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“CONFLICT OF VALUES” IN THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFRONTATION

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Abstract. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is ethnopolitical in nature. It has a number of features that distinguish it from other conflicts of a similar type. The distinctive features of the conflict go beyond the contradictions at the level of regional politics. They touch on the deep nature of the Arab-Israeli / Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In addition to the political and economic component of the conflict, other factors such as culture, values of ethnic identity are of great importance. From the very beginning, the Arab-Israeli conflict in Palestine reflected more than just a struggle for the territory. It was a struggle for their history, myths, traditions, and religion, associated with this land by both peoples. The expanding borders of the Israeli state especially after the 1967 war are perceived by Palestinians not only as a confirmation of the seizure of their territories, but also as an assertion of differences and hostility between the two peoples. Due to the ethnic component, it is perceived by the parties not only as a conflict of interests but as a conflict of values. The concept and essence of ethnopolitical conflict and the complexity of its regulation reflect the main characteristics of the Palestinian-Israeli confrontation. These features make the Arab-Israeli conflict the most difficult to manage and to settle. The difficulties of resolution through political compromises create serious problems for the peace process. Despite the ongoing local and international peace efforts, the Jews, Arabs, and other residents of Israel and the Palestinian territories (i. e. the West Bank and Gaza) have endured decades of political, social, and physical upheaval with periodic eruptions of violence.

Keywords: ethnopolitical conflict, conflicts of values, violence, long-term effects of war, collective memories, ethos of conflicts, psychological stress.

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“КОНФЛИКТ ЦЕННОСТЕЙ” В ПАЛЕСТИНО-ИЗРАИЛЬСКОМ ПРОТИВОСТОЯНИИ

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Аннотация. Ближневосточный конфликт является по своей сути этнополитическим. Он обладает рядом черт, который выделяет его из других конфликтов подобного типа. Его отличительные особенности выходят за рамки противоречий на уровне региональной политики. Они затрагивают глубинную природу арабо-израильского / палестино-израильского противостояния. Большое значение, помимо его политико-экономической составляющей, имеют такие факторы, как традиционные ценности, культура и этническая идентичность. С самого начала арабо-еврейские противоречия в Палестине отражали не только борьбу за территорию. Это была борьба за историю, мифы и религию, связанные у обоих народов с этой землей. Изменение границ еврейского государства, особенно после войны 1967 г., начало восприниматься арабами Палестины не только как подтверждение захвата территорий, но и как утверждение различий и враждебности между народами. Вследствие этих особенностей он воспринимается сторонами не только как конфликт интересов, но и как конфликт ценностей. Понятия, сущность этнополитических конфликтов составляют основные характеристики палестино-израильского противостояния. Эти особенности делают его наиболее сложным с точки зрения управления. Трудности урегулирования путем политических компромиссов создают серьезные проблемы для мирного процесса. Несмотря на все попытки региональных и международных игроков достичь мира, евреи, арабы и другие жители Израиля и палестинских территорий (на Западном берегу р. Иордан и в секторе Газа) долгие десятилетия

тилетия живут в обстановке политических, социальных, психологических и физических потрясений и периодических вспышек насилия.

Ключевые слова: этнополитический конфликт, конфликты ценностей, насилие, долговременные последствия войны, коллективная память, “этос конфликта”, психологический стресс.

“The task of the present is to correct our understanding of the past, and this task becomes especially relevant when the past is irreversible”.

E. Renan. What Is a Nation?

INTRODUCTION

The Middle East continues to experience the longest-running ethnopolitical conflict, the Arab-Israeli conflict (often referred to simply as the Middle East conflict). Its history and political characteristics have been extensively studied, and the bibliography is so vast that even citing the most well-known works would exceed the scope of this article. At the same time, analysis of its historical-psychological, political-sociological, and cultural features has largely remained outside the focus of research. Political scientists and historians have primarily studied and described the causes, stages, and specific circumstances of the conflict, the conditions of military confrontations, and have engaged in forecasting subsequent stages of its development. However, comprehensive studies of the particular features of the Arab-Israeli confrontation have been relatively rare, though in the last decade, Russian political scientists have begun producing works on the unique characteristics of ethnopolitical conflicts [1, 2, 3, 4].

