

# From Versailles to the United Nations Security Council: The Impact of World War I on Human Rights and International Law in the Middle East

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Published 27th January 2025

## Abstract

This paper examines the integration of international law into state formation and transformation in the Middle East, focusing on World War I agreements such as the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Treaty of Versailles. Colonial interest led to the signing of these treaties, as evident in how they ignored existing ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity, which led to major regional conflicts. Though certainly most obvious in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, problems of statehood, right of return, and reparations inalienably challenge international law. This article explores the origins of these conflicts and their implications for subsequent UN resolutions, therefore highlighting the manner in which international law has tried to address grave historical injustices.

Keywords: International law, State formation, Sykes-Picot Agreement, Treaty of Versailles, Colonial interests, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, UN resolutions.

## I. Introduction

As the conflict in the Middle East intensifies, United Nations members have pontified and questioned the role of international human rights law. These actions have obscured the meaning of international law and dehumanized the victims from the 7th of October onwards, as described by UN Special Rapporteur for the occupied Palestinian territories, Francesca Albanese.<sup>1</sup> Human rights exist in a stark dichotomy: they are both

voiced, with protests worldwide, especially in the West, calling on states to uphold the rule of law, and voiceless, as political leaders suppress these rights in their pursuit of power.

The Middle East boasts a vast and complex history shaped by millennia of cultural, religious, and political transformations. Over time, it has been the home to the rise and fall of many different civilizations, including Jews,

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<sup>1</sup> "A/79/384." Undocs.org. 2024. <https://undocs.org/A/79/384>.

Arabs, and Ottomans, as well as the Romans and Greeks.<sup>2</sup> This region has long had significant cultural, ethnic, and religious power, which served as the foundation for the formation of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and kingdoms like the Kingdom of Israel and Judah. In more recent history, colonial powers such as the British and French have dominated the region, dividing it through agreements to favor their colonial interests, leaving long-lasting effects on the region.<sup>3</sup> Initiatives like UN Resolution 2334 (2016) emphasize the need for a two-state solution based on principles created to solve colonial legacies and recognize the illegality of Israeli settlements. These divisions continue to impact international law.<sup>4</sup>

The Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1916 and the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, both signed after World War I, reshaped the Middle East. Made in secret, the Sykes-Picot agreement was made between the United Kingdom and France and divided the Middle East, cutting over civilizations, ethnic groupings, and religious communities, hence fostering long-term instability and the emergence of wars in the area. Subsequently, the Treaty of Versailles not only imposed heavy reparations and territorial losses on Germany but

also had significant implications in the Middle East<sup>5,6</sup>. This resulted with the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire, mandate systems established by the League of Nations, as well as arbitrary borders and a legacy of nationalism, with anti-colonial movements among Arab Treaty communities, such as the *Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)*, which led to systematic human rights conflicts.<sup>7,8</sup> The United Nations has taken actions to solve the systematic problems that have aroused since early 20-th century history through the establishment of peacekeeping missions and advisory opinions of the International Court of Justice.<sup>9</sup>

These treaties have profoundly influenced how international law addresses the rights of people and nations, especially regarding the legitimacy of state claims

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<sup>2</sup> William Foxwell Albright. 2014. "Ancient Middle East | Historical Region, Asia." In Encyclopedia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/place/ancient-Middle-East."A/79/384."

<sup>3</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2024. "Middle East | History, Map, Countries, & Facts." Encyclopedia Britannica. November 15, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Middle-East.William>

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Security Council. 2020. "U.N. Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016)." *The Palestine Yearbook of International Law Online* 19 (1): 385–87. [https://doi.org/10.1163/22116141\\_019010017](https://doi.org/10.1163/22116141_019010017).

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<sup>5</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2024. "Sykes-Picot Agreement | Map, History, & Facts." Encyclopedia Britannica. October 15, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Sykes-Picot-Agreement.Unit> edUnited

<sup>6</sup> Treaty of Versailles | Definition, Summary, Terms, & Facts." Encyclopedia Britannica. October 21, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Treaty-of-Versailles-1919.Th> e

<sup>7</sup> Yapp, Malcolm Edward, and Stanford Jay Shaw. 2024. "Ottoman Empire | Facts, History, & Map." Encyclopedia Britannica. October 5, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ottoman-Empire>.

<sup>8</sup> The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. 2018. "Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant | History & Facts." In Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Islamic-State-in-Iraq-and-th> e-Levant.

<sup>9</sup> MENA, ICJ. 2024. "Palestine/Israel: International Court of Justice's Advisory Opinion on Israel's Unlawful Presence in Palestine Is an Important Step towards Justice and Self-Determination | ICJ." International Commission of Jurists. July 19, 2024. <https://www.icj.org/palestine-israel-international-court-of-justic> es-advisory-opinion-on-israels-unlawful-presence-in-palestine-is-an-important-step-towards-justice-and-self-determination/.

and territorial boundaries. The arbitrary borders drawn by Sykes-Picot have influenced the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, resulting in a series of UN interventions aimed at addressing these colonial legacies. A shift in the legal framework of the Middle East happened with the establishment of the United Nations on the 24th of October 1945<sup>10</sup>. Resolutions 242 addressed the issues created by the aforementioned agreements, such as occupation, refugee rights, and the right to self-determination, reflecting historical grievances established by earlier treaties<sup>11</sup>. Such accords have also affected geopolitical reality and international relations, guiding state interactions. Though their efficacy in the scope of current conflicts is still debatable, these resolutions show the change of international legal systems meant to secure and correct the inequities of colonial treaties.

Hence, this leads us to our research question: *How did post-WWI treaties, particularly the Sykes-Picot Agreement and Treaty of Versailles, shape the legal and geopolitical landscape of the Middle East, and how has the UN addressed the resulting conflicts through international law?*

First, we will delve into the historical background of the Middle East up to the 1940s, examining important treaties and accords. Secondly, we will look at continuous peacebuilding initiatives and evaluate how later UN

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<sup>10</sup> Ravndal, Ellen J. 2023. *In the Beginning*. Policy Press EBooks. Policy Press. <https://doi.org/10.1332/policypress/9781529210439.001.0001>.

