

Media and Political Mobilization: The Israel-Palestine Conflict

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Abstract

This thesis explores the role of media in political mobilization within the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict, analyzing how journalism and mass communication have shaped public perception, policy decisions, and grassroots activism. Beginning with an overview of the history of media and journalism, the study examines how news coverage, propaganda, and digital media have influenced international discourse on the conflict. The historical background of Israel and Palestine is traced to provide context for contemporary political tensions, followed by an analysis of their current political regimes and governance structures. The study also delves into the contrasting approaches of U.S. Presidents Donald Trump and Joe Biden, assessing their policies and diplomatic strategies in relation to both Israel and Palestine. By analyzing media framing, political rhetoric, and international responses, this research highlights the power of information in shaping political narratives and mobilizing action. Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the intersection between media, politics, and conflict resolution in one of the world's most enduring geopolitical struggles.

Introduction

The land historically known as Israel and Palestine has been a center of conflict, culture, and civilization for thousands of years. They have shared similar desires, which has resulted in a complex dynamic between the groups and territories. Their connections to each other date back to religious times and have since escalated into further division. As history has shown, societies often create conflict over land or cultural freedoms; in this

case, the struggle over land has turned into a broader ideological and religious clash, further fueling animosity between the two groups.

One of the most significant factors in shaping the modern discourse around the Israel-Palestine conflict is the role of media. Journalism and mass communication have played a critical role in shaping public perception, policy decisions, and grassroots activism related to the conflict. The way news is reported—whether through traditional media, propaganda, or digital platforms—has directly influenced international discourse, often reinforcing political narratives and mobilizing political action. This thesis explores the historical context of the conflict as well as how the media has not only informed but also intensified political tensions and ideological divisions between Israel and Palestine.

The history of media and journalism provides essential context for understanding how news coverage influences public opinion and policy. Traditional journalism, characterized by newspapers, radio, and television broadcasts, has historically shaped narratives by controlling the flow of information. Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, media outlets have operated under different political, economic, and security constraints, which have affected their reporting on the Israel-Palestine conflict. The rise of digital media, including social media platforms and independent journalism, has further complicated the landscape by amplifying various perspectives, both factual and misleading, contributing to a fragmented and often polarized international discourse.

Israeli media operates within a complex environment, balancing national security concerns with journalistic integrity. Major Israeli news outlets often align with specific political ideologies, influencing their coverage of the conflict. For instance, right-leaning publications such as *Israel Hayom* and *The Jerusalem Post* may emphasize narratives that

underscore security threats and justify military actions, while left-leaning outlets like *Haaretz* might focus on the humanitarian impact on Palestinians and advocate for diplomatic solutions (Katzir, 2025). This ideological divide can lead to selective reporting, where certain events are highlighted or downplayed to fit a particular agenda. Additionally, the Israeli government enforces policies such as military censorship and restrictions on journalists' access to conflict zones, further shaping media narratives.

On the Palestinian side, media outlets also function under significant political and security constraints. Palestinian media, including outlets like *Al-Aqsa TV* (linked to Hamas) and *Wafa News Agency* (affiliated with the Palestinian Authority), present perspectives that align with their respective governing bodies. These outlets often frame their reporting around themes of resistance, occupation, and human rights violations, shaping Palestinian and international perceptions of the conflict (Katzir, 2025). Additionally, independent Palestinian journalists frequently face obstacles such as censorship, harassment, and physical danger while reporting on the situation on the ground.

The role of international media, particularly in the United States, is crucial in shaping global perceptions of the conflict. U.S. media coverage has historically demonstrated biases depending on the political climate and the affiliations of different news networks. Studies have shown that American media often presents the conflict through a lens that aligns with U.S. foreign policy interests, sometimes omitting critical historical and geopolitical context.

The contrasting approaches of U.S. Presidents Donald Trump and Joe Biden further illustrate how political leadership and media framing influence the Israel-Palestine conflict. During his presidency from 2017 to 2021, Trump adopted a staunchly pro-Israel stance,

implementing policies such as recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital and proposing a peace plan that heavily favored Israeli territorial claims (CNN, 2023).. His administration's approach was widely covered by conservative-leaning U.S. media outlets, which praised his firm support for Israel, while more liberal-leaning media criticized his disregard for Palestinian sovereignty.

In contrast, President Joe Biden, serving from 2021 to 2025, took a more balanced yet still pro-Israel stance. His administration's response to the 2023 Gaza war demonstrated support for Israel's right to defend itself while facing increasing domestic and international pressure to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza (CNN, 2023). Media coverage of Biden's policies reflected a mix of perspectives, with some outlets emphasizing his diplomatic efforts and others critiquing his reluctance to push for a permanent ceasefire.

