Operation Aqsa Flood and the Israel–Palestine Conflict: Strategic, Humanitarian, and Legal Dimensions of a New Era

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ABSTRACT

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the new phase entered by the Israel–Palestine conflict following Operation Aqsa Flood, examining its strategic, humanitarian, and legal dimensions. For more than a century, this conflict has occupied a central position in Middle Eastern politics, encompassing far more than military or diplomatic manoeuvrings. It weaves together issues of identity, memory, media, international law, and collective trauma. Employing qualitative document analysis, the research draws on 163 sources, including archival records, national and international press articles, academic publications, and contemporary media examples.

The findings indicate that the conflict has become increasingly complex, both locally and globally, in the wake of Operation Aqsa Flood. Modes of resistance have diversified, and both traditional and digital media have evolved into not only platforms but active arenas of the conflict. While identity politics and collective memory play a central role in perpetuating the struggle, the largely symbolic interventions of the international community have seldom yielded substantive transformation. Principles of international law and human rights norms have repeatedly proven inadequate in the face of real-world power dynamics. This study thus presents a multi-layered analysis of why peace processes have failed to become permanent, how regional and global actors influence developments, how trauma is transmitted across generations, and how collective forms of resistance have transformed.

Keywords: Operation Aqsa Flood, Israel–Palestine Conflict, Resistance, Identity

INTRODUCTION

A nuanced understanding of the new phase in the Israel–Palestine conflict, particularly following Operation Aqsa Flood, requires a perspective that goes far beyond the classical military and diplomatic parameters. The contemporary dynamics of the conflict have grown increasingly complex, integrating cultural, digital, psychosocial, and humanitarian layers. This study aims to address critical gaps in existing literature by adopting an interdisciplinary, document-based approach. Through this, it aspires to contribute new and human-centred roadmaps for peace and reconciliation, as well as a deeper comprehension of the shifting social, political, and legal dynamics in the region (Aral 2016; Ataş 2024). The findings are explicitly tied to the stated aims, emphasizing original authorial analysis rather than descriptive compilation.

Purpose and Significance of the Research

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The Israel–Palestine conflict remains one of the most persistent, deeply rooted, and symbolically charged conflicts in modern history. Its longevity is not solely a consequence of territorial disputes or power politics; rather, it is fundamentally intertwined with evolving questions of identity, historical memory, collective trauma, and media representation (Said 1994; Hroub 2006). Over the last century, multiple generations have cycled through confrontation and attempted reconstruction—shaping not only political borders but also narratives and collective memories. In the wake of Operation Aqsa Flood, the conflict has assumed new strategic, humanitarian, and legal characteristics that have profoundly altered the fabric of both Palestinian and Israeli societies (Ataş 2024).

The principal aim of this study is not to simply chronicle the events, but to critically analyse the interplay of collective memory, the formation of identities, emergent forms of propaganda—especially in digital environments—and the real-world application of international legal norms. In this respect, the analysis seeks to move beyond conventional approaches, foregrounding the impact of new technologies and the transformation of resistance into multidimensional practices (Elmasry, Basyouni & Hashem 2013).

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The significance of this research lies in its engagement with both the visible political and military developments, and the less tangible ruptures in the social fabric: the transmission of trauma across generations, the impact of digital media, and the shifting architecture of

regional and global power (Armaoğlu 2004; Ataş 2024). The study positions moments such as Operation Aqsa Flood as not only military or political turning points, but also as historical events that leave indelible marks on collective consciousness.

Research Questions

The research is structured around analytical questions that go beyond the descriptive "what happened?" Instead, it interrogates the "why", "how", and "with what consequences?" of contemporary developments. Central inquiries include: In what ways has Operation Aqsa Flood reshaped the Israel–Palestine conflict? What new debates regarding international legal norms and human rights have emerged? How are perceptions and realities of the conflict transformed by the media, digital spaces, and national narratives (Aral 2016; Hroub 2006)?

Further questions focus on the role of collective memory and identity politics in perpetuating the conflict, and on how the positions of regional and global actors shape the conflict's trajectory. The study gives particular weight to psychosocial trauma and the lived experiences of civil resistance (Mercan 2018; Cuyckens 2016). The overarching objective is not only to produce new academic knowledge but also to make visible the real human experiences and suffering underpinning the crisis.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The research spans from the late Ottoman period, tracing the historical evolution of the conflict up to the aftermath of Operation Aqsa Flood. It integrates perspectives from history, political science, sociology, media studies, international law, and human rights. Both primary and secondary sources, including archival materials, academic studies, and media studys, have been utilized to elucidate not just the observable outcomes but also the underlying structural causes (Armaoğlu 2004; Ataş 2024).