<sup>11</sup>Security, UN. 2024. "Resolution 242 (1967) / [Adopted by the Security Council at Its 1382nd Meeting], of 22 November 1967." United Nations Digital Library System. November 29, 2024. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/90717?ln=fr>.

resolutions and legal reforms have sought to resolve issues resulting from these historical choices.

## II. Historical Foundations of the Middle East: From Antiquity to the Mandate Era

The Sykes-Picot agreement, named after its architects, English diplomat Sir Mark Sykes and French diplomat François Georges-Picot, was made secretly in London<sup>12</sup>. The agreement, birthed from the desire for colonialism and power, drew the frontiers of the Middle East, dividing the Ottoman Empire's Arab Provinces and cutting over their history and culture, which led to long-term instability and conflicts in the region. Implementing this secret agreement violated the McMahon-Hussein Correspondence (1915-1916), which promised Arab independence in exchange for supporting the British against the Ottomans.<sup>13</sup> Ultimately, it raised conflicts between the Arabs and the British at the time of World War I because the British promised to aid Arab independence in exchange for the support of the Arabs against the Ottoman Empire.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, the arbitrary borders drawn by the

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<sup>12</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2024. "Sykes-Picot Agreement | Map, History, & Facts." Encyclopedia Britannica. October 15, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Sykes-Picot-Agreement>.

<sup>13</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2024. "Hussein-McMahon correspondence | Palestine, History, Significance, & Map." Encyclopedia Britannica. October 15, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Husayn-McMahon-correspondence>.

<sup>14</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2024. "Sykes-Picot Agreement | Map, History, & Facts." Encyclopedia Britannica. October 15, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Sykes-Picot-Agreement>.

Sykes-Picot agreement set the stage for future sectarian and nationalistic conflicts across the Middle East.

The Balfour Declaration, issued by British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour in 1917, had been a very meaningful document in the history of Zionism and the establishment of Israel<sup>15</sup>. It declared the British government's intention to make "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people" possible. At a period when Britain had some sway in the Middle East, especially with Palestine's strategic location close to the Suez Canal, this proclamation was issued. However, the Balfour Declaration was burdened by its vague and contradictory aspects. It expressed an idea of a Jewish homeland; however, it also claimed Greco-Jewish that "nothing shall be done that may violate the civil and religious rights of the current non-Jewish communities in Palestine." This statement was quite elusive because it aroused various interpretations and was subjected to different readings by the Jews and Arabs. Besides, for the Jews, it meant that the matter of persecution they had endured in Europe might be near an end. The Zionist movement, which was headed by men like Theodor Herzl, saw it as a signal that they could intensify the Jewish immigration to Palestine<sup>16</sup>. Similar colonial policies affected other regions under the mandate system, which led to

various levels of autonomy and resistance movements beyond Palestine.<sup>17</sup>

Conversely, the Arab people in Palestine perceived the Balfour Declaration as a risk to their dream of autonomy. Thus, the Balfour Declaration was more of a danger to the aspirations of national self-determination for the Arabs in Palestine.<sup>18</sup> This led to civil wars such as the one we saw in Syria, which erupted in 2011, where these divisions, deeply rooted in colonial history, intensified, leading to various sectarian groups fighting for influence. In effect, the arbitrary decisions institutionalized through the Sykes-Picot agreement gave substance to the marginalization and alienation felt by certain The radical elements, drivers that helped to fuel the rise of extremist groups like ISIS, which have sought to expunge these "colonial borders" in an attempt to mobilize support for the re-establishment of a unified Islamic state. These groups leveraged the resentment towards this unfair demarcation and the outsider's influence to further their popularity, especially in societies with weak or contested administration.<sup>19</sup> This Sykes-Picot agreement is thus felt in modern times in the Middle East via some of the

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<sup>15</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2018. "Balfour Declaration | History & Impact." In Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Balfour-Declaration>.

<sup>16</sup> Britannica. 2019. "Zionism | Definition, History, Examples, & Facts." In Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Zionism>.

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<sup>17</sup> United Nations. 2021. "Origins and Evolution of the Palestine Problem: 1917-1947 (Part I)." Question of Palestine. 2021. <https://www.un.org/unispal/history2/origins-and-evolution-of-the-palestine-problem/part-i-1917-1947/>.

<sup>18</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2018. "Balfour Declaration | History & Impact." In Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Balfour-Declaration>.

<sup>19</sup> Stansfield, Gareth. Review of Explaining the Aims, Rise, and Impact of the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham, by Jean-Pierre Filiu, Michael Weiss, Hassan Hassan, Patrick Cockburn, Abdel Bari Atwan, Jessica Stern, J.M. Berger, Charles Lister, and William McCants. *Middle East Journal* 70, no. 1 (2016): 146–51. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43698623>.

continuous geopolitical tensions. One instance of this is the fight for Kurdistan's self-determination that stretches over Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran. The Kurds' inability to build a shared national identity from their ongoing differences has hampered their capacity for stability and peace, hence fueling ongoing warfare.<sup>20</sup>

The Treaty of Versailles, enacted following the end of World War I, is famous for its retributive policies against Germany for its part in extending the conflict. The treaty then contained the 231 "war guilt clause," which assigned Germany and its allies whole responsibility for the start of the war. However, the treaty also reshaped the geopolitics of the Middle East. Alongside the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920, it was intended to formally divide the Ottoman lands but was strongly resisted by the Turkish nationalists and was replaced by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, which led to a fundamental geopolitical reorganization and established the League of Nations' mandate system.<sup>21</sup>

One of the very significant outcomes of the Treaty of Versailles and the other peace treaties was the mandate system.<sup>22</sup> The League of Nations devised the mandate system, allegedly to govern territories that were not yet able

to stand by themselves until they could eventually govern themselves. In practice, however, it became a tool of colonial administration, allowing European powers to exert control over these regions. Under this system, Britain and France assumed administrative control over vast portions of the former Ottoman Empire. One such affected region is Palestine; this placed it under an international regime as "Mandatory Palestine" because of its religious importance.<sup>23</sup> This showed up in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, when both parties asserted religious and historical links to the territory. Britain received mandates for Palestine and Iraq; Syria and Lebanon came under the authority of France.<sup>24</sup> Even though the mandates were different, the general situation was that the British and French imposed political systems that were reflective of their global economic and strategic interests on the societies. As an example, it can be said that, on the one hand, the British authorities possessed power and were able to offer the Zionist movement the political support that the Balfour Declaration expressed. On the other hand, the Zionist potential to the local Arabs was the situation that would develop as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In Iraq, the British established a monarchy; however, they had challenges of rebellion, which were especially a result of

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<sup>20</sup> Gordyaen Benyamin Jermayi on, and 2024. 2024. "Why Some Kurds Side with Turkey and Iran." Kurdish Peace Institute. April 8, 2024. <https://www.kurdishpeace.org/research/government/why-some-kurds-side-with-turkey-and-iran/>.