Digital media has also emerged as a powerful force in political mobilization related to the conflict. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have allowed activists, journalists, and ordinary citizens to share real-time updates, personal stories, and calls to action. Hashtags like #FreePalestine and #IStandWithIsrael have trended globally, demonstrating how online discourse shapes public opinion and influences political activism. However, the rapid spread of misinformation and propaganda on these platforms has also fueled misunderstandings and deepened divisions.

By analyzing media framing, political rhetoric, and international responses, this research highlights the power of information in shaping political narratives and mobilizing action. The Israel-Palestine conflict is not only a battle over territory and sovereignty but also a struggle over public perception and political legitimacy. The way the conflict is

reported, interpreted, and disseminated influences diplomatic efforts, policy decisions, and grassroots movements worldwide. Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the intersection between media, politics, and conflict resolution in one of the world's most enduring geopolitical struggles. As digital media continues to evolve and shape international discourse, the role of journalism in informing, persuading, and mobilizing audiences remains more critical than ever. Recognizing the biases and motivations behind media coverage is essential for developing a more nuanced and informed perspective on the Israel-Palestine conflict and working toward potential avenues for resolution.

Religious History

Both Judaism and Islam trace their heritage back to Abraham, a foundational figure in both religious traditions. However, the historical record of this region is complex, often shaped by mythology, religious texts, and archeological discoveries. The Bible, while a significant religious text, is not considered an entirely reliable historical document due to the lack of archeological evidence for many of its events. However, there is some evidence to support the existence of King David, who is revered as a hero among Jewish people for uniting the Jewish tribes into one monarchy and establishing the Torah as the constitutional foundation of the kingdom.

In 980 BCE, after David's reign, the Jewish kingdom split into two: Judea in the south and Israel in the north. These two kingdoms were subject to the influence and domination of larger empires in the region, including Egypt, the Assyrian Empire, and the Babylonian Empire (Katzir, 2025). Constant battles over the land defined this period of history.

In 772 BCE, the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel, exiling much of its population. Later, in 587 BCE, the Babylonians conquered Judea, leading to the destruction of the First Temple and the persecution of the Jewish people. This event marked the beginning of the Jewish Diaspora. However, the Persian King Cyrus the Great, praised in Jewish texts for his tolerance, allowed the Jews to return to their homeland after the Babylonian exile (Katzir, 2025).

The region continued to shift under foreign rule. In 332 BCE, Alexander the Great conquered the territory, introducing Hellenistic culture—a fusion of Greek and local traditions. By 63 BCE, the Romans took control of Jerusalem, solidifying their dominance over the Jewish people (Katzir, 2025).

In 30 BCE, Jesus, a Jewish rabbi, was crucified by the Romans. Crucifixion was a punishment reserved for political criminals, and since Jesus was referred to as the "King of the Jews," the Romans saw this as a political challenge to their authority (Katzir, 2025). The concept of a messiah in Jewish tradition originally referred to someone anointed as a king, prophet, or priest, with King David being the earliest example. The messiah was expected to overthrow oppressors and restore Jewish sovereignty. However, Jesus' teachings blended Jewish tradition with Greek philosophical ideas, leading to the formation of Christianity (Katzir, 2025).

The Jewish struggle against Roman rule culminated in the Jewish revolt of 70 CE, which ended in defeat, the destruction of the Second Temple, and the exile of the Jewish population (Katzir, 2025). The Western Wall, or Wailing Wall, is the only surviving part of this temple and remains a significant religious site (Zwick-Tapley, 2025). Another Jewish

revolt in 135 CE led the Romans to rename the region "Palestina" in an effort to erase Jewish identity from the land (Katzir, 2025).

The region continued to change hands over the centuries, influenced by Byzantine, Islamic, and later Ottoman rule. Palestine, as an entity, evolved culturally and religiously, becoming a predominantly Arab land. Palestinians today are considered among the most educated Arabs in the world, with a strong emphasis on literacy and academic achievement. However, the demographic structure of the Palestinian population is notably young, with approximately 40% of Palestinians under the age of 18 (Zwick-Tapley, 2025).

The history of Israel and Palestine is deeply intertwined, marked by ancient conquests, cultural exchanges, and ongoing struggles over land and identity. Understanding this history requires a nuanced approach that acknowledges both the archeological evidence and the lived experiences of the people in the region. The historical claims to the land remain central to contemporary geopolitical debates, and the legacies of ancient civilizations continue to shape modern identities and conflicts.

Conflict History

Jewish immigration to Palestine began in 1882, marking the beginning of a movement that would eventually lead to the establishment of the State of Israel (Zwick-Tapley, 2025). In 1896, the First Zionist Congress was convened by Theodor Herzl, advocating for a Jewish homeland. The term "Zion" originally referred to a hill in Jerusalem and eventually became synonymous with the entire city (Zwick-Tapley, 2025). Meanwhile, in 1911, the first Palestinian newspaper, Falastin, began publication, signifying the growing national consciousness among the Palestinian Arabs (Zwick-Tapley, 2025).

