty betrays that promise and gives the British control over much of the Middle East. | The British Balfour declaration supported the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, which the British could support when they gained control of Palestine after WWI |
| Needs: desire for a national homeland | British and French ‘colonization’ after WWI was perceived as a gross betrayal to Arabs after their alliance with them and promises. | Reacting to European antisemitism, Theodor Herzl supported the goal of creating a national homeland, called Zionism. |
| Resources: Territorial rivalry | Loss of land in the creation of Israel by the UN | The strong desire for a homeland prompted waves of immigration to Palestine and then the land given to Israel for its creation by the UN. |
| Values: Religious difference | Predominantly Muslim | Jewish (includes both secular and religious Jews.) |

# History: What is the history of the conflict?

The Ottoman Empire controlled the Middle East before its demise after WW1. What did each of the following desire after the war? How did they act to achieve their goal? What was the response of the other parties?

1. The British:
2. The Zionists:
3. The Arabs of Palestine:

When the British and French took control of the Middle East after WWI what was the response of

1. Arabs
2. Jews

How do the British attempt to control the situation?

# Styles: How have the parties chosen to deal with the conflict?

Confrontation:

1. War
2. Intifada

# Relationship: What is the relationship between the parties in the conflict?

Do the groups know each other well?

Do the parties have equal power?

# Management: What is the history of efforts to manage the conflict?

What attempts have been made to resolve the conflict?

1. Camp David Accords
2. Oslo Accords

Who made the attempts and what happened?

What could be done to resolve the conflict now?

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# History: What is the history of the conflict?

The Ottoman Empire controlled the Middle East before its demise after WW1. What did each of the following desire after the war? How did they act to achieve their goal? What was the response of the other parties?

1. The British: With the declining Ottoman Empire, British were interested in securing the Suez Canal, which was an important trade route to their colony in India and natural resources in the region. During WWI, the British fought with France against Germany, Austro-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire. They encouraged Arabs to rebel against the Turkish empire with a promise of independence, but secretly the British agreed to divide of the Middle East with the French in the Sykes-Picot agreement. After the war, the British felt they could eventually divide the portion of the Middle East they controlled into two areas, giving one portion to Jews and the other to Arabs.
2. The Zionists: The Jews of Europe having faced centuries of anti-Semitism began to gather around Theodor Herzl Zionist movement. He was convinced that the only option for the future safety of the Jewish people was for the creation of a Jewish state and they saw the location for that in Palestine. Inspired by this idea, Jews began emigrating from Europe to Palestine, buying land, and ultimately gaining a British promise for a Jewish state in the Balfour Declaration. The Jews were filled with hope that a state would be created.
3. The Arabs of Palestine: The Ottoman decline prompted the Arabs to desire national independence from the Turks. They received the promise of independence from the British in return for allying with them and rebelling against the Ottoman Turks. News of the Balfour Declaration angered Arabs and the Sykes-Picot treaty was considered a betrayal of the British promise.

When the British and French took control of the Middle East after WWI what was the response of

1. Arabs: The continued immigration of Jews led to further acquisition of land and the eviction or displacement of Arabs from the land. After rioting the British attempted to slow down the emigration of Jews from Europe
2. Jews: Jews continued to emigrate from Europe to Palestine in order to secure land and began to form a military to force a Jewish majority if necessary.

How do the British attempt to control the situation?

The British were convinced that Jews and Arabs were not going to live together well so pushed for divided Palestine. After Arab anger and fighting the British then pushed for a unified state with equal right for both groups and limiting immigration to Palestine, which angered Zionists. The British ultimately washed their hands of the situation and gave the issue over to the UN who decided on a two-state solution.

# Styles: How have the parties chosen to deal with the conflict?

Confrontation:

1. War: The UN two state solution was quickly met with Arab resistance as war broke out in the Arab-Israeli War (1948-49). The result of the war was an expanded Jewish territory and Palestinian displaced into refugee camps. The Six Days War further expanded Jewish Territory placing Palestinian Arabs under Israeli occupation.
2. Intifada: The first intifada (1987-93), shaking off, by Palestinians is an expression of anger at Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, making an independent state more difficult. This is leading to the rise of Hamas, a more Islamic group compared to the PLO. A second intifada (2000-2005) occurs when Palestinians loose hope of any resolution. Jews on the other hand distrust Palestinians commitment to the peace process and attempt to manage the Palestinian population.

# Relationship: What is the relationship between the parties in the conflict?

Do the groups know each other well?