<sup>21</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2019. "Treaty of Lausanne | Allies-Turkey [1923] | Britannica." In Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Treaty-of-Lausanne-1923>.

<sup>22</sup> "Treaty of Versailles | Definition, Summary, Terms, & Facts." Encyclopedia Britannica. October 21, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Treaty-of-Versailles-1919>.

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<sup>23</sup> Shaw, Malcolm. 2016. "The League of Nations Mandate System and the Palestine Mandate: What Did and Does It Say about International Law and What Did and Does It Say about Palestine?" *Israel Law Review* 49 (3): 287–308. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0021223716000170>.

<sup>24</sup> The American Journal of International Law. 2010. "French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon." 1923. Journal-article. *The American Journal of International Law*. Vol. 17. American Society of International Law. <https://www.ndu.edu.lb/lerc/resources/french%20mandate%20for%20syria%20and%20the%20lebanon.pdf>.

tribal groups that refused to be ruled by foreigners.<sup>25</sup> France's control over Syria and Lebanon was also based on the precarious balance between competing religious and ethnic communities, resulting in an enormously fragmented and very unstable political environment. Under a surface of international legitimacy, the mandate system therefore established European dominance in the area. The mandates sometimes planted seeds of bitter resentment instead of offering means of independence when local populations came to recognize that their so-called guardians were more concerned with resource exploitation and geopolitical control than in promoting self-governance.<sup>26</sup>

In addition, although the Treaty of Versailles is considered to be a European event and its post-war influence was primarily on European countries and events, it was no less of a damage to the Middle East in the long run<sup>27</sup>. The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, along with the imposition of the mandate system and the drawing of arbitrary borders, set off a series of events leading to a

century of conflict and instability in this part of the world. The architects of the Versailles settlement are blamed for leaving a legacy of social tensions among the Middle Eastern populations by making sure that colonial interests were attended to first and foremost. Indeed, those arbitrarily created borders and political structures have been so resilient that they prolonged cycles of conflict and complicated peace efforts and attempts at self-determination. The consequences of the Treaty of Versailles, then, constitute one of the most basic chapters in understanding the challenges and complexities of the modern Middle East.<sup>28</sup>

Hence, we find delving into the ancient history of the Middle East pivotal in understanding the modern-day Middle East. For this reason, we are going to draw a parallel between the history of Palestine and Israel. In its early history, the Middle East region, more specifically Palestine and the West Coast, was originally inhabited by the Canaanites, who established city-states and engaged in trade with surrounding civilizations., including Egypt.<sup>29</sup> The southern coast was given the name of Palestine because it was occupied by the Philistines (derived from the Greek word "Philistine"). Amidst the Classical period, the region was occupied by the Assyrian and Babylonian

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<sup>25</sup> Rey, Matthieu, 'The British, the Hashemites and monarchies in the Middle East', in Robert Aldrich and Cindy McCreery (eds), *Crowns and Colonies: European Monarchies and Overseas Empires*, Studies in Imperialism MUP (Manchester, 2016; online edn, Manchester Scholarship Online, 19 Jan. 2017), <https://doi.org/10.7228/manchester/9781784993153.003.0012>, accessed 10 Nov. 2024.

<sup>26</sup> "French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon." 1923. Journal-article. *The American Journal of International Law*. Vol. 17. American Society of International Law. <https://www.ndu.edu.lb/lerc/resources/french%20mandate%20for%20syria%20and%20the%20lebanon.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. 2019. "Treaty of Versailles | Definition, Summary, Terms, & Facts." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. October 21, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Treaty-of-Versailles-1919>.

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<sup>28</sup> McDougall, James, 'The British and French Empires in the Arab World: Some Problems of Colonial State-formation and its Legacy', *Sovereignty After Empire: Comparing the Middle East and Central Asia* (Edinburgh, 2011; online edn, Edinburgh Scholarship Online, 22 Mar. 2012),

<sup>29</sup> The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. "Canaan | Definition, Map, History, & Facts." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. October 28, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Canaan-historical-region-Middle-East>.

Empires in the 8th century, respectively, the 6th century BCE. Afterwards, the western region of the Middle East was controlled by the Persian Empire when they conquered the Babylonian Empire in 539 BCE<sup>30</sup>. Followed by the Hellenistic period, with Alexander the Great conquering the region in the 330s BC.<sup>31</sup> Three centuries later, it was conquered by the Romans, who annexed that region in 63 BCE and the Byzantine Empire, leading to several Jewish revolts against Roman rule, including the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. Six centuries later, it would be conquered under Islamic rule, spanning over a millennia, including the Crusaders establishing the Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1099, later reconquered by the Ayyubid Sultanate in 1187. The Ottoman Empire ruled the region from 1516 until the end of World War I in 1918<sup>32</sup>. Making sense of the Middle East in its modern manifestation, requires an understanding of the ancient past. The region has long been a crossroads of civilizations, including those of the Canaanites and Philistines, the Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Hellenistic, Roman,

Byzantine, Islamic, and Ottoman empires, especially in Palestine and the West Coast. With each conquest and each administrative change came new complexities woven into the region's social and political fabric, creating the patterns of conflict we see here today.<sup>33</sup>