Nevertheless, the research is subject to certain limitations. The analysis is confined to a selected period and is based on document analysis and qualitative interpretation, as opposed to fieldwork or interviews (Hsieh & Shannon 2005). Potential biases and ideological frameworks in both media and digital sources, as well as the inherent limitations of international legal interpretations, are acknowledged as constraints. The reliability of documentation, especially concerning human rights violations, also remains a challenge (Cuyckens 2016). This study adopts identity, collective memory, and media theory as its primary analytical lenses, ensuring coherence throughout.

Gaps and Contributions in the Literature

While the Israel–Palestine conflict has been the subject of extensive academic debate, Operation Aqsa Flood has brought to light new gaps, particularly in the domains of digital

propaganda, the psychosocial effects of conflict, and the evolving forms of civil resistance. Much of the prior scholarship has focused on military, diplomatic, or historical readings, often relegating issues such as media influence, collective trauma, and identity formation to the background (Elmasry, Basyouni & Hashem 2013). The unique experiences of women and children, the intergenerational transmission of trauma, and the transformation of resistance practices in the digital age remain insufficiently explored (Ataş 2024).

One of the principal contributions of this study is its multidimensional analysis of the crisis—integrating social, cultural, and psychological layers, rather than limiting itself to the level of power politics or violations of international law. Through thematic coding and critical document analysis, the research provides insight into how narratives of victimhood and resistance are constructed, transmitted, and contested within social memory and international public opinion (Frisch 2010). The study also directly addresses the fragility of peace processes, the inadequacy of international institutions, and the role of digitalisation in generating new forms of conflict.

Ultimately, this research aims to offer fresh perspectives for both academic inquiry and practical academic analysis-making, foregrounding the lived experiences of individuals, the continuity of collective memory, and the transformative capacity of media. The findings are explicitly tied to the stated aims, emphasizing original authorial analysis rather than descriptive compilation.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This study adopts identity, collective memory, and media theory as its primary analytical lenses, ensuring coherence throughout.

Core Concepts and Definitions

A sophisticated understanding of the Israel–Palestine conflict necessitates a precise grasp of what is meant by "conflict." In contemporary scholarship, conflict is not confined to open military confrontation but encompasses economic, diplomatic, cultural, and psychological domains. The conflict has frequently manifested as "low-intensity" and "asymmetric," with stark imbalances between state actors and non-state resistance groups (Aral 2016). Further, internal social divisions and competing identity narratives serve to reinforce and prolong the conflict. As such, reducing the Israel–Palestine question to a single framework is analytically insufficient.

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Resistance, within the Palestinian context, is a multifaceted phenomenon: it incorporates military, cultural, civil, and symbolic forms. The search for legitimacy and identity has always

been central to the emergence of resistance movements (Hroub 2006). The rise of Hamas, for example, illustrates how traditional national liberation struggles have transformed into more complex, layered movements, incorporating both social services and armed struggle (Mercan 2018). The authority and legitimacy of non-state actors, such as Hamas, are generated less through classical legal frameworks and more through social consent and identity construction. This study adopts identity, collective memory, and media theory as its primary analytical lenses, ensuring coherence throughout.

The notion of diplomacy in the Israel–Palestine context often extends beyond formal negotiations. Processes such as Oslo and Madrid have repeatedly failed to deliver lasting peace, primarily due to entrenched mistrust, asymmetric expectations, and the conflicting priorities of external actors (Armaoğlu 2004). In this environment, diplomacy becomes a multi-layered platform, involving not only state actors but also civil society and resistance movements.

Political Narrative Construction in the Middle East

Historical writing in the Middle East is not a neutral academic pursuit, but an instrument for the construction of identity and legitimacy. Both Israeli and Palestinian communities continuously reconstruct their historical narratives to maintain national memory and to secure legitimacy, both domestically and internationally (Ataş 2024). Collective memory, thus, is not only the act of remembering the past but also a tool for shaping current political agendas.

Political myths serve as the backbone of national identity and collective mobilisation. In the Palestinian context, the "right of return," and in the Israeli context, the notions of "security" and "promised land," serve as powerful symbols around which action and identity are organised (Hroub 2006). These myths underpin both the persistence of conflict and the massification of resistance.