Zionists are more closely connected to the West, culturally and politically, having birthed their vision in Europe. Arabs are culturally foreign to both the West and Zionists. While each likely understands the issues on the table, they are unable to empathize with each other’s experience.

Do the parties have equal power?

Israelis have greater military strength in the conflict as demonstrated through their successful wars. They also have political and economic power over the occupied Palestinian lands. Finally, Israel has received significant backing from the US, the superpower of the world.

# Management: What is the history of efforts to manage the conflict?

What attempts have been made to resolve the conflict?

1. Camp David Accords: Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel marks a growing peace between Israel and surrounding Arab states, but Arabs in Palestine are left advocating for themselves, particularly through the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO).
2. Oslo Accords: This is the first step after the wars to moving Palestine toward a two-state solution. It creates a Palestinian Authority to have limited authority to govern themselves. This agreement leads to violence on both sides.

Who made the attempts and what happened?

The British made the early attempts to bring peace when they were the colonial power. After handing the issue over to the UN, the US increasingly became a major player in trying to bring peace as the Cold War developed.

What could be done to resolve the conflict now?

# Mandate Period (1914-46)

1914: What promises are made to Jews and Arabs during World War I? What does Britain want?

# Arab-Israeli Wars (1947-1973)

# Diplomacy and Intifada (1973-1993)

# Diplomacy & Radicalization (1993-Present)

# Mandate Period (1914-46)

## 1914-1918: WWI: Seeds of the Conflict

Britain encourages the Arab Hashemite tribe to rebel against the Ottoman Empire, which sided with Germany during World War I. In exchange, British officers pledge support for an independent Arab state in the region, though the promise is vague and its boundaries are disputed. The Arab Revolt begins in 1916. The next year, British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour expresses official support to Britain’s Jewish community for a Jewish “national home” in Palestine. The Balfour Declaration spurs Jewish immigration and lays the foundation for the eventual establishment of Israel. It also expresses concern for the “rights of existing non-Jewish communities,” and Britain repeatedly affirms its desire for Palestine to be home to Jews and Arabs.

## 1922: The British Mandate

The League of Nations grants Britain and France administrative control over much of the former Ottoman Empire until local populations are deemed ready for self-rule. The division is based upon the 1920 San Remo Resolution and affirms the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement, a secret pact between London and Paris defining their spheres of influence in the postwar Middle East. The British control territory equivalent to modern-day Israel and Jordan. France gains control of modern-day Syria and Lebanon. The League of Nations reiterates the Balfour Declaration’s concerns for a Jewish nation and the rights of non-Jews. The arrival of French and British colonial forces undermines the Faisal-Weizmann agreement, an early effort to forge Arab-Jewish peace.

## 1929-1939: Jewish Violence, Arab Revolt

As Jewish immigration continues, violence breaks out between Jews and Arabs living in the British Mandate. In 1929, clashes over Jerusalem’s Western Wall and in Hebron leave hundreds dead on both sides. A Jewish militia, the Haganah, emerges and works with British forces to protect Jewish communities. In 1936, a second Arab revolt kicks off a three-year period of sustained violence, with Arab militants attacking Jewish and British installations. To protest Jewish immigration, Arabs hold a general strike and stop paying taxes.

## 1933: Hitler and the Nuremberg Race Laws

Pogroms against Jews in Europe began in the Middle Ages, and additional murderous campaigns occurred in the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires in the early twentieth century. But in 1933, events transpire in Germany that cast a lasting shadow over the Middle East. Parliamentary elections lead to Nazi Party leader Adolf Hitler's appointment as chancellor. Hitler quickly consolidates power and ends Germany’s interwar experiment with democracy. Germany immediately establishes its first concentration camp, Dachau, and in 1935 propagates the Nuremberg Race Laws, codifying Nazi ideology toward Jews and other “undesirables.” Many Jews in Germany, and later Austria, flee to Palestine or other nations. Far more remain in the lands of their birth.

## 1937: Peel Commission

The Peel Commission, a British effort to explore the causes of Arab-Jewish violence and recommend a long-term solution, issues a report in July. It proposes eventual abolition of the Mandate for Palestine by partitioning the land into two states: one Jewish and one Arab. The commission proposes resettling approximately 225,000 Arabs and 1,250 Jews to their respective areas. The dominant Arab leadership, led by the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, staunchly opposes the plan, though some moderate Arabs are open to the idea. Mainstream Jewish groups, led by David Ben-Gurion, embrace it. The commission affirms Britain's controversial limitation on Jewish immigration, however, recommending a cap of 12,000 per year.