Abraham, regarded as the father of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, has helped to shape Israel from its beginnings. The Israelites, his descendants, landed in Canaan, what is now Israel and Palestine. King David founded Jerusalem as the capital and united the Israelites about 1000 BCE. His son, King Solomon, built the First Temple in Jerusalem.<sup>34</sup> After Solomon's death, the kingdom split into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah around 931 BCE. The origins of Israel are deep in the ancient history of the region, with the likes of Abraham, King David, and King Solomon at the center. The historic legacy thus inherited imbues the modern-day Israeli-Palestinian conflict with a heavy layer of religious and cultural significance, along with an intersection of ancient aspirations and those more recent, dealing with colonial-era treaties that shaped the realities across the land.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Valbjørn, Morten, 'Culture in the Middle East: The "Western Question" and the Sovereignty of Post-imperial States in the Middle East', *Sovereignty After Empire: Comparing the Middle East and Central Asia* (Edinburgh, 2011; online edn, Edinburgh Scholarship Online, 22 Mar. 2012), <https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748643042.003.0016>

<sup>31</sup> Valbjørn, Morten, 'Culture in the Middle East: The "Western Question" and the Sovereignty of Post-imperial States in the Middle East', *Sovereignty After Empire: Comparing the Middle East and Central Asia* (Edinburgh, 2011; online edn, Edinburgh Scholarship Online, 22 Mar. 2012), <https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748643042.003.0016>,

<sup>32</sup> Gitler, Inbal Ben-Asher, 'Appropriating Multi-histories: The Palestine Archaeological Museum', *Architectural Culture in British-Mandate Jerusalem, 1917-1948* (Edinburgh, 2020; online edn, Edinburgh Scholarship Online, 19 May 2022), <https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9781474457491.003.0003>

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<sup>33</sup> The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. 2017. "Canaan | Historical Region, Middle East." In Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Canaan-historical-region-Middle-East>.

<sup>34</sup> The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. 2017. "Canaan | Historical Region, Middle East." In Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Canaan-historical-region-Middle-East>.

<sup>35</sup> Gitler, Inbal Ben-Asher, 'Appropriating Multi-histories: The Palestine Archaeological Museum', *Architectural Culture in British-Mandate Jerusalem, 1917-1948* (Edinburgh, 2020; online edn, Edinburgh Scholarship Online, 19 May 2022),

As a “mandated power” under the League of Nations, Britain controlled Palestine, all the while managing a wave of Jewish immigration and popular resistance in the form of Arab uprisings (1936–1939) and a Jewish insurgency (1944–1948). In 1947, the UN Partition Plan suggested dividing Palestine into separate states for Jewish and Arab people and an international zone for Jerusalem.<sup>36</sup> Zionist leaders accepted the plan as a step toward independence, whereas Arab leaders rejected it, viewing it as part of colonialism, and rejected the establishment of a Jewish state in a predominantly Arab region. That rejection triggered the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, whereby Israel became independent and about 700,000 Palestinians were displaced – the Nakba. In “Der Judenstaat”<sup>37</sup> (1896). Theodor Herzl imagined the ideological foundation of a Jewish home, provoking increased Jewish migration to the region and growing friction with the native Arabic population.<sup>38</sup>

The Sykes-Picot Agreement was replaced following World War I by the San Remo Conference and later mandated laws, therefore formalizing British and French

rule over Lebanon, Iraq, Transjordan, and Palestine.<sup>39</sup> Turkey seized Syria’s Iskenderun province in 1939 with the French’s help, but in 1943, both Syria and Lebanon managed to gain independence<sup>40</sup>. Driven by international pressure after World War II and increasing hostilities between Jews and Arabs, Britain terminated the Palestine mandate<sup>41</sup>. The year that Israeli independence was declared in 1948 and the Arab-Israeli War broke out following the UN Partition Plan of 1947 to divide Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. It led to the displacement of about 700,000 Palestinians (Nakba) and the creation of unresolved issues of land, borders, and sovereignty, with Jerusalem and Israeli settlements playing a key role.<sup>42</sup> The Six-Day War of 1967 reinforced tensions by adding the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Golan Heights under Israeli authority, entrenching military governance and further

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<sup>36</sup> Khalidi, Walid. “Revisiting the UNGA Partition Resolution.” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 27, no. 1 (1997): 5–21. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2537806>.

<sup>37</sup> Wijnberg, Nachoem M., and David Colmer. “Der Judenstaat.” In *Of Great Importance*, 90–91. Punctum Books, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.2353958.45>.

<sup>38</sup> Sears, John F. “COMMITTING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A JEWISH STATE.” In *Refuge Must Be Given: Eleanor Roosevelt, the Jewish Plight, and the Founding of Israel*, 176–93. Purdue University Press, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv17kw9gh.18>.

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<sup>39</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. 1998a. “Conference of San Remo | League of Nations, Treaty of Sevres, Mandates System.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*. July 20, 1998. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Conference-of-San-Remo#:~:text=During%20the%20Conference%20of%20San,also%20mandated%20to%20Great%20Britain>.

<sup>40</sup> Lawson, Fred H., ‘Ottoman Legacies and Economic Sovereignty in Post-imperial Anatolia, Syria and Iraq’, *Sovereignty After Empire: Comparing the Middle East and Central Asia* (Edinburgh, 2011; online edn, Edinburgh Scholarship Online, 22 Mar. 2012), <https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748643042.003.0003>

<sup>41</sup> Nalbantian, Tsolin, ‘Repositioning Armenians in Newly Post-Colonial Nation-states: Lebanon and Syria, 1945–1946’, *Armenians Beyond Diaspora: Making Lebanon their Own, Alternative Histories* (Edinburgh, 2020; online edn, Edinburgh Scholarship Online, 17 Sept. 2020), <https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9781474458566.003.0002>

<sup>42</sup> Richmond, Oliver P., and Jason Franks, ‘Building/Rejecting the Liberal Peace: State Consolidation and Liberal Failure in the Middle East’, *Liberal Peace Transitions: Between Statebuilding and Peacebuilding* (Edinburgh, 2009; online edn, Edinburgh Scholarship Online, 22 Mar. 2012), <https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748638765.003.0005>

inflaming the issue.<sup>43</sup> Other similar unanswered questions – the same ones in Iraq and Syria and the Kurdish populations – show the bigger picture of what these colonial decisions lead to across the region.