This article aims to analyze some of the distinctive traits and factors of the Middle East conflict that help us understand its specificity and examine the issues that complicate its resolution.

At the present stage, the conflict is primarily an interethnic or ethnopolitical confrontation. Based on the characteristics of its participants, it is asymmetrical: Israel, possessing a strong regular army, is currently engaged against Palestinian and other quasi-state armed formations and organizations (Hamas, Hezbollah, Houthi units) that combine military and political activities.

Researchers of ethnopolitical conflicts consider the Palestinian-Israeli conflict one of the most complex forms of interethnic confrontation in terms of governance and resolution [5, p. 238; 6, p. 71]. An interethnic conflict typically encom-

passes both interstate and interethnic dimensions. The features of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict include psychological impulses, historical motives, religious contradictions, and the traditional cultural values of the opposing sides. These characteristics, instrumental for the political elites of each side, are used to maintain a state of extreme tension and hostility toward opponents. They generate causes for recurring military escalations and outbreaks of violence [7], which hinder international and regional attempts to establish effective negotiations.

Ethnic identity is particularly important in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The study of ethnic identity has been addressed by many Russian experts, sparing the author from a detailed examination here [6; 8; 9; 10, pp. 153-176; 11]. It should be emphasized that, due to its ethnic component, the conflict is perceived by the parties not merely as a dispute over interests but also as a conflict of values. The notion of values includes traditions, beliefs, and the memory of victims (the memorial factor), characteristic of the social and ethnic communities involved. Lastly, ethnopolitical conflicts are conflicts of interest arising from the unequal access of different ethnic groups to resources and power [9, p. 140].

From the outset, Arab-Jewish tensions in Palestine reflected a struggle not only over territory but also over history, myths, traditions, and religion, elements tied by both peoples to the “Promised Land” for Jews and to Muslim holy sites for Arabs. The struggle involves not just material or power concerns but also the protection of the culture, status, and identity of one’s ethnic group. Russian specialist V.M. Shevtsov emphasizes that, due to the excessive emotional component, ethnopolitical conflicts exhibit a high degree of irrationality, expressed in an enormous potential for aggression, hatred, and hostility, far exceeding

the rational calculation of interests and strategy selection [1, p. 54].

POLITICAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS

A major issue of ethno-political conflict, traditionally addressed by sociologists and psychologists, is its psychological impact. Political psychology, a discipline clearly underestimated in modern political science, makes it possible to determine the influence of psychological trauma as a painful factor shaping the reactions of populations involved in conflict. Political-psychological methods demonstrate that conflicts inflict devastating effects on the mental state of participants [12, 13, 14]. Changes occur in the consciousness of people, who gradually come to regard their opponents as “alien,” as “other” peoples separated by an insurmountable barrier of hostility.

In recent decades, research has increasingly focused on the psychological impact of military conflicts on the Palestinian population, especially in Gaza. Studies have examined individuals suffering from depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Exposure to violence can increase the risk of PTSD by more than tenfold in peacetime. Current research indicates that 26% of Palestinians in Gaza suffer from PTSD [15, 16]. The severity of anxiety and depressive symptoms is directly linked to the intensity of trauma experienced during combat [17]. Russian psychologists have found that direct participants in military actions are highly susceptible to “combat fatigue syndrome.” Civilians who witness war suffer psychological trauma related to the loss of loved ones and emotional violence. These traumas constitute a form of “secondary victimhood,” in which people gradually develop psychological “empathy fatigue” [14]. Consequently, a sense of hopelessness arises, blocking efforts to resolve the conflict [18]. Surveys show that, during crisis escalations, youth aged 18–24 are the most vulnerable to anxiety-depressive states, PTSD, and stress [16, source 1]¹.

¹ This conclusion is supported, for example, by research and surveys conducted in the Gaza Strip between 2015 and 2020. These studies identified increased symptoms of PTSD and rising rates of depression among young people. Findings from 2020 indicate that 88.4% of youth experienced person-

Data on the psychological state of Israelis who have experienced periods of military escalation is similarly revealing. Israeli specialists have studied PTSD among Jewish and Bedouin populations in southern Israel, who have faced frequent rocket attacks. Even in peacetime, 20.3% of respondents exhibited PTSD [19]. During periods of frequent rocket fire and military operations in Gaza, the number of psychologically affected individuals rises by nearly 20% [16, 20]².