## 1937: Britain Exiles Grand Mufti of Jerusalem

Haj Amin al-Husseini, Grand Mufti of Jerusalem since 1922, emerges as a radical advocate of the Arab cause during the 1930s, inciting violence and intimidating more moderate Arab voices. In 1936, the Mufti creates the Arab Higher Committee to fight British rule and Jewish nationalism. The following year, British officials dissolve the committee and banish the Mufti, who flees to Lebanon. During World War II, Husseini finds his way to Germany, where he advocates the extermination of Jews in radio broadcasts, convincing many Jews in Palestine that they face an existential struggle. According to documents from the Nuremburg trials, Husseini’s efforts to stir up the Arab revolt of the 1930s were financed in part by Nazi Germany. After the war, he returns to Egypt and arranges for the murder of Jordan's King Abdullah in 1951. He dies in exile in 1974.

## 1939-1945: World War II and the Holocaust

During World War II, Germany systematically kills 6 million Jews living in Europe. The Holocaust, as the genocide becomes known, has major implications for the Middle East. Many survivors of the slaughter seek to immigrate to Palestine, though British policy, outlined in a 1939 white paper, limits the influx of Jewish refugees. After the war, many nations horrified by the mass murder become more sympathetic to the idea of a Jewish national home. Despite British policy, Jews make their way to Palestine. A 1945 survey by the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry finds some 600,000 Jews living in Palestine, up from 175,000 in 1931. The Jewish population in Palestine reaches 1.2 million by 1950.

## 1945: Arab League Founded

Seven nations sign the Pact of the League of Arab States, formally inaugurating the Arab League. Though originally conceived in wartime by the British as a means of rallying Arabs against the Axis powers, the league quickly adopts a nationalist tone, pressing for freedom from colonial rule and the prevention of a Jewish state in Palestine. The league’s expressed goals are to “safeguard [Arab states’] independence and sovereignty, and to consider in a general way the affairs and interests of the Arab countries.” A special provision allows Palestine to send an Arab delegate to Arab League functions.

## 1946: King David Hotel Bombing

Enraged by British policies, especially the restriction of Jewish immigration to Palestine, the Jewish resistance gives rise to some radical factions, including Irgun and Lehi (a.k.a. the Stern Gang), who organize attacks on both Palestinian and British targets. On July 22, the Irgun group plants bombs in Jerusalem’s King David Hotel, where the British Secretariat and military leadership is based. The blast kills over ninety people and injures forty-five in the deadliest attack against the British government in Palestine during the Mandate Period. British Prime Minister Clement Attlee deems the bombing an “insane act of terrorism,” and mainstream Jewish leaders denounce it as a “criminal act.” Irgun leaders, including future Prime Minister Menachem Begin, claim responsibility but blame the British for failing to evacuate despite advance warning.

# Arab-Israeli Wars (1947-1973)

## 1947-1948: Partition and War

By 1947, the British have made plans to leave and the mandate is engulfed by civil conflict. Each side accuses the other of atrocities; massacres of Arabs in the village of Deir Yassin, and of Jews in a Hadassah medical convoy, enter the lore of each side. The fledgling United Nations passes Resolution 181 calling for separate Jewish and Arab states in Palestine. Arabs object to the partition, which gives more land to the Jews. Fighting intensifies, and when the British complete their withdrawal in May 1948, Israel declares itself an independent state. The next day, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq invade, but ultimately lose much of the land the UN had set aside for Arabs. Egypt and Jordan are left in control of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, respectively.

## 1948: UN Resolution 194

In response to Arab-Israeli fighting, the UN General Assembly passes Resolution 194, one article of which asserts that “refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date,” and those who do not should be compensated. Palestinians cite Resolution 194 as the basis for their “right of return.” Other notable articles include protection and free access to the Holy Places and Jerusalem, with UN control over the city. Several attempts to offer a negotiated solution fail; Arab countries, with the partial exception of Jordan, choose to perpetuate the refugee status and camps rather than offer avenues of naturalization.

## 1950: Israel's Law of Return

Israel’s Knesset passes the Law of Return, granting Jews and their families the right to settle in Israel as automatic citizens. The law marks the realization of the Zionist vision of a national home for the Jewish diaspora in the Holy Land. In the three years before the law’s passage, 500,000 Jews had arrived in Israel; another 500,000 arrive in the following decade. Many are effectively refugees from Arab countries, where they faced hostility and persecution. Some are also motivated to come by Zionist ideology and religious yearnings.