In 1917, during World War I, the British issued the Balfour Declaration, stating that Jews had a right to a homeland in Palestine (Katzir, 2025). However, at the same time, the British also made conflicting promises to the Arabs, leading to tensions that would persist for decades. The Holocaust, which took place between 1941 and 1945, saw the mass extermination of six million Jews by the Nazis (Katzir, 2025). Many Jews who survived the concentration camps sought refuge outside of Europe, with Palestine becoming a primary destination.

In 1948, the State of Israel was established, leading to immediate war with surrounding Arab nations (Katzir, 2025). Surrounding Arab countries had demanded that the Palestinians fled or they would be met with a bomb. The conflict resulted in the division of Jerusalem between Israel and Jordan. The war also marked the beginning of the Palestinian refugee crisis, as many Palestinians were displaced from their homes (Zwick-Tapley, 2025). At the same time, Jewish populations were expelled from surrounding Arab nations. Palestinians refer to this period as the Nakba, or "the catastrophe," as many lost their homes and livelihoods (Katzir, 2025). Some Jews had purchased land from foreign Arab landowners, but for Palestinian farmers who had worked the land for generations, this was a distinction without a difference. Additionally, some Arab leaders urged Palestinians to leave temporarily, believing they would soon be able to return after military victory, while others were forcibly displaced by Jewish forces.

In 1964, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was founded with the goal of creating a Palestinian state from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea (Zwick-Tapley, 2025). The PLO engaged in terrorist attacks against Israel until the 1990s. The phrase "from the river to the sea" has been interpreted as advocating for the elimination of Israel.

In 1967, the Six-Day War erupted, resulting in Israel gaining control of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Sinai Peninsula, and Golan Heights (Katzir, Zwick-Tapley, 2025). This victory led to the beginning of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, with the Israeli government justifying these settlements based on biblical claims to the land.

The Yom Kippur War of 1973 saw Egypt and Syria launch a surprise attack on Israel during the holiest day of the Jewish year (Katzir, 2025). Despite initial losses, Israel eventually won the war. In 1978, the Camp David Accords were brokered by U.S. President Jimmy Carter, leading to a 1979 peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, who signed the treaty, was assassinated in 1981 for making peace with Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin was the Israeli signatory to the agreement (Katzir, Zwick-Tapley, 2025).

The 1993 Oslo Accords, mediated by U.S. President Bill Clinton, were signed between Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, aiming to establish a framework for peace (Katzir, Zwick-Tapley, 2025). In 1995, Rabin was assassinated by an Israeli extremist opposed to the peace process. Mahmoud Abbas, born in 1935, has been the President of the Palestinian Authority for decades but has struggled to govern effectively. Now nearly 90 years old, he often resides in Europe for medical care (Zwick-Tapley, 2025).

In 1987, Hamas was founded during the First Intifada as a Palestinian militant group with the declared goal of destroying Israel. The Second Intifada, which began in 2000, saw an escalation of violence, including suicide bombings against Israeli civilians (Katzir, Zwick-Tapley, 2025). In response, Israel constructed a security barrier in 2002, significantly reducing bombings but also restricting Palestinian movement and worsening their quality

of life. In 2005, Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip, handing control to the Palestinian Authority. However, in 2007, Hamas seized control of Gaza from the PA and has since launched rocket attacks into Israel (Zwick-Tapley, 2025).

Hezbollah, a militant group funded by Iran and based in Lebanon, was created in 1982 with the goal of eliminating Israel (Katzir, 2025). In 2023, Hezbollah began bombing northern Israel. That same year, Hamas launched a large-scale invasion of Israel on October 7, sparking another war (Katzir, Zwick-Tapley, 2025). The conflict has gained Hamas sympathy in some circles, which is leading them to resist an end to the war, as they are supposed to be known as a terrorist group. This has led to calls for a ceasefire, while others view it as a continuation of longstanding hostilities.

The ongoing war has sparked massive demonstrations in Israel, with citizens protesting government policies. Prior to the war, protests were focused on judicial reforms, but during the war, demonstrators demanded that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu secure the release of hostages and end the conflict (Zwick-Tapley, 2025). These protests, involving hundreds of thousands of people, reflect the lack of a monolithic perspective among Israelis. Similarly, Palestinians do not hold a singular viewpoint, as those in the West Bank and Gaza experience different conditions and governance.

Palestinians in Gaza face particularly dire conditions, as funds provided by Arab nations for civil administration have often been redirected by Hamas toward military infrastructure, including tunnel construction (Katzir, 2025). The conflict has resulted in human rights violations by both sides. Palestinian militant groups have carried out bombings, shootings, kidnappings, and other forms of violence, including the targeting of civilians. Israel, in turn, has been accused of excessive force, police brutality, and the

implementation of discriminatory policies (Katzir, Zwick-Tapley, 2025). The cycle of violence and retaliation has made peace difficult to achieve, as both Israelis and Palestinians continue to suffer the consequences of the enduring conflict.