Studies show that PTSD can persist or appear years later. A 2020 Tel Aviv University study of veterans of the First Lebanon War (1982) found that 59% of soldiers who experienced combat stress later developed PTSD [21]. Long-term research indicates that these conditions can recur with delayed onset and last for decades. For instance, 27% of soldiers who endured acute combat shock continued to show symptoms years later, especially when confronted with new traumatic events [21].

A 2024 report by the State Comptroller stated that, following the Hamas massacre of October 7, 2023, and the ensuing war, about 3 million Israeli adults experienced anxiety, depression, or PTSD symptoms. Furthermore, approximately 580,000 Israelis suffered at least one severe PTSD symptom directly related to these traumatic events. If accurate, nearly 17% of Israel’s population is affected, more than triple the U.S. rate of 5% [21], and over four times the global average of 3.9% (WHO data).

Some domestic and foreign specialists argue that in prolonged military interethnic conflicts, participants’ behavioral attitudes are shaped by a unique syndrome, the “ethos of conflict.” This concept, well-studied in the Palestinian-Israeli context, was developed by Israeli scholar D. Bar-

al trauma, and 83.7% suffered “witness trauma”, having observed the destruction of their homes and incidents of violence. PTSD was diagnosed in 53.5% of participants.

² Another study, involving 25 adult Jews living in communities subjected to rocket attacks, found a 19.5% higher rate of severe post-traumatic stress disorder, with women accounting for 80% of the affected individuals. A 2018 study conducted by Ariel University professor Menachem Ben-Ezra reported that 11.6% of Israelis suffered from PTSD. Following the Israeli “Operation Breaking Dawn” in Gaza in 2022, the proportion of respondents exhibiting PTSD symptoms rose to 30.8%.

Tal [22]. The “ethos of conflict” refers to societal worldviews within communities involved in intractable military confrontation [22, 23]³. It is linked to distorted perceptions of the overall situation. The ethos establishes societal guidelines for interpreting past and present causes of tension, justifying one’s own side’s actions, and strengthening solidarity during military campaigns. These norms are cultivated and transmitted across generations [24, 25].

Gradually, a socio-psychological “infrastructure” develops, shaping how members perceive reality, process information, and make decisions. This infrastructure becomes rigid and resistant to change as long as the conflict continues, becoming a key factor fueling the conflict and ultimately sustaining its cycle of intractability [25].

The ethos of conflict is closely tied to the role of mass media in promoting ethnic solidarity against an enemy. Israeli media, for example, emphasize the constant need to ensure national security against radical Arab forces, portraying Israelis as the victimized side and delegitimizing the opposition [26, p. 436]. Bar-Tal contends that studying this syndrome helps analyze the social-psychological mechanisms by which societies perceive events related to the Arab-Israeli conflict [22].

Russian political scientist S.V. Lebedev, building on Bar-Tal’s concept, suggests that collective memory among Palestinians and Israelis consists of shared beliefs about historical events. Each side views itself as the innocent victim of the other [12]. These components of the syndrome are evident in the stages of the Arab-Israeli and, later, Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Markers include Israel’s justification of war objectives, emphasis on national security, and the delegitimization and “dehumanization” of the opponent. Israeli political elites and the Palestinian leadership of the PA and Hamas cultivate unity against the enemy while fostering intolerance toward alternative perspectives [27, pp. 29-50; 28, pp. 35-36].

Border issues between Israel and the Arab states have significantly shaped the political-psychological features of the conflict. Israel’s

³ In recent years, the term “intractable” has become widely used among political sociologists.

territorial expansion, especially after the 1967 war, was perceived by Palestinian Arabs not only as land seizure but also as proof of irreconcilable differences [29, 30, 31]. Many Israeli psychologists argue that a “mental wall” existed long before the physical barrier was constructed [32]. This wall, rooted in a long history of violence and territorial disputes, reinforced generalized enemy stereotypes [33, pp. 118-129; 34]. Israeli experts view the barrier as a security measure and interpret the desire for separation as “normal,” rooted in the historical experience of the Jewish people. The wall is seen as a defensive line separating “clashing civilizations” and fundamentally different worldviews [33, pp. 238-240].