## 1956: The Suez Crisis

In July 1956, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalizes the Suez Canal, which had been operated by the Universal Suez Ship Canal Company, a private company jointly owned by the British government and French investors. Nasser also warns of settling scores with Israel. Israel invades the Sinai Peninsula in October, while Britain and France attack the canal zone. Although Egyptian forces are driven back, the intervention stokes Cold War tensions. U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower compels a withdrawal lest the invasion spur a showdown with the Soviet Union. He also pledges to guarantee open access to Israel's sole Red Sea port at Elat. U.S. influence in the region soon eclipses that of the European powers. The war also makes a hero of Nasser, who moves to harness “pan-Arab” sentiment into a geopolitical force over the next decade.

## 1964: Founding of the PLO

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is founded by members of the Arab League as the sole representative for the Palestinian people. The PLO, which is heavily under Egypt’s influence, vows to use “material, military and spiritual forces” to resist Zionism and form a Palestinian state. The PLO’s first chairman is Ahmad Shukeiri, a former Saudi ambassador to the United Nations with Palestinian ancestry. The PLO Charter, adopted by the Palestinian National Assembly in 1964 and later amended in 1968 to include a call for armed struggle, defines “liberation” of Palestine as a Palestinian and Arab duty. It also declares as “null and void” the 1917 Balfour Declaration and asserts that “Judaism, being a religion, is not an independent nationality.”

## June 1967: Arab-Israeli War

Erroneous Soviet reports of an Israeli troop buildup along Syria’s border prompt Egypt’s Gamal Abdel Nasser to expel UN peacekeepers, send troops into the Sinai Peninsula, and blockade Israel’s sole Red Sea port, access to which the U.S. had guaranteed after the 1956 war. Israel responds with a preemptive strike on Egyptian air forces, catching most of it on the ground, followed by an armored thrust into the Sinai that sweeps Egyptian troops back across the Suez Canal. Jordan and Syria attack from the east but Israeli forces resist, seizing the Golan Heights from Syria and the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan. The war deeply scars the Arab psyche and fatally weakens Nasser and his pan-Arab dream. The UN passes Resolution 242, calling for the return of Arab lands in exchange for a “lasting peace.” Israel holds onto the lands, and after the 1977 election of the Likud Party, begins a major expansion of Jewish settlements.

## September 1967: The “Three Nos”

Late in the summer of 1967, eight Arab heads of state attend an Arab League conference in Khartoum, Sudan, where they reach a consensus that guides their nations’ policies toward Israel for the next six years. On September 1, the Arab League approves the Khartoum Resolution, famous for its “Three Nos”: No peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, and no negotiations with Israel.

## 1970: Black September

Bolstered by a large population of displaced Palestinians living in Jordan—by some estimates Palestinians constitute one-third to more than one-half of Jordan’s population—the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) attempts to overthrow the Hashemite monarchy. Following a failed assassination attempt on King Hussein in June and a spate of airplane hijackings in September, the Jordanians endeavor to drive the PLO out of their country. Syria sends a division of tanks to intervene on behalf of the Palestinians, but this unit is mauled by Jordanian forces. At Washington’s behest, Israel prepares to act in support of Jordan, though it never intervenes. After ten months, the PLO is completely ejected from Jordan and relocated to Lebanon.

## 1972: Terror at the Munich Olympics

During the Munich Olympics, Palestinian terrorists from Black September, a clandestine arm of Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat’s Fatah, storm the Olympic village, killing two Israeli athletes and taking nine hostage. The terrorists demand the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli prison, but Israel refuses to negotiate. German officials agree to grant the hostage takers passage to Egypt, but a botched rescue attempt at the Munich airport results in the murder of all remaining hostages and the deaths of five of their eight captors.

## 1973 Arab-Israeli War

During the month of Ramadan, Egypt and Syria mount a surprise attack in the Sinai and the Golan Heights on the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur. The war brings the United States and Soviet Union perilously close to open confrontation, and spurs the Arab-dominated OPEC oil cartel to embargo shipments to Western nations that support Israel. The embargo intensifies a shift by France and several other leading European states toward a more pro-Arab stance. After early military gains, the Arab forces are driven back before a UN cease-fire takes effect. Preliminary success in the three-week conflict restores Arab military confidence and provides an opening for the United States to begin a diplomatic process that brings Egypt and Israel to the table. UN Security Council Resolution 338 echoes 242’s call for a land-for-peace deal. As for Egypt, two agreements prompt step-by-step Israeli withdrawal in Sinai—in the process confirming Egypt’s shift from the Soviet to the U.S. camp in the Cold War.