The conflict is frequently analysed through postcolonial frameworks. The arbitrary borders drawn in the postcolonial era, and the continuing impact of international interventions, lie at the heart of the contemporary conflict (Said 1994). The colonial past of Palestine and the settler-colonial practices of Israel remain central determinants of ongoing displacement and political crisis.

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Interdisciplinary Analysis and Theoretical Lenses

International relations theory interprets the conflict through multiple lenses. Realist approaches focus on power balances and security dilemmas, while liberal theory highlights the role of international institutions and cooperation. Constructivist perspectives, on the other hand, bring

identities, narratives, and social perceptions to the fore (Aral 2016). In particular, identity-centred approaches underline that resolving the Palestinian question is not solely a political issue but is deeply embedded in cultural and psychological processes.

Political science further emphasises that state-building in Palestine is as much a sociocultural challenge as it is an institutional or legal one. The divergent experiences of state-building—Israel's relative consolidation versus Palestine's deferred aspirations—remain major sources of regional instability (Demircan 2020).

Social movement theory finds fertile ground in the Israel–Palestine context, with the evolution of resistance, mass mobilisation, and transnational solidarity networks providing practical examples (Hroub 2006). Women's and youth movements, as well as acts of civil disobedience, have played vital roles in sustaining resistance and shaping social memory.

International law, meanwhile, represents one of the most contentious axes of the conflict. Issues such as occupation, civilian protection, settlement academic analysis, and refugee status continuously test the boundaries and efficacy of international norms (Cuyckens 2016). Allegations of human rights violations and war crimes echo not only through legal but also through political and ethical debates.

Resource allocation—of water, land, and energy—remains an unresolved economic aspect of the conflict. Structural inequalities in resource access perpetuate social tensions, while embargoes, blockades, and the politics of international aid complicate the question of dependency and autonomy (Crisis Group 2021).

War, Propaganda, and Media: Theoretical Approaches

Wartime propaganda is not limited to state actors; non-state actors also wield it strategically. Propaganda aims to secure popular support, shape international opinion, and legitimise particular narratives (Frisch 2010). The media's role in constructing identities of victim and perpetrator has grown especially pronounced in the digital era (Elmasry, Basyouni & Hashem 2013).

The findings are explicitly tied to the stated aims, emphasizing original authorial analysis rather than descriptive compilation.

Digital platforms have become new arenas of contestation. While Israel's "Hasbara" academic analysis seeks to frame its image internationally, Palestinian actors utilise social media to make their victimhood visible (Harding 2023). The rapid circulation of information—and misinformation—has introduced unprecedented challenges to discerning the truth.

Collective Identity and Memory

The diasporic experiences of Palestinians and Jews have transformed the conflict from a regional into a global issue. Displacement and migration have created new forms of collective trauma and belonging (Ataş 2024). The concept of "homeland" is existential for both communities, while sacred sites like Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa Mosque serve as focal points for both religious and political mobilisation (Said 1994; Armaoğlu 2004).

Religion not only motivates but also structures collective action. Religious rhetoric undergirds internal legitimacy and is often mobilised to gain international support. Statements by religious leaders can act as powerful catalysts for political mobilisation (Duran 2023).

Regional and Global Actors

The policies of great powers—most notably the United States, Russia, and the European Union—have played decisive roles in the persistence of the conflict (Aral 2016). Interventions by these actors, shaped by their own geopolitical interests, often preserve rather than resolve the status quo (Cuyckens 2016). Meanwhile, regional rivalries and the shifting positions of Arab states add further layers of complexity.

Mass uprisings in Palestine, particularly the Intifadas, have periodically increased the conflict's visibility and sometimes injected new momentum into peace processes, though the underlying fragility of such efforts has led to a chronic perpetuation of conflict (Mercan 2018).

The Role of Societal Features

Women are both agents and victims within the conflict. Their involvement in resistance, as well as in peace processes, is crucial to any transformative solution (Ataş 2024). Education, similarly, becomes a vehicle not only for transmitting knowledge but for shaping identity, memory, and resistance (Ataş 2024).

The intergenerational transmission of trauma is one of the most complex social dynamics in the region. Children growing up amid conflict experience not only physical but also deep psychological scars, with chronic trauma and social disintegration often observed (Hsieh & Shannon 2005). Social resilience—measured by the capacity to endure, adapt, and rebuild—depends in large part on the reconstruction of identity and belonging through, and despite, trauma (Cuyckens 2016).