During his presidency from 2021 to 2025, President Joe Biden played a significant role in addressing the Israel-Palestine conflict, particularly during the Gaza war that erupted in October 2023. The conflict began when Hamas launched a surprise attack on Israel, leading to an intensified military confrontation. In response, President Biden unequivocally condemned the attacks by Hamas and reaffirmed his steadfast support for Israel, deploying aircraft carriers to the region to deter further escalation and requesting an additional military aid for Israel (Reuters, 2023).

As the conflict progressed, concerns over the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip grew. President Biden faced increasing pressure to address these issues and began urging Israel to mitigate the humanitarian crisis affecting Palestinian civilians. In March 2024, Vice President Kamala Harris called for an immediate ceasefire, citing the immense suffering in Gaza and urging Israel to allow more humanitarian aid into the territory (ABC News, 2024). The United Nations Security Council passed a resolution in March 2024 demanding an immediate temporary ceasefire in Gaza. The United States abstained from the vote, allowing the resolution to pass—a move that strained U.S.-Israel relations (NBC News, 2024). In response, Israel canceled a scheduled meeting between its delegation and U.S. officials in Washington, reflecting the growing tensions between the two allies (NBC News, 2024).

Biden involvement

During his presidency from 2021 to 2025, President Joe Biden played a significant role in addressing the Israel-Palestine conflict, particularly during the Gaza war that erupted in October 2023. The conflict began when Hamas launched a surprise attack on Israel, killing over 1,200 people and taking hundreds of hostages, including foreign nationals. The attack, which was unprecedented in scale and intensity, led to an immediate and forceful Israeli military response, triggering one of the deadliest conflicts in the region's recent history. In response, President Biden unequivocally condemned Hamas, reaffirming the United States' unwavering support for Israel. He characterized the attack as "sheer evil" and emphasized Israel's right to defend itself against terrorism (New York Times, 2023). To demonstrate U.S. commitment to Israeli security, the Biden administration swiftly deployed aircraft carriers, including the USS Gerald R. Ford, to the Eastern Mediterranean as a deterrent against broader regional escalation involving Hezbollah, Iran, or other militant groups (New York Times, 2023). Additionally, he requested an emergency package of \$14 billion in military aid to Israel, reinforcing America's long-standing strategic alliance with the country (Reuters, 2023).

As the conflict progressed, concerns over the humanitarian crisis in Gaza grew significantly. The Israeli military campaign, which included heavy aerial bombardment and a ground offensive, resulted in widespread destruction and mounting civilian casualties. By early November 2023, humanitarian organizations, including the United Nations and the Red Cross, warned that Gaza was facing a catastrophic shortage of essential supplies, including food, water, medical aid, and electricity (UNRWA, 2023). President Biden faced increasing domestic and international pressure to address these concerns. While rejecting calls for a complete ceasefire, he advocated for "humanitarian pauses" to allow aid

deliveries and temporary relief for Palestinian civilians caught in the conflict. These pauses, he argued, would help ensure that humanitarian organizations could reach those in need while maintaining Israel's ability to target Hamas operatives (Washington Post, 2023). Additionally, he directed the U.S. military to coordinate with Jordan, Egypt, and international agencies to facilitate the airdrop and land delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza. However, the effectiveness of these measures was debated, as access remained limited, and Israel continued its military operations.

Domestically, Biden's firm support for Israel sparked deep divisions within his administration and the Democratic Party. In October 2023, Josh Paul, the director of congressional and public affairs for the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, resigned in protest against continued arms transfers to Israel, arguing that such actions contributed to indiscriminate violence and potential violations of U.S. arms export laws (The Guardian, 2023). His resignation highlighted the growing ethical concerns among officials working on U.S. foreign policy. Furthermore, Biden faced significant backlash from progressive lawmakers and pro-Palestinian activists who demanded an end to unconditional military aid to Israel. Mass protests erupted across major U.S. cities, with demonstrators calling for an immediate ceasefire and condemning the administration's stance on the conflict (CNN, 2023).

As civilian casualties in Gaza mounted and international criticism of Israel's military campaign intensified, the Biden administration began recalibrating its approach. In February 2024, President Biden described Israel's actions in Gaza as "over the top," signaling his growing frustration with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's handling of the war (NBC News, 2024). This marked a notable shift in rhetoric, reflecting rising

tensions between Washington and Tel Aviv. In an effort to ensure greater accountability, the U.S. required written assurances from Israel that American-supplied weapons would be used in compliance with international humanitarian law (Politico, 2024). The move was seen as an attempt to address mounting concerns over the legality of U.S. military aid and the disproportionate impact of the conflict on Palestinian civilians.

