



Rooting Out the Problem: Extremism and Humanitarian Challenges in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

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Abstract

This article analyses the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, focusing on extremism and humanitarian challenges. It highlights the contrasting reactions to a recent explosion at a Palestinian hospital, where some Israelis celebrated the deaths of infants, reflecting deep-seated animosity. The historical roots of this enmity are traced to Israel's founding and subsequent wars. The article examines the differing perspectives of Israeli political leaders and voters, dominated by security concerns. It discusses the frequent violations of humanitarian principles and compares them to historical examples like the Roman Empire's tactics and Japan's "Three Alls Policy." The piece concludes by warning of increasingly brutal future warfare and calls for reforms to address the conflict's root causes, stressing the importance of upholding humanitarian principles to maintain international order.

Keywords: *Israeli-Palestinian Conflict; Extremism; Humanitarian Challenges; Historical Enmity; Future Warfare*

1. Introduction

On the complex stage of modern international relations, the conflict between Israel and Palestine is notorious for its high level of violence and persistence. Recently, an explosion at a Palestinian hospital resulted in the tragic deaths of numerous infants, sparking global mourning. However, within Israel, there was a starkly different reaction; some Israelis not only refrained from expressing sorrow but even celebrated the deaths of these children. This reaction prompts a profound reflection on humanitarian principles and rules of engagement. This article will explore the background of this event, the political psychology within Israel, the historical roots of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the potential evolution of future warfare.

2. Extreme Ideologies and Historical Hostility

The explosion at the Palestinian hospital drew widespread global attention and condemnation. Various nations held mourning activities, demonstrating the international community's concern for innocent lives and abhorrence of wartime atrocities. Yet, within Israel, some individuals supported the event, even openly celebrating. This phenomenon highlights the presence of certain extreme ideologies within Israeli society and raises questions about their causes and impacts.

Some Israelis celebrating the deaths of Palestinian infants indicates a deep-seated hatred towards perceived enemies. The underlying logic is that all who do not support Israel are part of the enemy, even if they are innocent infants. This mindset reflects an extreme "us vs. them" mentality. For these individuals, anyone who might become a Hamas member in the future, or even merely supports Hamas, must be eradicated. The existence of such ideologies renders some Israelis' attitudes towards violence more extreme and inhumane.

Against this backdrop, the assassination of a senior commander of Hezbollah by Israel further escalated regional tensions. Although Hezbollah is not Hamas, Israel perceives the boundaries between these hostile entities as blurred. The strategy of "rooting out the problem" aims to eliminate all potential threats from enemy forces, regardless of their specific identity.

The adversarial relationship between Israel and neighbouring Arab countries dates back to the founding of Israel in 1948 and several ensuing Arab-Israeli wars. These wars not only forged mutual hatred and distrust between Israel and Arab states but also profoundly influenced Israeli political culture. Israelis generally believe that had they not won past wars, Israel might have been annihilated. Therefore, Israel must maintain a robust military to ensure its survival and security.

This historical memory and current threat create a strong survival crisis within Israeli society. Many Israelis believe that only through stringent military measures can national security and stability be ensured. Palestine is seen as one of the greatest threats to Israel's security, with Hamas embodying this threat. Consequently, the Israeli obsession with eliminating Hamas is essentially an extreme pursuit of survival and security.

This mentality mirrors some historical cases in the Western world. For instance, during the Roman Empire, Romans employed severe suppression tactics against rebellious tribes to maintain stability. In the three Punic Wars between Rome and Carthage, Rome ultimately used extreme measures to utterly destroy Carthage, ensuring Rome's absolute dominance. While such extreme tactics achieved short-term goals, they also sowed seeds of long-term enmity.

3. Different Considerations of Political Leaders and Voters

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu is seen internationally as an extreme political leader, but some Israelis view his policies as too lenient. This contrast reflects the different considerations of political leaders and voters regarding security issues. As a politician, Netanyahu must consider international relations and long-term interests, with decisions often influenced by global pressures and diplomatic considerations. However, ordinary voters are more concerned with their own safety and interests, demanding tougher measures from political leaders to ensure national security.

This phenomenon is not unique in history. For example, in the later stages of World War II, British Prime Minister Churchill adopted extremely tough policies during the war but lost support in the post-war elections due to public desire for peace and reconstruction.

4. Humanitarian Challenges in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, humanitarian principles and rules of engagement are often ignored or violated. Whether through Israel's military strikes on Hamas or Hamas's terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians, both sides' violent actions inflict immense suffering and harm on innocent civilians. While the international community calls for adherence to humanitarian principles, these appeals often fail to materialise on the ground.

Israel's strategy of "rooting out the problem" involves not only eliminating existing Hamas members but also preventing those who might become members in the future. This approach results in significant civilian casualties, especially among women and children. Such actions violate international humanitarian law and further exacerbate the conflict, making peaceful resolution more difficult.

This strategy can be likened to the "Three Alls Policy" in Chinese history. During the Second Sino-Japanese War, the Japanese army implemented the "Three Alls Policy" - kill all, burn all, loot all - aiming to destroy the anti-Japanese forces' base and prevent further resistance. Although this strategy achieved certain short-term military objectives, the immense harm inflicted on civilians and severe violations of international humanitarian law ultimately deepened the long-term hatred of the victims towards the aggressor and its nation.

5. Evolution of Warfare

The development of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict suggests that future warfare might become even more brutal and inhumane. In modern warfare, adhering to humanitarian principles and rules of engagement is a consensus within the international community. However, these principles are often overlooked or distorted in practice. Israel's strategy of "rooting out the problem" against Hamas and Hamas's terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians both exemplify this trend.

Future warfare may increasingly focus on absolute military superiority and the complete eradication of enemy forces, rather than resolving conflicts through negotiation and compromise. This trend is not only evident in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but may also manifest in other regional conflicts. The moral baseline and humanitarian principles advocated by modern civilisation could be further eroded in future wars.

This trend is also reflected in Western history. During the American Civil War, both the North and South adopted more brutal "total war" strategies in the later stages, targeting not only enemy forces but also the opposing economy and civilian support. Union General Sherman's "scorched earth policy" in the southern states aimed to destroy the enemy's resources and civilian support base, thoroughly dismantling the South's will to resist.

6. Conclusion

The conflict between Israel and Palestine reflects the extreme conditions and humanitarian dilemmas of modern warfare. Extreme ideologies within Israel, stemming from historical memories and current threats, lead some individuals to support violent actions. This attitude exacerbates the brutality of the conflict and suggests that future warfare may become even more inhumane.

While the international community calls for adherence to humanitarian principles, the practical challenges of implementing these principles must be recognised. Only through comprehensive political, economic, and social reforms can the Israeli-Palestinian conflict be fundamentally alleviated, achieving lasting peace and stability. In this process, all parties must transcend short-term interests and strive to establish a more just and humane international order. As the ancient Chinese saying goes, "When an arrow strikes the Son of Heaven, rites and music collapse." If the fundamental principles of modern civilisation are broken, the entire international order faces the risk of collapse. Therefore, we must remain vigilant against the use of extreme measures in warfare and endeavour to uphold the dignity of humanitarian principles and international law.

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