Palestinians, for their part, view the Israeli “security wall” with extreme hostility. The barrier between Israelis and Palestinians constructs two opposing worldviews, which are then projected onto the overall conflict situation. It serves as a dividing line between two hostile groups: Israelis on one side, Arabs on the other [13].

Closely linked to the psychological “division” of the two peoples is the problem of sociocultural contradictions: differences in language, behavioral norms, values, customs, traditions, stereotypes, national symbols, and modes of thinking and acting. Each of these differences can become a source or trigger for behavioral conflict, manifested through prejudice, denigration of the other’s national character and culture, and the formation of negative stereotypes [4].

Analyzing numerous publications by Israeli and Western authors, American scholar B. Beit-Hallahmi provides examples of sociocultural traits and aspects of the Palestinian national character. Authors of such studies often argued that specific features of the Arab national character negatively influenced the nature of the conflict. They even considered Arab personal characteristics the main cause of the conflict [34], claiming that the rigid stance of Arabs constituted the primary obstacle to its resolution. According to these authors, this stance was shaped by Arab culture, language, and ways of thinking. Professors at the American University of Beirut described Arab culture as authoritarian and hostile to Western values, even characterizing their cultural level dismissively as that of

street vendors of falafel [35, pp. 243-249]. As a result, both sides use each other’s cultural differences as instruments to achieve political and military goals and, most importantly, to emphasize their moral superiority.

HISTORICAL (MEMORIAL) FACTOR

The political-psychological factor is closely tied to the historical and memorial aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Its origins and development are rooted in the history of the peoples living in Palestine, their interactions, established national mentalities and consciousness, traditions, and ideological and historical myths and stereotypes transmitted across generations. Historical memory, mythologization, and the “mobilization of the past” become powerful factors in the conflict. Israeli scholar H. Kushner emphasizes that past traumas experienced by the Jewish people, genocide, slavery, exile, and mass flight, return during the conflict “like a boomerang, a centuries-long hatred anchored in the memory of suffering” [35, p. 247]. In Israeli collective memory, the events of 1948–1949 are seen as the end of exile, a national revival, and victory in the War of Independence. In contrast, Palestinian collective memory refers to these events as the *Nakba* (catastrophe), perceived as an invasion followed by illegal occupation.

Leading Russian Middle East scholars V.V. Naumkin and V.A. Kuznetsov argue persuasively that victories and defeats in particular battles in the Middle East cannot be regarded as victories or defeats in the wars themselves. If the history of the conflict is long-term, if its “symbols do not lose their formidable appeal, and the myths are captivating, destruction of the enemy’s infrastructure, deprivation of their material assets, or physical elimination of leaders will not lead to a final resolution,” but “will only create new symbols of struggle and heroic myths” [4]. Therefore, without ending the “wars of memory,” only a ceasefire is possible in people’s minds, but not a lasting peace in the Middle East [14].

Ann Schutzenberger, in her book *The Ancestors’ Syndrome*, concludes that ethno-political conflicts have no historical solution in the long

term [36, p. 81]. She argues that “reciprocal blows of history,” the “ledger of victims,” and memories of conflict victims prevent full resolution of ethno-political conflicts, especially in the Middle East. She explains that “memory stigmas” generate *genosociomic programs*, linkages between events, facts, and dates transmitted across generations. The “trauma of cannon winds”, the history of the Jewish people, exile (*Galut*), anniversaries of suffering and victims (Yom Kippur), wars and victories of the State of Israel against Arab states, and the displacement of Palestinians, reflect temporal collisions and create “vulnerability nodes” [36, p. 112].

These “nodes” are woven into the history of peoples, states, and conflict participants, lowering the threshold of anxiety among populations involved in the conflict. Memory influences Israel’s political and military programs, including its national security strategy, which relies on forceful regulation of the conflict.

Russian author B.A. Cherkesov concludes that it is practically impossible to resolve ethno-political conflicts in the long term. As long as ethnic groups exist, contradictions in their interactions will periodically arise [3].