By March 2024, divisions within the Biden administration became increasingly evident. Vice President Kamala Harris publicly called for an immediate ceasefire, citing the immense suffering in Gaza and urging Israel to facilitate greater humanitarian access (ABC News, 2024). Her comments reflected growing impatience within the administration over the continued hostilities and the humanitarian toll of the war. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer also issued an unprecedented rebuke of Netanyahu, labeling him an "obstacle to peace" and warning that Israel's long-term survival depended on avoiding international isolation (Axios, 2024). His remarks underscored the shifting sentiment within the Democratic Party, as even staunch pro-Israel voices expressed concerns over the trajectory of Israeli policy.

In a significant diplomatic moment, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution demanding an immediate temporary ceasefire. The United States abstained from the vote. Historically, Washington had vetoed such resolutions to shield Israel from international pressure, making this abstention particularly noteworthy. In response, Netanyahu's government canceled a meeting with U.S. officials in Washington DC (Haaretz, 2024). Despite this diplomatic friction, Biden continued to assert that the U.S.-Israel alliance remained strong, though he emphasized the need for Israel to address humanitarian concerns more seriously.

Throughout the conflict, the Biden administration provided substantial military aid to Israel, with total U.S. assistance reaching at least \$17.9 billion in the first year of the war—a record amount (Congressional Research Service, 2024). At the same time, the U.S. allocated approximately \$1.2 billion in humanitarian aid to Palestinians, attempting to balance military support for Israel with efforts to alleviate suffering in Gaza. However, critics argued that these efforts were insufficient, as humanitarian access remained highly restricted, and Israel’s military operations continued unabated.

In the final days of his presidency, President Biden welcomed a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas, which was facilitated by Qatari mediation. The deal included the release of 33 hostages held by Hamas in exchange for Palestinian prisoners detained by Israel (Brookings Institution, 2025). Additionally, the agreement laid the groundwork for discussions on the reconstruction of Gaza, though major political and logistical challenges remained. Biden hailed the ceasefire as a critical step toward ending the violence and initiating a long-term peace process. However, many analysts remained skeptical, noting that the underlying political disputes—particularly the issue of Palestinian statehood—remained unresolved (Brookings Institution, 2025).

President Joe Biden’s involvement in the Israel-Palestine conflict was characterized by strong support for Israel’s right to self-defense, coupled with efforts to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. His administration navigated complex domestic and international pressures, attempting to strike a balance between military assistance and diplomatic engagement. While his support for Israel remained firm, the war also exposed deep political divisions within the United States, reshaping Democratic Party discourse on Middle East policy. As Biden left office, the future of U.S. involvement in the Israel-Palestine

conflict remained uncertain, with ongoing debates over the long-term implications of his administration's decisions.

Trump Involvement

During his presidency from 2017 to 2021, President Donald Trump adopted a staunchly pro-Israel stance, implementing policies that significantly impacted the Israel-Palestine conflict. In January 2020, he unveiled the "Peace to Prosperity" plan, aiming to resolve the longstanding conflict. Authored by his senior advisor and son-in-law, Jared Kushner, the plan proposed a demilitarized Palestinian state with limited sovereignty, while allowing Israel to annex approximately 30% of the West Bank, including all Israeli settlements and the Jordan Valley (The Guardian, 2020). The plan was met with widespread criticism; Palestinian leadership rejected it outright, viewing it as heavily biased toward Israel, and even some Israeli settler leaders opposed it due to the envisaged Palestinian state.

In his 2024 presidential campaign, Trump maintained his pro-Israel rhetoric, urging Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to conclude the Gaza conflict within two months and hinting at potential U.S. support for strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities. He warned Hamas of severe repercussions if the war persisted beyond his inauguration. Following his election, Trump engaged with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas for the first time since 2017, expressing a desire to swiftly end the Gaza war (Krauss, 2025).

Upon assuming office in January 2025, Trump's administration faced the ongoing Gaza conflict. Special Envoy for the Middle East Steve Witkoff played a pivotal role in ceasefire negotiations. In January 2025, a ceasefire agreement was reached between Israel

and Hamas, leading to the release of the 33 Israeli hostages previously mentioned (Wall Street Journal, 2025). Both Trump and outgoing President Joe Biden claimed credit for the ceasefire, with reports indicating that Trump's team, particularly Witkoff, had a significant influence in brokering the deal.

In February 2025, President Trump proposed a controversial plan for the Gaza Strip, suggesting that the U.S. could "take over" and "own" Gaza, forcibly relocating its Palestinian residents to neighboring countries and redeveloping the area (Wall Street Journal, 2025). This proposal was met with international condemnation; the United Nations labeled it as "ethnic cleansing," Arab nations expressed concerns over regional stability, and human rights organizations decried it as a potential war crime. Israeli leadership, including Prime Minister Netanyahu, praised the plan. Amid mounting pressure, Trump later stated that the U.S. would not enforce the takeover but would recommend it as a solution.

Domestically, the Trump administration faced criticism for its handling of pro-Palestinian activism. In March 2025, a New York judge blocked the deportation of Mahmoud Khalil, a pro-Palestinian activist and permanent U.S. resident, who had been detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) (Wall Street Journal, 2025). This detention followed an executive order targeting students involved in pro-Palestinian activities, sparking debates over free speech and civil liberties.