# Diplomacy and Intifada (1973-1993)

## 1973-1975: Shuttle Diplomacy

With Israel, Syria, and Egypt still bristling from war, U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger employs “shuttle diplomacy,” serving as an intermediary between the hostile parties in an attempt to negotiate a disengagement agreement. Such a deal between Israel and Syria establishes a UN observer force, which still remains, to monitor an area of separation between the two countries along the Golan Heights. The Egypt-Israel track will bear greater fruit, setting the mood for talks leading to the Camp David Accords at the end of the decade.

## 1974: A Palestinian Political Program

In June, the Palestinian National Council, the legislative body of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), ratifies a ten-point political program aimed at “liberating Palestinian territory” and establishing a Palestinian state. In November, PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat speaks at the UN General Assembly. “I have come bearing an olive branch and a freedom fighter’s gun. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand,” he tells the chamber. “I repeat: do not let the olive branch fall from my hand.” The United Nations grants the PLO observer status in November 1975 and recognizes Palestinians’ right to self-determination.

## 1976: Entebbe Hostage Crisis

In late June, terrorists belonging to an offshoot of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—a radical faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)—hijack an Air France flight out of Tel Aviv with 248 passengers on board. The flight is redirected to Libya, where it refuels before heading on to Entebbe Airport in Uganda. The terrorists occupy an airport terminal, releasing their non-Jewish and non-Israeli hostages and threatening to kill the rest unless Palestinian prisoners in Israel and elsewhere are freed. In early July, an elite Israeli military unit raids the airport. Six hijackers, one Israeli soldier, and forty-five Ugandan troops die in the assault, as does one hostage. The remaining hundred hostages are freed.

## March 1978: Lebanon Invasion

Responding to raids on northern Israel by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Israel invades Lebanon, occupying land south of the Litani River as a “security buffer” in which local Lebanese forces cooperate with Israel to resist Palestinian control. With the United States lobbying for UN action, the Security Council responds, passing Resolution 425, which calls for Israel’s withdrawal, and Resolution 426, which mandates the creation of a peacekeeping force.

## September 1978: Camp David Accords

Following a surprise 1977 visit to Israel by Egypt’s Anwar Sadat, the first by any Arab leader, Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin meet at Camp David for twelve days of secret negotiations, producing a “Framework for Peace in the Middle East.” Brokered by U.S. President Jimmy Carter, the Camp David Accords, as the agreements become known, set the stage for an Egypt-Israel peace treaty the following year. Sadat and Begin receive the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts. The framework calls for similar agreements between Israel and its other neighbors, but to little effect. For the next decade, Egypt is suspended from the Arab League and shunned by other Arab states.

## 1981: Golan Heights Law

Israel effectively annexes the Golan Heights, a strategic rocky plateau in southwest Syria. The land was first seized by Israel in 1967, and was the scene of further fighting in the 1973 war. The Golan Heights Law, which is not recognized by the United States or the international community, replaces military rule over the Golan with Israeli civilian law.

## 1982: Siege of Beirut

Israel attacks Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) installations in Lebanon following the shooting of an Israeli diplomat. PLO retaliation prompts Israel to push further into Lebanon—which is in the midst of a civil war—shelling and besieging Beirut. U.S., French, and Italian troops intervene, evacuating the PLO to a new home in Tunisia. Israel eventually withdraws to a self-declared “security zone” after helping install a sympathetic president in Beirut, who is soon assassinated on Syrian orders. During the withdrawal, Israeli-allied Christian militiamen massacre at least seven hundred people—perhaps far more—in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Chatila. An Israeli inquiry, the Kahan Commission, later holds Ariel Sharon, Israel's defense minister, indirectly responsible for the massacre.

## 1983: Beirut Terrorist Attacks

In April, a suicide bomber detonates a delivery van packed with explosives in front of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, killing sixty-three people. In October, two massive truck bombs kill fifty-eight French and 241 American servicemen in almost simultaneous attacks on their respective barracks. A U.S. court eventually rules that the bombings were the work of an emerging Islamic militant group, Hezbollah, which the court says received assistance from Iran. While Hezbollah, Iran, and Syria all deny any role, Israeli officials cite evidence that the Syrian regime was involved. Within five months, U.S., French, and other foreign troops leave Lebanon, which lapses into deeper civil conflict.