Despite the Oslo Accords of the 1990s that were initially supposed to result in a two-state solution and the Palestinians' actual governance, there still exist issues such as the status of Jerusalem, refugee rights, and borders that remain unresolved.<sup>44</sup> The conflict persists in that Israelis are largely, on the one hand, emphasizing security and their recognition as a Jewish state, while Palestinians, on the other hand, are more into self-determination and sovereignty. Peace initiatives by the international community still face stiff opposition, which is rooted in both regional and global dynamics. The establishment of Israel and the subsequent conflicts have contributed to the emergence of the present Middle East; thus, it has become a perpetual cycle of tension and violence.<sup>45</sup>

The establishment of Israel and the following conflicts have influenced the modern Middle East, thereby creating a cycle of tension and violence. The historical legacies of

such important events as the Balfour Declaration, the UN Partition Plan, and the wars of 1948 and 1967 are still breeding the relations between Israelis and Palestinians; hence, the significant challenges to peace and stability in the region are being highlighted.

### **III. UN Resolutions and Changes in International Law**

In order to ensure a permanent peace in the region, the United Nations Security Council issued the UN 242 resolution in 1967, following the Six-Day War, which was fought mainly between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, and Syria.<sup>46</sup> Because the resolution urged the Arab governments to recognize Israel's right "to live in peace within secure and organized boundaries free from threats or acts of force," the Israelis supported it. Furthermore, because the resolution called for Israel to leave "territories occupied in the recent conflict," Egypt and Jordan agreed to it. In the case of the Palestinians, the Palestinian Liberation Organization rejected the resolution until 1988 because it lacked explicit references to Palestinians. Although it was never implemented, it was diplomatic grounds to end the Arab-Israeli conflicts until the Camp David Accords.<sup>47</sup> Its "lands for peace" perspective remained pivotal in the

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<sup>43</sup> Rezk, Dina, 'Six-Day War', *The Arab World and Western Intelligence: Analysing the Middle East, 1956-1981* (Edinburgh, 2017; online edn, Edinburgh Scholarship Online, 18 Jan. 2018), <https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748698912.003.0007>

<sup>44</sup> Hurst, Steven, 'The 1990s: Clinton and the Failure of Containment and Engagement', *The United States and the Iranian Nuclear Programme: A Critical History* (Edinburgh, 2018; online edn, Edinburgh Scholarship Online, 23 May 2019), <https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748682638.003.0004>

<sup>45</sup> Hurst, Steven, 'The 1990s: Clinton and the Failure of Containment and Engagement', *The United States and the Iranian Nuclear Programme: A Critical History* (Edinburgh, 2018; online edn, Edinburgh Scholarship Online, 23 May 2019), <https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748682638.003.0004>

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<sup>46</sup> Security, UN. 2024. "Resolution 242 (1967) / [Adopted by the Security Council at Its 1382nd Meeting], of 22 November 1967." United Nations Digital Library System. November 29, 2024. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/90717?ln=fr>.

<sup>47</sup> "CAMP DAVID ACCORDS." *Strategic Studies* 15, no. 3/4 (1993): 103–10. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45182129>.

negotiation of the resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.<sup>48</sup> If the resolution was evaluated in terms of its effectiveness by metrics, you cannot argue that the resolution was successful because there was no 100 percent adherence by both Israel and the Arab states to the terms of the resolution, and there were even territorial disputes that persisted. Despite this legal framework for negotiations, resolution had little practical impact, mainly because it did not resolve essential issues of a settlement such as withdrawal from occupied lands, sovereignty of state, and location of refugees. Its life has been longer than that, but the principles contained in Resolution 242 are still used as a basis for proposals for peace and for diplomacy in the region.

An earlier resolution, in 1948, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly near the end of the Palestinian War (1947-1949), asserted principles of reaching a final agreement and returning Palestine refugees to their homes<sup>49</sup>. This statement can be found in Article 11 of the resolution:

*“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 that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of*

*international law or equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible.”*<sup>50</sup>

Additionally, the resolution also mentioned the establishment of the United Nations Conciliation Commission with the scope to facilitate peace between Israel and Arab countries.<sup>51</sup> The six Arab League countries represented at the UN voted against the resolution, followed by the Communist bloc member countries,<sup>52</sup> which had already recognized Israel as a state. It is worth noting that Israel was not a member of the United Nations at that time and objected to many resolution articles. On the other hand, Palestinian representatives also rejected Resolution 194.<sup>53</sup>

Despite rejection at that time, Article 11 of the resolution was cited in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 302, establishing the UNRWA and other UN resolutions. Consequently, it has been argued that the resolution enshrines a right of return for the Palestinian refugees, a claim that Israel disputes.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "United Nations Resolution 242." Encyclopedia Britannica, October 15, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/United-Nations-Resolution-242>.

<sup>49</sup> Gabiam, Nell. 2006. "Negotiating Rights: Palestinian Refugees and the Protection Gap." *Anthropological Quarterly* 79 (4): 717–30. <https://doi.org/10.1353/anq.2006.0049>.

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<sup>50</sup> Gabiam, Nell. 2006. "Negotiating Rights: Palestinian Refugees and the Protection Gap." *Anthropological Quarterly* 79 (4): 717–30. <https://doi.org/10.1353/anq.2006.0049>.

<sup>51</sup> United Nations General Assembly Resolution 169 (1980), Article 66.

<sup>52</sup> United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine. December 11, 1948.

<sup>53</sup> "1948 Refugees: Proceedings of an International Workshop, Hebrew University of Jerusalem Faculty of Law, 14–15 December 2016." *Israel Law Review* 51, no. 1 (2018): 47–110. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021223717000280>.

<sup>54</sup> Masalha, Nur (October 20, 2003). *The Politics of Denial: Israel and the Palestinian Refugee Problem*. Pluto Press. ISBN 978-0-7453-2120-2.