The current “trauma of Gaza” following October 7, 2023, will become historical and exploited by the elites of all parties. Collective trauma complicates resolution, as present violence will evoke painful memories for both sides. These traumas become part of the conflict’s history, potentially obstructing compromise intended to prevent a repetition of past tragedies [8]. According to Boston University professor Jessica Stern, the effects of the Gaza war will be long-lasting for both direct victims and surviving children, “whose developing minds will be forever shaped by their exposure to horrendous violence and the loss of loved ones. This is true for both Israelis and Palestinians” [37].

Gaza journalist Mustafa Mahmoud similarly concludes: “Combat operations may end in one side’s victory, but the war in minds continues every minute, leaving little hope for conflict resolution. The war must be ended in minds; otherwise, everyday life may become even more brutal than the events themselves” [38].

RELIGIOUS FACTOR

One consequence of this situation is the rise of religiosity in Israeli and Palestinian societies. Over time, the influence of Israeli ultra-Orthodoxy and Palestinian radical Islam on the politics of both sides increased. The rise of religious radicalism in Israel coincided with the growing influence of ultra- and right-wing religious parties on state policy and public life. Simultaneously, Palestinian radical religious organizations (Hamas, Islamic Jihad⁴, etc.) grew stronger, contributing to the radicalization of both sides. Religion gradually became politicized and central to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Hamas, which carried out the October 2023 terrorist attack called the “Al-Aqsa Flood” (*Tufan al-Aqsa*), took essentially suicidal steps in the name of liberation from Israeli dependence. It repeatedly invoked the defense of Muslim holy sites on the Temple Mount and the symbolic memory of the Crusades, recalling centuries-old European conquest of Arab lands [39].

In Israel, the religious factor is based on Orthodox Judaism, particularly the “emotional” connection between Judaism and the Land of Israel promised by God. Historically, belief in the “chosen people” led to adherence to Torah laws as necessary for survival and return to the Promised Land, Palestine. These principles evolved within Zionism: messianism took the form of secular liberation from exile and the reconstruction and normalization of the people through the return to and revival of their historical homeland [40, pp. 203-204].

After 1967, following Israel’s occupation of several Arab territories, the borders acquired a new theological interpretation. Settling the “new lands of Israel” within biblical borders was considered a divinely sanctioned act. In subsequent years, key issues such as borders, security, mutual recognition, refugees, Jewish settlements in the West Bank, and authority over Jerusalem became directly connected to the religious programs of Jewish and Arab leadership. Jewish settlement in the West Bank also has a religious dimension: settling Judea and Samaria (settlers use these ancient names) is viewed as fulfilling the task of physi-

cally restoring the biblical Land of Israel before the Messiah’s return, a central belief for Orthodox Jews [source 2].

Palestinian national consciousness followed a similar trajectory. In contrast to secular and widely held Christian beliefs, the institutionalization of radical Islamic ideology progressed. Initially, Palestinian Arab ideology lacked a strong religious component. Overall, the Palestinian national liberation movement was led by secular liberals and had a politically anti-Zionist character [39]. Today, Palestinian society in the West Bank still largely adheres to the ideas of secular nationalism. However, when confronted with anti-Palestinian attitudes and provocations from Jewish settlers, political radicalization occurs, and the role of the religious factor grows stronger.

In Gaza, especially after the radical movement Hamas came to power in 2006 (as the successor to the ideology and political line of the Egyptian Salafist organization, the Muslim Brotherhood⁵), the ideas of radical Islamism spread widely. Hamas openly conducts a “holy” and uncompromising war against Israel, aiming at its complete destruction, and also fights against any manifestation of secularism in the Palestinian territories. The creed of all Islamist organizations in Gaza is that giving up any part of Palestine is equivalent to renouncing religion, and that there is no solution to the Palestinian issue other than a holy war against Israel, jihad [41]. Hamas incorporated its political program into a religious doctrine, declaring that it embodies “the highest Palestinian patriotism, raising over the homeland the Divine Banner” [42, p. 103].

Analyzing the religious aspect of the conflict reveals the profound impact of religion on the identity of participants, including secular members of both societies, and on the practical challenges to conflict resolution. Religious tenets related to Islam and Judaism, the defense of sacred sites, and belief in apocalyptic myths hinder mutual understanding and peace [43].