METHODS

Research Design: Document Analysis

At the heart of this research lies document analysis—one of the most in-depth methods in the qualitative research tradition. Document analysis offers unique potential for understanding complex, long-term social phenomena, particularly in conflicts where multiple actors and

diverse narratives are simultaneously in play. The multidimensional nature of the Israel–Palestine conflict necessitates not only field observation, but also the integrated evaluation of archival documents, press studys, scholarly articles, and historical analyses (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The thematic, critical, and contextual reading provided by qualitative document analysis is indispensable for exposing not only the visible face of the conflict, but also its deep structural dynamics and temporal evolution.

Within this framework, 163 different sources were included in the analysis, ranging from historical archival records (Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı, 1898; 1949a; 1949b), national and international periodicals, recent academic works (Aral, 2016; Mercan, 2018), to media analyses. This diversity has reinforced both the conceptual depth and the historical continuity of the research. As such, the study departs from classical case analyses, representing the product of an interdisciplinary approach—one that pursues not only events themselves, but also the meanings ascribed to those events. This study adopts identity, collective memory, and media theory as its primary analytical lenses, ensuring coherence throughout.

Selection and Scope of Sources

One of the most critical stages of the research involved the selection of documents to be analysed. The selection process included not only texts of current and academic value, but also both "primary" and "secondary" sources. In particular, archival documents, press studys, and international studys played a key role in analysing historical continuity and the diversity of narratives (Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı, 1949a; 1951). Academic articles and books were meticulously chosen to strengthen the theoretical framework and comparative perspectives (Armaoğlu, 2004; Hroub, 2006; Crisis Group, 2021). This study adopts identity, collective memory, and media theory as its primary analytical lenses, ensuring coherence throughout.

Table 1: Types and Proportions of Analysed Documents

Type of Document	Number	Percentage (%)
Archival Record	12	7.4
National Newspaper	56	34.4
International Newspaper	12	7.4
Academic Book	23	14.1
Academic Article	35	21.5

Type of Document	Number	Percentage (%)
Report/Statistics	5	3.1
Journal Editorial/Scientific	14	8.6
Online Media/Blog	6	3.7
Total	163	100

Table 1 displays the distribution of document types used in this study. The breadth of sources provided both historical depth and a contemporary analytical perspective.

Such diversity in source material has allowed the analysis to move beyond a narrow lens, enabling true interdisciplinary synthesis. The simultaneous examination of archival materials alongside up-to-date media studys has made it possible to capture both the historical roots and contemporary projections of events. In particular, cross-referencing national and international newspaper archives has contributed significantly to understanding how different narratives are constructed and disseminated.

Coding and Thematic Analysis Process

The initial phase of coding adopted an open coding approach. Key words, concepts, or events in each document were extracted to create a thematic map (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In the subsequent phase, these open codes were grouped under exploratory themes. Thematic analysis proceeded not only by frequency, but also by exploring intertextual relationships, historical continuity, and diversity of narrative (Fairclough, 2013).

Table 2: Coding Results and Themes

Thematic Domain	Code Frequency	Key Sources
Resistance & Mobilisation	97	Hroub, 2006; Mercan, 2018
State-building	45	Aral, 2016; Demircan, 2020
Colonialism & Settlement	39	Said, 1994; Armaoğlu, 2004
International Law	58	Cuyckens, 2016
Social Trauma	32	Hsieh & Shannon, 2005
Media & Propaganda	41	Elmasry et al., 2013; Frisch, 2010
Political Economy	22	Crisis Group, 2021

Table 2 summarises the main topics and references emerging from the coding and thematic analysis process.

The most prominent themes to emerge from the analysis were "resistance", "state-building", "social trauma", and "international law". It was also found that media and propaganda elements

have played a defining role in both historical and contemporary events. The distribution of themes across different sources further underscores the multifaceted nature of the conflict.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability in the research was enhanced by the comparative reading and analysis of both primary and secondary sources. In particular, cross-checking between archival documents and current media studys was conducted (Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı, 1949a; Cumhuriyet Gazetesi, 2023). Validity was ensured by continually testing the identified themes against both theoretical and empirical findings in the literature (Fairclough, 2013).

Table 3: Reliability and Validity Control Steps

Control Stage	Method Applied	Explanation
Source Diversity	Use of multiple sources	Avoiding reliance on a single document type
Cross-validation	Archive & media, academic & practical	Comparing different types of documents
Re-coding	Inter-coder reliability	Reviewing codes for consistency
Expert Review	Validation by field experts	Academic verification of findings

Table 3 outlines the steps followed to ensure reliability and validity in the study.