## May 1983: Shaky Peace in Lebanon

Following the 1982 assassination of Lebanon’s Israeli-backed president, Bashir Gemayel, U.S. mediators help Israel and Lebanon reach an agreement ending hostilities between the two nations. Syria, which had a hand in Gemayel’s death, refuses to recognize the pact, keeping some forty thousand of its troops stationed in Lebanon. Syrian pressure leads the Lebanese government to abandon the accord. In turn, Israel decides to maintain a twelve-mile security barrier in southern Lebanon patrolled by the locally recruited South Lebanon Army, a Christian militia armed by Israel.

## 1985: The Achille Lauro

Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) terrorists take over an Italian cruise ship, the Achille Lauro, in Egyptian waters, killing a Jewish wheelchair-bound U.S. tourist and demanding the release of Palestinian prisoners. After two days of negotiations, Egypt grants the hijackers safe passage to Tunisia on an Egyptian airliner. U.S. fighter jets intercept the flight, forcing it to land in Sicily. Italian officials arrest some of the terrorists, but others are allowed to go, though they are later convicted in absentia in Italian court. One of these men, Abu Abbas, is captured by U.S. forces in Iraq in 2003. He dies in custody the following year.

## 1987: Founding of Hamas

Palestinian spiritual leader and activist Sheikh Ahmed Yassin founds Hamas, a violent offshoot of Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood seeking “to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine.” Published in August 1988, the Hamas covenant calls on Muslims to liberate the territory through violent jihad. The group’s emphasis on religion stands in stark contrast to other prominent Palestinian groups, which tend toward secularism. Some Israelis initially welcome the development, viewing it as a blow to their mortal enemy, Yasir Arafat’s Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

## December 1987: Intifada

The first Palestinian uprising (intifada) begins throughout the occupied West Bank and Gaza. Anger and outbursts over four Palestinian deaths in a traffic accident help young local leaders, and later cadres operating on behalf of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), to mobilize a more general, coordinated rebellion against the two-decades-old occupation. Some Palestinians use civil disobedience, strikes, and graffiti, while others attack Israeli troops with axes, Molotov cocktails, grenades, and firearms. Demonstrations that throw stones at groups of heavily armed Israeli Defense Forces become symbolic acts of defiance for Palestinians.

## 1988: PLO Prominence

With the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) enjoying broad international support as the “sole representative” of Palestinians, Jordan’s King Hussein cedes to the PLO all his country’s territorial claims in the West Bank and Eastern Jerusalem, partly out of fear that the intifada will spread to Jordan. In December, Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat delivers a conciliatory speech at the UN General Assembly in Geneva, but is criticized by Washington, which had expected Arafat to renounce all forms of terrorism and recognize Israel’s right to exist within its pre-1967 borders. At a news conference the following day, Arafat obliges. As a result, U.S. President Ronald Reagan authorizes a “substantive dialogue” with the PLO although Israel remains hostile.

## 1991: Persian Gulf War

Iraq’s 1990 invasion of Kuwait sparks the first Middle East crisis of the post-Cold War world. The United States leads a UN-sanctioned force, with troops from several Arab states, to eject Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Saudi Arabia, for the first time, sanctions the stationing of foreign forces on its territory. During the brief war, Iraq fires Scud missiles at Israeli population centers and at U.S. bases in Saudi Arabia. U.S. diplomatic pressure keeps Israel from retaliating. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is one of only three Arab League members to oppose a resolution condemning Iraq’s aggression, and PLO leader Yasir Arafat remains a staunch backer of Iraq President Saddam Hussein even after Iraq’s defeat. The war rearranges the region’s diplomatic dynamic and sets the stage for the Madrid Conference.

## October 1991: Madrid Conference

The United States and Soviet Union jointly sponsor the Madrid Conference, involving Israeli, Syrian, Jordanian, Lebanese, and Palestinian delegates. The peace conference establishes a framework for multilateral negotiations to address broad regional issues as well as bilateral talks between Israel and each of the other delegations. The ensuing dialogues lead to Israel-Jordan and Israeli-Palestinian peace agreements.

## 1993: Military Clash in Lebanon

Following an escalation of clashes in southern Lebanon, Israel launches “Operation Accountability,” during which the Israeli army carries out its heaviest artillery and air attacks on targets in southern Lebanon since 1982. The fighting claims the lives of 120 civilians, almost all Lebanese. Competing accounts put the death toll for Islamic militant group Hezbollah anywhere from eight to fifty. In addition, some 300,000 Lebanese civilians flee north during the weeklong assault.