The binding nature of these resolutions led to the development of legal norms that were influenced by the UN resolutions, especially concerning refugees' rights and the right to self-determination of all people. The international legal scene was significantly impacted by UN Resolution 242's emphasis on territorial withdrawal and peaceful cohabitation as well as by the earlier 1948 resolution's emphasis on refugee rights. By stressing the need for international law in handling difficult humanitarian problems, these resolutions have had a long-lasting effect on the diplomatic and legal methods used to settle Middle Eastern problems.<sup>55</sup>

After the second Intifada, also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada, where the Palestinians led a major uprising against Israel and its corruption,<sup>56</sup> the United Nations Security Council was convened, leading to Resolution 1397. It was the first Security Council resolution to call for a two-state solution to the conflict.<sup>57</sup>

The Secretary General of the United Nations at that time, Kofi Annan, urged the Palestinians to end the "morally repugnant" violence and suicide bombings, as well as Israelis to end their occupation of Palestine and

excessive forces.<sup>58</sup> The Security Council expressed its concerns about the events that took place after September 2000 and the need for all civilians to coexist with two of the existing states side-by-side and respect international humanitarian law. Finally, the resolution demanded the immediate ceasefire and called upon both the Israelis and the Palestinians to cooperate in the implementation of the Tenet Plan and Mitchell Report, led by former US Senator George Mitchell. The paper discusses the various reasons for the Al-Aqsa Intifada and makes proposals to cease the violence, restore confidence, and resume discussions.<sup>59</sup>

These resolutions clearly show the strengthening of human rights values in frameworks of conflict resolution and negotiations. These resolutions have created vital legal and diplomatic rules by giving refugees' rights, the right to self-determination, and peaceful coexistence first priority. This focus on human rights highlights the ongoing impact of international law in the Middle East since it shapes the policies applied in handling and resolving problems.

International law was strengthened in 2016 at the Security Council with the adoption of Resolution 2334 concerning Israeli settlements in "Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem." According to the resolution, Israel's settlement activity is a "flagrant violation" of international law and has "no legal validity." It

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<sup>55</sup> Shaw, Malcolm N. *International Law*. 6th ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

<sup>56</sup> Araj, Bader, and Robert J. Brym. "Opportunity, Culture, and Agency: Influences on Fatah and Hamas Strategic Action during the Second Intifada." *International Sociology* 25, no. 6 (2010): 842–868. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580909351327>.

<sup>57</sup> Podeh, Elie. 2014. "Israel and the Arab Peace Initiative, 2002–2014: A Plausible Missed Opportunity." *The Middle East Journal* 68 (4): 584–603. <https://doi.org/10.3751/68.4.15>.

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<sup>58</sup> Left, Sarah. 2002. "UN security council backs Palestinian state." *The Guardian*, March 13, 2002. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/mar/13/israelandthepalestinians.unitednations>.

<sup>59</sup> Shapira, Amos. 1971. "The Six-Day War and the Right of Self-Defence." *Israel Law Review* 6 (1): 65–80. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0021223700002843>.

requests that Israel cease such activities and fulfil its obligations as an occupying power under the Fourth Geneva Convention.<sup>60</sup>

It was the first UNSC resolution to expressly address the issue of Israeli settlements since Resolution 465 in 1980 and the first on Israel and the Palestinian territories since Resolution 1860 in 2009.<sup>61</sup> The resolution, which was adopted under the non-binding Chapter VI of the UN Charter and contained no sanctions or coercive measures, "may have serious ramifications for Israel in general and specifically for the settlement enterprise" in the medium-to-long term, according to Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*<sup>62</sup>. In addition to the challenges that Resolution 2334 faced from a compliance perspective, Israel openly rejected its terms and continued settlement activities. In the short term, its impact has proven limited, as its adoption has not led to substantial change. But the resolution has real staying power in the international debate, framing the settlements as a violation of international law and a major obstacle to peace.<sup>63</sup>

Much of the world community reacted positively to the text in the days that followed. According to Murray

McCully, former Minister of Foreign Affairs for New Zealand, Resolution 2334 reinforces the international community's commitment to a negotiated outcome, while former Canadian ambassador Paul Heinbecker observed that, despite Israeli and Palestinian narratives, Resolution 2334 "reflects what the world thinks."<sup>64</sup> It is hardly a minority stance or even a strongly split one. If this resolution of the 15-member UN Security Council were submitted to a vote in the 193-member General Assembly, the outcome would be unlikely to alter." In response, Israel's government replied with a series of diplomatic moves against select Security Council members, accusing President Barack Obama's administration of secretly orchestrating the resolution's adoption. Palestinian representatives argued that there was an opportunity to end the occupation and establish a Palestinian state alongside Israel on the 1967 border.<sup>65</sup>

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas stated, "The voting in favour of the resolution has not resolved the Palestinian cause but defined it." He further stated: "The world said its word that settlement in the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem, is illegal." He invited the two countries "to sit together on the negotiation table to discuss all the outstanding issues

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<sup>60</sup> McGarry, Brian. 2017. "United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334." *International Legal Materials* 56 (3): 645–49. <https://doi.org/10.1017/ilm.2017.17>.

<sup>61</sup> Ravid, Barak; Khoury, Jack (10 December 2016). "Palestinians Try to Sway Obama Not to Veto UN Resolution on Israeli Settlements". *Haaretz*.

<sup>62</sup> Ravid, Barak. "Analysis Understanding the UN Resolution on Israeli Settlements: What Are the Immediate Ramifications?", *Haaretz*

<sup>63</sup> Ravid, Barak. "Analysis Understanding the UN Resolution on Israeli Settlements: What Are the Immediate Ramifications?", *Haaretz*

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<sup>64</sup> Hoffman, Joshua. 2024. "The Ultimate Enemy of Israelis and Palestinians." *Futureofjewish.com*. Future of Jewish. January 9, 2024.

<https://www.futureofjewish.com/p/the-ultimate-enemy-of-israel-is-and?selection=22bef3d3-8061-4c18-88da-8849cfc4ced7>.

<sup>65</sup> Wikipedia Contributors. 2019. "United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation. October 27, 2019. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_Nations\\_Security\\_Council\\_Resolution\\_2334](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council_Resolution_2334).

between us and resolve them with good intentions," claiming, "We are neighbours on this holy land, and we want peace."<sup>66</sup>

These resolutions clearly show the strengthening of human rights values in frameworks of conflict resolution and negotiations. These resolutions have created important legal and diplomatic rules that still impact policies in handling and resolving the continuous Israeli-Palestinian conflict by giving refugees' rights, the right to self-determination, and peaceful coexistence first priority. Furthermore, by underlining the illegality of the settlements and supporting the ideas of international humanitarian law, the acceptance of Resolution 2334 has greatly affected international legal procedures. It has also sharpened the worldwide conversation on the issue by stressing the necessity of a fair and peaceful settlement honoring the rights of all the engaged parties.