Sacred sites revered equally by both Jews and Arabs within the territory of Israel play an exceptionally important role. One such shrine is

⁴ A designated terrorist organization (banned in the Russian Federation).

⁵ A designated terrorist organization (banned in the Russian Federation).

the Cave of Machpelah (the Cave of the Patriarchs), where the biblical Jewish patriarchs and prophets are buried, and where, according to Islamic tradition, twenty-five ancestors of the Arabs and prophets mentioned in the Qur’an were born or buried. This circumstance has repeatedly given rise to incidents of religious intolerance, which have led to terrorist attacks by religious fanatics from Israel’s ultra-religious camp⁶ as well as by radical Muslims⁷.

The issue of Jerusalem holds special significance for all parties to the conflict, and its status remains a major stumbling block in Israeli-Palestinian relations. The city, the birthplace of three world religions, has historically been a spiritual treasure and symbol of faith for Jews, Christians, and Muslims around the world. For most Jews, both religious and secular, Jerusalem symbolizes the messianic idea of divine intervention in the future salvation not only of the chosen Jewish people but also as a place of refuge for all people who have been humiliated and persecuted throughout history [44, p. 76]. Both Jews and Palestinians regard Jerusalem as their capital; Israel’s refusal to share the city with the Palestinians traditionally leads to deadlock in any attempt to move toward a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Over time, particularly in the last decade, the issue has intensified amid complex social processes in both Israeli and Palestinian societies. Jerusalem’s future is increasingly intertwined with Jewish and Palestinian nationalism. The Temple Mount (*Haram al-Sharif*) occupies a central place in the religious consciousness of Muslims, Jews, and Christians [44]⁸. For Muslims, it is the third-holiest site in Islam; control over it is

⁶ In 1994, Baruch Goldstein, an ultra-Orthodox resident of Kiryat Arba, opened fire with an automatic weapon, killing 29 Muslims at prayer. Following this attack, access to the cave was divided to prevent Jews and Arabs from being present inside the site at the same time.

⁷ Earlier, in 1980, militants from one of the far-right factions within Fatah shot worshippers at the Tomb of the Patriarchs, and in 2002 another shooting targeted the vicinity of the Cave of Machpelah.

⁸ Believers of the Abrahamic religions venerate the Temple Mount as the site of the Foundation Stone (*al-Sakhrah*), on which, according to tradition, the divine act of creation of the world and of the first human, Adam, took place (Qur’an, Sura 2, Ayah 28–29).

fiercely contested [45]⁹. Radical forces in Gaza, primarily Hamas, actively present themselves as defenders of Muslim holy sites and have used clashes on the Temple Mount, such as in spring 2021, as justification for military actions against Israel. Hamas claims that Palestinian resistance is rooted in the defense of Palestine and its capital, Jerusalem.

The Jerusalem issue reflects not only the Jewish-Palestinian conflict but also Israel’s conflict with the broader Muslim world. It increasingly assumes the characteristics of a religious confrontation, surpassing the Palestinian-Israeli context. The slogan “defend Jerusalem” has become a pan-Islamic rallying point against Israeli policy.

Tensions over Jerusalem escalated following the Trump administration’s decision to move the U.S. embassy there and effectively recognize it as Israel’s capital, strengthening Israel’s right-wing faction. For some Israeli politicians who supported Trump’s decision, the religious-historical role of Jerusalem and its holy sites outweighed the importance of a peace agreement with the Palestinians [46].

POLITICAL ASPECTS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The development of any long-standing ethnopolitical conflict, such as the Arab-Israeli conflict, generally involves three potential scenarios: long-term peace, large-scale war, or an intermediate status quo characterized by sporadic military clashes and temporary attempts at negotiation. Currently, the prospect of rapid long-term peace appears the least likely [47, p. 174]

A broadly accepted understanding, endorsed by the international community, holds that any peace agreement must be based on a two-state solution between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea: the State of Israel and a Palestin-

⁹ Protection of Jerusalem’s holy sites has repeatedly served as a pretext for the most recent escalations of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict: for example, Prime Minister of Israel Ariel Sharon’s visit to the Temple Mount in 2000 triggered the start of the Second Intifada – “Al-Aqsa”; clashes between residents of East Jerusalem and the Israeli police near the Temple Mount in 2017 led to widespread unrest.

ian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Negotiations were conducted on the basis of this formula for decades; at present, however, the issue of two states is increasingly being pushed into the background. The development of the conflict inevitably leads to the radicalization of positions, not only among the elites but also among ordinary participants. Israel's current state policy is being implemented under the rule of the most right-wing governing coalition in the history of the Jewish state.