President Trump's involvement in the Israel-Palestine conflict was characterized by unwavering support for Israel, the introduction of contentious peace proposals, direct engagement in ceasefire negotiations, and domestic policies affecting pro-Palestinian activism. His administration's actions have had lasting implications for U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and the dynamics of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Netanyahu

Benjamin Netanyahu, serving as Israel's Prime Minister since December 2022, has played a pivotal role in shaping the nation's policies and responses amid the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict. His tenure during this period has been marked by decisive actions, firm stances, and significant international ramifications. Netanyahu, the longest-serving leader in Israel's history, has maintained a hardline approach toward security and Palestinian statehood, often prioritizing military strength and strategic deterrence over diplomatic negotiations. His policies have not only influenced Israel's domestic landscape but have also played a crucial role in shaping regional dynamics and international diplomatic relations, particularly with the United States and European allies.

Upon returning to power in December 2022, Netanyahu formed what has been described as the most right-wing government in Israel's history. His coalition partners included ultra-nationalist and religious factions that openly rejected the two-state solution, a long-discussed framework for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (The Guardian, 2022). Figures such as Itamar Ben-Gvir, the Minister of National Security, and Bezalel Smotrich, the Finance Minister, advocated for policies that strengthened Israeli settlements in the West Bank while opposing any concessions to Palestinian statehood. In February 2023, Netanyahu expressed a willingness to grant Palestinians a degree of autonomy but firmly opposed granting them sovereignty, emphasizing that Israel would maintain full security control over the West Bank in any future arrangement (Times of Israel, 2023). By June 2023, he explicitly stated that Israel must block the creation of a Palestinian state,

reinforcing his administration's stance against Palestinian sovereignty and aligning with the ideological positions of his far-right coalition partners (Haaretz, 2023).

The situation escalated dramatically on October 7, 2023, when Hamas militants launched a large-scale surprise attack on Israel, killing over 1,200 Israelis and taking hundreds hostage. The attack, the deadliest on Israeli soil in decades, prompted Netanyahu to declare a state of war against Hamas, vowing to transform all locations associated with the group into "cities of ruins" (BBC, 2023). He labeled Gaza as the "city of evil" and urged its residents to evacuate immediately, although limited options for evacuation existed due to border restrictions. In an effort to consolidate national unity during the crisis, Netanyahu proposed forming an emergency unity government with opposition leaders, following calls from figures like Benny Gantz and Yair Lapid to prioritize national security over political rivalries (Jerusalem Post, 2023). However, internal divisions within the government persisted, with opposition figures criticizing Netanyahu's handling of the war effort and humanitarian concerns in Gaza.

Netanyahu faced significant domestic criticism for what was widely perceived as a major intelligence failure leading up to the Hamas attack. Public protests erupted, with many Israelis blaming the government for security lapses that allowed the attack to unfold. A poll conducted in late 2023 revealed that 56% of Israelis believed Netanyahu should resign after the war, while 86% attributed the security failings to the country's leadership (Israel Democracy Institute, 2023). The Prime Minister's rhetoric during this period also drew controversy; notably, his comparison of Hamas to Amalek—a biblical enemy of the Israelites—was seen by some as an incitement to extreme retaliation. Additionally, Netanyahu faced backlash for a social media post blaming Israel's security chiefs for the

Hamas attack, which he later deleted following widespread condemnation from political and military leaders (Reuters, 2023).

In November 2023, Netanyahu dismissed international calls for a ceasefire, asserting that Israel would "stand firm against the world if necessary" (Al Jazeera, 2023). He stated that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) would remain in Gaza as long as necessary and opposed the return of the Palestinian Authority to the region, viewing it as weak and ineffective in controlling militant activity. Allegations that Israel was violating international law were dismissed by Netanyahu as "hogwash," while he referred to Palestinian civilian casualties as "collateral damage"—a stance that further heightened criticism from the United Nations and humanitarian organizations. Reports from the United Nations and the International Red Cross highlighted the increasing toll on Gaza's civilian population, warning of a potential humanitarian catastrophe due to restricted access to food, water, and medical supplies (United Nations, 2023).

The conflict saw numerous Israeli citizens taken hostage by Hamas, leading to immense public pressure on Netanyahu's government to secure their release. In December 2023, during a meeting with released hostages, Netanyahu faced direct criticism, with one individual accusing him of prioritizing politics over the safe return of captives (The Times of Israel, 2023). Around the same time, Netanyahu suggested supporting the "voluntary migration" of Palestinians from Gaza, a proposal that sparked widespread controversy and was perceived by many as an endorsement of forced displacement—a violation of international law (The Guardian, 2023). The proposal drew condemnation from international human rights organizations, who warned of the potential for ethnic cleansing if implemented.