The application of UN resolutions to impose penalties on states neglecting to follow international law, including Israel's settlement activity, emphasizes the enforcement tools accessible via international coalitions and agreements. Resolution 2334 strengthened the illegality of the colonies and urged member states to act to guarantee compliance even if it did not contain particular penalties. This approach underscores the importance of international cooperation and legal frameworks in holding states

accountable and promoting adherence to international humanitarian law.<sup>67</sup>

#### **IV. Mediation and Peacekeeping Efforts**

Mediation and peacekeeping efforts were continued by the United Nations through a series of resolutions in the region. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1860, adopted on January 8, 2009, after recalling resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003), and 1850 (2008) on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, called for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza War after 13 days of fighting between Israel and Hamas.<sup>68</sup> Ultimately, the resolution failed because Israel and Hamas ignored it, and the war continued despite members calling for "an immediate ceasefire in Gaza leading to a full Israeli withdrawal, unimpeded provision through Gaza of food, fuel, and medical treatment, and intensified international arrangements to prevent arms and ammunition smuggling."<sup>69</sup> Resolution 1860 thus serves as a sad example of how poorly it has performed and what an abysmal record of compliance it has to its name, with neither Israel

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<sup>66</sup> Wikipedia Contributors. 2019. "United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation. October 27, 2019. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_Nations\\_Security\\_Council\\_Resolution\\_2334](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council_Resolution_2334).

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<sup>67</sup> Dan Joyner, "Legal Bindingness of Security Council Resolutions Generally, and Resolution 2334 on the Israeli Settlements in Particular." 2017. EJIL: Talk! January 8, 2017. <https://www.ejiltalk.org/legal-bindingness-of-security-council-resolutions-generally-and-resolution-2334-on-the-israeli-settlements-in-particular/>.

<sup>68</sup> United Nations Security Council. 2009. Resolution 1860 (2009) / adopted by the Security Council at its 6063rd meeting, on 8 January 2009. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/645525?ln=fr&v=pdf>

<sup>69</sup> United Nations Press. 2009. "SECURITY COUNCIL CALLS for IMMEDIATE, DURABLE, FULLY RESPECTED CEASEFIRE in GAZA LEADING to FULL WITHDRAWAL of ISRAELI FORCES | UN Press." Press.un.org. January 8, 2009. <https://press.un.org/en/2009/sc9567.doc.htm>.

nor Hamas abiding by its provisions. The effects were minimal, as the humanitarian crisis and violent death appeared to only increase rather than decrease. Its longevity, similarly, has also been short, as it has not been a basis for other agreements or ceasefires, underscoring the difficulty of enforcing such resolutions in live theatres of conflict.<sup>70</sup>

Israel's status as a UN member state forces it to "agree, accept, and carry out the decisions of the Security Council" under Article 25 of the UN Charter.<sup>71</sup> It is generally acknowledged that Security Council resolutions taken in the exercise of its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace in conformity with the UN Charter are binding on member states.

In a statement issued immediately following the Israeli cabinet session on January 9, the government stated that it would not accept the UN resolution, declaring that "the IDF will continue to act in order to achieve the operation's goals, which include changing the security environment in the southern part of the nation, in line with the plans that were approved prior to embarking on the operation."<sup>72</sup> In addition, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert deemed the

resolution "unworkable" owing to Hamas' continuous missile fire.<sup>73</sup> "Even though we are the main actors on the ground in Gaza, we were not consulted about this resolution, and they have not taken into account our vision and the interests of our people," stated Ayman Taha, a Hamas spokesman in Gaza, on the same day.<sup>74</sup>

The deployment of peacekeeping personnel to negotiate ceasefires and safeguard civilians has been a significant component of the United Nations' conflict zone stabilization policy. Peacekeeping operations have sought to create a buffer between warring sides, track ceasefire agreements, and guarantee citizen safety in many wars, including the Israeli-Palestinian one. Though not always successful in instantaneous conflict resolution, these initiatives highlight the international community's will to preserve peace and defend human rights by means of coordinated military and diplomatic activities.

Particularly in terms of refugee rights and self-determination, the acceptance of UN resolutions, including Resolution 193 and Resolution 2334, has had a significant influence on the national policy of member states.<sup>75</sup> Recognising their right to live in peace and security, these resolutions have driven nations to create and carry out programs encouraging the repatriation and

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<sup>70</sup> United Nations Press. 2009. "GENERAL ASSEMBLY DEMANDS FULL RESPECT for SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1860 CALLING for IMMEDIATE GAZA CEASEFIRE, as EMERGENCY SESSION CONCLUDES | UN Press." Press.un.org. <https://press.un.org/en/2009/ga10809.doc.htm>.

<sup>71</sup> United Nations Charter, Chapter V: The Security Council

<sup>72</sup> Shamir, Shlomo, and Barak Ravid. 2009. "Israel rejects UN truce resolution, says Gaza operation to continue - Haaretz Com." Haaretz.Com, January 9, 2009. <https://www.haaretz.com/2009-01-09/ty-article/israel-rejects-un-truce-resolution-says-gaza-operation-to-continue/0000017f-f41c-d47e-a37f-fd3cbf5f0000>.

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<sup>73</sup> BBC News Editors. 2009. "BBC NEWS | Middle East | UN Ceasefire Call Goes Unheeded." Bbc.co.uk. BBC. 2009. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7820027.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7820027.stm).

<sup>74</sup> BBC News Editors. 2009. "BBC NEWS | Middle East | UN Ceasefire Call Goes Unheeded." Bbc.co.uk. BBC. 2009. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7820027.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7820027.stm).