Strictly speaking, the current situation regarding a settlement is far more complex than at any other point in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Over the past decades, a whole set of "peace" programs, plans, and initiatives has accumulated, yet none have been implemented¹⁰. The weak point of these programs was that documents initially defined as interim did not contain mechanisms for resolving the most difficult issues of the conflict. Moreover, these programs did not remove from the agenda the key question: the future of a Palestinian state. Evidently, each peace initiative only partially corresponded to the interests and core concepts of conflict resolution held by the opposing sides.

All attempts at peace negotiations have been extremely difficult, and the flexibility of alternative initiatives has always been constrained by military rhetoric focused on security. Most importantly, ending escalation has fundamentally not aligned with the interests of the Israeli political elite and the leadership of radical Palestinian organizations. For example, a resolution of the conflict with Hamas would mean the loss of political prospects for its leadership in the Gaza Strip. For Israel's leadership, each new failure of peace talks worsened the Jewish state's regional standing, provoked terrorist attacks, and intensified pressure from global public opinion. For B. Netanyahu, ending the current military conflict in Gaza threatens not only the loss of the position of prime minister but also negative consequences associated with judicial investigations into corruption

¹⁰ Examples of compromise, phased approaches to conflict resolution include the Oslo I and Oslo II agreements, the "Roadmap" plan, the Declaration of Principles by Sari Nusseibeh and Ami Ayalon, the Geneva Agreement, and others.

and abuse of power. Accordingly, political elites (primarily Netanyahu's supporters) have long advocated the political freezing of the conflict and the preservation of the status quo.

CONCLUSION

The political challenges of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation (exiting the state of conflict) go far beyond settling inter-state contradictions, such as those involved in Israel's past wars with neighboring Arab countries, with which peace treaties were eventually concluded (Egypt, Jordan, UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan). The difficulty of reconciling deeply rooted traditional values solely through material incentives for political compromise poses a serious problem for the peace process. Nor are the efforts of mediators, who attempt to facilitate at least temporary agreements, sufficient. A critically important task remains: to translate ethnosocial and psychological contradictions into political dialogue that can shape compromise solutions and allow the conflict to enter a phase of "cooling down."

The interests of elite groups on all sides drive them to act in pursuit of access to political and economic resources. Another difficulty lies in the fact that political leaders responsible for seeking solutions take little account of the views of broader Israeli and Palestinian society. Currently, the maximum that any Israeli government can offer the Palestinians without immediately resigning is far less than what any Palestinian leadership could accept and still survive politically [47, p. 177]. Thus, at present, it is difficult to reach a settlement not only because any attempt may be doomed to fail, but also because the cost of such failure would be too great, both for Israel itself and for Palestinian leaders who might pursue such a course.

It is possible that after the end of Israel's war in Gaza, new alternative settlement options will emerge. However, without taking into account the most fundamental characteristics of this conflict, one can only hope for interim solutions. A joint search is required for phased approaches that entail the least territorial and political losses. In practice, this means a series of concessions and compromises on both sides, grad-

ually addressing the most acute disagreements. The challenge lies in identifying and smoothing interethnic contradictions, preventing violence, and finding effective mechanisms for resolving disputed issues.

The unresolved nature of such conflicts leads to new confrontations in the Middle East. The standoff between Israel and Iran does not fully fit into the logic of the ethno-political factors of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict described above. However, Israel's strategic goal of reshaping

the political architecture of the Middle East by countering Iran, which challenges the “nuclear monopoly” of the Jewish state, has triggered a new war in the region. The outbreak of military violence between Israel and Iran in July 2025, including reciprocal strikes on each other's territory, will inevitably inflict serious psychological trauma on the civilian populations of both countries. Furthermore, the confrontation is fueled by incitement of religious hatred from Islamic Iran toward the perceived hostile “Jewish Zionist” state.

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