The international community's response to Netanyahu's actions during the conflict included legal and diplomatic challenges. In May 2024, the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) sought arrest warrants against Netanyahu and Hamas leaders for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity, citing indiscriminate attacks on civilians and the use of collective punishment (ICC, 2024). Although Israel does not recognize the ICC's jurisdiction, such warrants could significantly impact Netanyahu's international travel, particularly to countries that are ICC members. Furthermore, in June 2024, the United Nations included Israel on a blacklist of countries violating children's rights in armed conflicts, a move Netanyahu condemned, asserting that the Israel Defense Forces are "the most moral army in the world" (UN, 2024). The listing placed Israel alongside countries such as Myanmar and Sudan, sparking debates within Israeli political circles about the long-term implications for Israel's global standing.

As of March 2025, tensions remain high. Israel has intensified its siege on Gaza by halting humanitarian aid and cutting electricity, aiming to pressure Hamas into revising a ceasefire agreement and releasing hostages (Al Jazeera, 2025). The siege has exacerbated humanitarian issues in Gaza, with risks of food and fuel shortages reaching critical levels. The International Criminal Court has accused Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant of using starvation as a method of warfare, a charge that has drawn further international condemnation (Human Rights Watch, 2025). Despite a fragile ceasefire in January 2025 that led to the release of some hostages, Israel insists on additional releases before agreeing to further ceasefire stages. Meanwhile, diplomatic efforts involving Egypt, Qatar, and the United States have struggled to produce a long-term resolution to the

hostilities, with Netanyahu's government remaining firm in its refusal to negotiate directly with Hamas.

Benjamin Netanyahu's recent tenure as Prime Minister has been characterized by a hardline stance on Palestinian statehood, aggressive military responses to attacks, domestic and international criticism, and complex legal challenges. His actions have significantly influenced the trajectory of the Israel-Palestine conflict, with lasting implications for regional stability and international relations. Whether his leadership will endure these mounting pressures remains uncertain, as both domestic and international calls for accountability continue to shape Israel's political landscape.

Media

The Israel-Palestine conflict has long been a focal point of global media coverage, with narratives shaped by various outlets across Israel, Palestine, and the United States. The media's portrayal of events has not only informed public opinion but also, at times, intensified the conflict by perpetuating biases, disseminating misinformation, and influencing political discourse. The complexity of the conflict, combined with deeply ingrained historical and ideological divisions, makes objective reporting particularly challenging. Furthermore, media organizations operate under different political, economic, and security constraints that further shape their narratives.

In Israel, the media operates within a complex environment, balancing national security concerns with journalistic integrity. Major Israeli news outlets often align with specific political ideologies, influencing their coverage of the conflict. For instance, right-leaning publications such as *Israel Hayom* and *The Jerusalem Post* may emphasize

narratives that underscore security threats and justify military actions, while left-leaning outlets like *Haaretz* might focus on the humanitarian impact on Palestinians and advocate for diplomatic solutions. This ideological divide can lead to selective reporting, where certain events are highlighted or downplayed to fit a particular agenda.

During periods of heightened conflict, Israeli media has been accused of engaging in omission bias, where the context of occupied territories is underreported. A study by Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR) found that only 4% of U.S. network news reports concerning Gaza or the West Bank mentioned that these are occupied territories, a figure that dropped to 2% in later analyses (FAIR, 2018). The lack of contextual reporting contributes to a skewed understanding of the situation, making it more difficult for audiences to grasp the historical and legal dimensions of the occupation. Furthermore, Israeli government policies, such as military censorship and restrictions on journalists' access to conflict zones, further influence how the conflict is reported. The Israeli Military Censor can prevent the publication of sensitive information related to national security, a measure that has been criticized for potentially suppressing critical coverage of military operations.

Palestinian media operates under challenging conditions, with restrictions imposed by both Israeli authorities and internal political factions. Journalists face arrests, censorship, and violence while reporting on the conflict, limiting their ability to present a full picture of events. Despite these obstacles, Palestinian journalists strive to highlight the experiences and struggles of their communities. However, the media landscape is fragmented, with outlets affiliated with different political groups, leading to varying narratives about the conflict. For example, media associated with Hamas, such as *Al-Aqsa*

TV, often frame the conflict in terms of resistance against Israeli occupation, whereas independent Palestinian outlets may adopt a more varied or critical stance on both Israeli and Palestinian leadership.

The rise of social media has provided Palestinians with platforms to share their perspectives globally. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter (now X) have seen war-related videos garner billions of views, with hashtags such as #Palestine, accumulating significant attention. However, this surge in user-generated content has also led to the spread of unverified information and propaganda, complicating the public's understanding of the conflict. The role of social media algorithms in amplifying emotionally charged content further exacerbates the issue, as posts that generate outrage or sympathy tend to spread more rapidly than fact-based, nuanced reporting. Moreover, social media companies have been accused of selectively censoring pro-Palestinian content, allegedly due to pressure from governments and lobbying groups, raising concerns about digital freedom of speech.