<sup>75</sup> McGarry, Brian. 2017. "United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334." *International Legal Materials* 56 (3): 645–49. <https://doi.org/10.1017/ilm.2017.17>.

compensation of refugees. For example, several nations have included measures in their domestic laws to help refugees integrate and be protected, assuring people access to essential rights and services.<sup>76</sup> To cite an example, the German government has made it easier for refugees to find asylum in Germany through the implementation of the Integrationsgesetz (Integration Law) in 2016.<sup>77</sup> This law was passed because a lot of refugees were coming to Germany when the conflict started in Syria.<sup>78</sup> This law says refugees should go to German classes, get job training, and learn how to be part of Germany. Additionally, the law ensures that refugees have access to healthcare, education, and social services. These measures have reinforced Germany's commitment to addressing humanitarian issues and upholding the dignity and rights of displaced persons, setting a strong example for other nations to follow.<sup>79</sup>

The binding nature of United Nations Security Council resolutions has led to the widespread adoption of international norms and principles within domestic legal frameworks.<sup>80</sup> Encouragement of member states to match

their national laws with the ideas expressed in these resolutions helps to foster respect for international humanitarian law and human rights norms. This has led to a harmonization of laws among many countries, therefore promoting a more consistent and coordinated strategy to handle world problems. In areas like conflict resolution, the protection of people, and the advancement of peace and security, UN resolutions clearly impact home policies. For example, South Africa has aligned its domestic legislation with the principles outlined in various UN resolutions, following and promoting international law and human rights standards.<sup>81</sup> As a result of the apartheid, South Africa created numerous laws with the scope of protecting human rights and accountability, adhering to the UN standards. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC),<sup>82</sup> created under the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, for example, was crucial in correcting past transgressions of human rights and promoting national healing. In keeping with international humanitarian norms, South Africa passed the South Africa Refugee Act to provide protection and rights for asylum seekers and refugees.<sup>83</sup> The influence and the binding nature of the resolutions led to a harmonized

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<sup>76</sup> Shaw, Malcolm N. *International Law*. 6th ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

<sup>77</sup> Gesley, Jenny. 2016. "Germany: Act to Integrate Refugees Enters into Force." Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA. August 15, 2016. <https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2016-08-15/germany-act-to-integrate-refugees-enters-into-force/>.

<sup>78</sup> Laub, Zachary. 2023. "Syria's Civil War." Council on Foreign Relations, February 14, 2023. <https://www.cfr.org/article/syrias-civil-war>.

<sup>79</sup> Gesley, Jenny. 2016. "Germany: Act to Integrate Refugees Enters into Force." Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA. August 15, 2016. <https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2016-08-15/germany-act-to-integrate-refugees-enters-into-force/>.

<sup>80</sup> Shaw, Malcolm N. *International Law*. 6th ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

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<sup>81</sup> South Africa. n.d. "Chapter 2: Bill of Rights." In BILL OF RIGHTS.

<https://www.justice.gov.za/constitution/SACConstitution-web-eng-02.pdf>.

<sup>82</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission. 2014. "Truth and Reconciliation Commission." Justice.gov.za. 2014. <https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/>.

<sup>83</sup> REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA and GOVERNMENT GAZETTE. 1998. "REFUGEES ACT, 1998." Act. GOVERNMENT GAZETTE 402 (19544): 1-6. [https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis\\_document/201409/a130-980.pdf](https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/a130-980.pdf).

approach to addressing global conflicts and promoting the values of the United Nations.

As we have observed through the decades, the United Nations resolutions have played an important role in enforcing human rights norms in conflict resolution and negotiation contexts. When seen through the prism of compliance, impact, and lifetime, their success has varied greatly, though. While resolutions like 242 and 2334 have shown ongoing relevance and guided negotiations, others like 1860 battled to reach quick compliance or influence. Emphasizing the requirement of strong procedures to translate legal principles into pragmatic results, these measures expose the difficulty of enforcing international law in politically charged and firmly rooted conflicts. These resolutions, which prioritize refugee rights, the right to self-determination, and peaceful coexistence, established legal and diplomatic norms that continue to impact conflict resolution techniques. Emphasizing the need for inclusive and fair solutions that regard the rights and aspirations of all parties involved, the focus on human rights has also affected the language surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and other world crises. This approach has helped to establish more successful and durable peace processes, emphasizing the role of international law in ensuring global stability and security.

## **V. Conclusion**

The Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Treaty of Versailles cemented much of modern international law on territoriality, self-determination, and sovereignty to uphold

colonial interests by partitioning the Middle East into zones of colonial control that ignored aspects of its ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity in fictitious political units by erecting new states through treaties whose artificial borders transcended historical and community boundaries, propounded claims to territory ownership, and established procedures to resolve disputes over sovereignty over territory along with the right to exercise a claim – at least according to contemporary international law. These treaties officially placed the area under colonial rule in accordance with the League of Nations' mandate system, setting forth governance and sovereignty standards that would mold the wider geopolitical architecture of the Middle East. The British, for example, created a political structure in Palestine with the direct government through the High Commissioner and the applications of policies encouraging Jewish immigration, which, among other series of events, sparked the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Similarly, in Syria, French rules not only set governmental systems but also imposed language and cultural policies affecting the varied population of the country, hence generating long-standing political difficulties.

The impact of these treaties is nowhere more starkly demonstrated, as noted below, than in the recurring international law debate over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This eternal tussle memorializes the chaos wrought by Sykes-Picot and Versailles, as sovereignty and land tenure, as well as displaced people, are never clear-cut. The set of principles summarized under refugee rights is one of the most important rallying cries in international

law, and here, too, the tenor of those claims resonates particularly strongly in a historic conflict such as this, where longstanding claims by Palestinian refugees to an international legal right to recognition and return are grounded on early UN Resolutions concerning the mandate of refugee rights. Moreover, the concepts of accountability and state responsibility that are becoming more common in international law present dilemmas in this context, as demands for accountability for acts by both Israeli and Palestinian actors remain part of the search for a legally mediated solution.

These ancient accords underline the need for creating fresh legal systems able to solve long-standing problems and simultaneously fit for present humanitarian conditions. Conventional strategies have often been unable to solve problems firmly rooted in the colonial-era regimes Sykes-Picot and Versailles established. Future legal systems should prioritize the efficient execution of binding resolutions, foster multilateral collaboration among affected parties, and ensure accountability for violations of international law and comprehensive peace treaties to address this issue. Only by embracing adaptive, forward-thinking legal processes can the international community hope to manage the complicated legacy of these founding treaties while fostering regional stability, human rights, and long-term peace in conflict-prone areas.

This study shows how colonial legacies still influence international law in the Middle East by analyzing the course from the Sykes-Picot Agreement to modern UN decisions. It emphasizes the pressing necessity of legal

reforms that can solve long-standing issues and promote a more permanent peace, stressing human rights, regional collaboration, and long-term stability of the area.

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