In the United States, media coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict has been scrutinized for potential biases. Major news outlets, including *CNN*, *The New York Times*, and *Fox News*, have been found to disproportionately emphasize Israeli perspectives, often highlighting Israeli casualties and framing narratives that align with U.S. foreign policy interests. This bias can shape public opinion and, consequently, influence political decisions regarding the conflict. For instance, research by the media watchdog group If Americans Knew found that in certain time periods, *The New York Times* published three times as many articles on Israeli deaths as on Palestinian deaths, despite the latter occurring at a significantly higher rate (If Americans Knew, 2019).

Critics argue that such coverage contributes to a one-sided understanding of the conflict, marginalizing Palestinian voices and oversimplifying the complexities on the ground. The emphasis on Israeli narratives can lead to a lack of critical examination of Israeli policies and actions, thereby perpetuating existing power dynamics. Furthermore, the influence of lobbying groups, such as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), on U.S. media and political discourse has been a point of contention, with some analysts arguing that this results in self-censorship or editorial bias that favors Israel.

The advent of social media has transformed the dissemination of information about the Israel-Palestine conflict. Platforms have become battlegrounds for competing narratives. While these platforms democratize information sharing, they also facilitate the rapid spread of misinformation and propaganda. Both Israeli and Palestinian supporters have utilized social media to garner international support. However, the prevalence of fake accounts and coordinated campaigns has muddied the waters. Investigations have revealed that on the day after a significant attack, one in four posts about the conflict on major social media platforms originated from fake accounts (The Guardian, 2023). Such activities contribute to the dissemination of misleading information, further polarizing public opinion and making it difficult for audiences to distinguish between credible and manipulated narratives.

The media's portrayal of the Israel-Palestine conflict has profound consequences on public opinion, influencing both domestic and international policy decisions. Public perception is shaped not only by the framing of events but also by the psychological processes that guide how individuals and societies interpret conflict. Media bias, selective

exposure, and political identity play crucial roles in this dynamic, affecting attitudes, beliefs, and even policymaking.

The way media outlets frame a conflict has a significant impact on how audiences understand it. In political psychology, this is known as the framing effect, where the presentation of information influences public reaction. For example, news reports that primarily focus on Israeli casualties may lead audiences to see Israel as a victim, whereas emphasizing Palestinian suffering may generate more sympathy for their cause. This selective framing can reinforce existing biases and shape political discourse. The agenda-setting theory suggests that the media doesn't necessarily tell people what to think but rather what to think about. By focusing disproportionately on certain aspects of the conflict (e.g., military actions rather than peace efforts), media outlets influence the public's perception of the most critical issues, which in turn pressures policymakers to respond in ways that align with these narratives.

The relationship between media, public opinion, and policy forms a self-reinforcing feedback loop. Recognizing the psychological mechanisms at play—such as framing effects, confirmation bias, and social identity theory—can help media consumers critically evaluate coverage and seek out diverse perspectives. A more informed and nuanced public discourse could, in the long run, lead to policy decisions that prioritize conflict resolution rather than perpetuating division. By understanding the intersection of media influence and political psychology, policymakers, journalists, and the public alike can work toward a more balanced and constructive engagement with the Israel-Palestine conflict, reducing its amplification through sensationalist or one-sided reporting.

Conclusion

The Israel-Palestine conflict remains one of the most deeply entrenched and widely debated geopolitical struggles of modern times. While the historical, religious, and territorial dimensions of the conflict are crucial in understanding its origins, the role of media in shaping public perception and political action has become increasingly significant. Media narratives have the power to influence policy decisions, mobilize activism, and even escalate tensions between the two sides. Journalism, whether through traditional news outlets, digital platforms, or social media, has continuously framed the conflict in ways that either reinforce existing biases or promote diplomatic discourse.

Throughout history, media coverage has often reflected the political and ideological leanings of the governments and organizations controlling its dissemination. Israeli, Palestinian, and international media outlets operate under varying degrees of political pressure, shaping narratives that align with their respective audiences. As seen through the differing approaches of U.S. Presidents Donald Trump and Joe Biden, political leadership also plays a crucial role in media framing, further influencing public discourse and international responses.

The expansion of digital media has transformed how individuals engage with the conflict, providing unprecedented access to firsthand accounts and real-time updates. While this democratization of information has empowered activists and independent journalists, it has also contributed to the spread of misinformation, further polarizing opinions and complicating diplomatic efforts. Recognizing and critically analyzing media biases is essential for fostering a more balanced and informed discussion about potential pathways to peace. Ultimately, the intersection of media, politics, and conflict resolution

remains a key factor in shaping the trajectory of the Israel-Palestine conflict. By understanding the power of media in influencing political mobilization and public opinion, policymakers, journalists, and global citizens can work toward more transparent, responsible, and constructive engagement with one of the world's most enduring conflicts.

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