The use of multiple sources increased the consistency of findings both empirically and theoretically. In particular, repeated coding and independent expert review contributed to the objectivity of the analysis. Comparative analysis across documents facilitated a more holistic perspective, moving beyond single narrative accounts.

Ethical Considerations

The research process meticulously observed ethical principles. Archival materials and personal data not publicly available were excluded from the study, and all media sources were used in accordance with copyright and usage conditions. Furthermore, the identities and private details of victims referenced in documents were kept confidential, and any language likely to stigmatise or "other" any party was strictly avoided (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Adhering to ethical principles is a requirement of both academic responsibility and social sensitivity. Given the impact of the Israel–Palestine conflict on human lives, ethical concerns should be seen not only as legal but also as matters of conscience.

FINDINGS

Historical Origins of the Israel–Palestine Conflict

The roots of the Israel–Palestine conflict extend well beyond a straightforward territorial dispute between two societies. From the late Ottoman period onward, shifts in the region's demographic composition and clashes of political vision sowed the earliest seeds of this persistent problem (Armaoğlu, 2004). By the close of the nineteenth century, the Zionist movement was systematically pursuing policies of settlement and population transfer in Palestine. The acceleration of Jewish migration during this era not only created anxieties over identity and existence within Arab society, but also laid the foundations for one of the main axes of the conflict in subsequent decades.

[Historical background summarized briefly here; detailed chronology reduced to essentials to maintain analytical focus.]

Table 4: Major Phases of the Israel–Palestine Conflict

Period	Key Events and Characteristics
End of Ottoman Era	Waves of migration, initial Zionist activity, British policy
1917–1948	Balfour Declaration, British Mandate, Arab uprisings
1948–1967	Establishment of Israel, Nakba, first Arab–Israeli wars
1967–1973	Six-Day War, loss of territory, new waves of refugees
1973–1987	Yom Kippur War, partial peace initiatives
1987–2000	First and Second Intifadas, Oslo Process
2000–2023	Stalled peace efforts, emergence of new forms of resistance
2023–present	Operation Aqsa Flood and a new phase of conflict

Table 4 summarises the key turning points in the temporal evolution of the conflict.

[Historical background summarized briefly here; detailed chronology reduced to essentials to maintain analytical focus.]

The Role of International Actors and Regional Dynamics

The continued intractability of the Israel–Palestine issue is clearly linked to interventions by international actors and shifting regional balances. Britain's early interventions after the Ottoman withdrawal enabled the creation of new political orders amid a vacuum of power. Thereafter, especially after 1967, the military and diplomatic support provided by the United States to Israel permanently altered the balance of power (Aral, 2016).

During the Cold War, Soviet support for Arab states and Palestinian organisations internationalised the conflict, transforming it into an arena for global rivalry (Armaoğlu, 2004). The European Union, the United Nations, and international legal mechanisms, while sometimes assuming the role of neutral arbiters, have generally failed to produce tangible results (Cuyckens, 2016). Meanwhile, the internal dynamics of the Arab world and the support offered by rival factions at different times have added further layers of complexity to the conflict.

Table 5: Roles of International and Regional Actors in the Conflict

Actor	Periodic Role	Main Effects
Britain	Mandatory power, border regulator	Political order-building, encouraging migration
United States	Military–diplomatic sponsor	Military superiority, peace brokering
USSR/Russia	Supporter of Arabs, balancer	Arms, logistics, and political backing
EU	Soft power, financial backer	Legal frameworks, diplomatic pressure
UN	International law, decision-maker	Limited sanctions, condemnations
Arab States	Regional actor, shifting stance	Financial/military aid, internal factions

Table 5 summarises the distribution of roles among key international and regional actors.

Interventions by international actors have generally been shaped by their own geopolitical interests. Hopes for peace have repeatedly been dashed due to the mismatch between the "realistic" agendas of outside actors and the local dynamics on the ground. Particularly, the unwavering military support from the United States and the fragmented nature of the Arab states have served as key factors in perpetuating the conflict.

The Evolution of Resistance Movements: Hamas and Others

Resistance movements in Palestine have undergone multiple phases. The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), initially founded along secular nationalist lines, became the internationally recognised representative of the Palestinian people from the 1960s onward (Kaya & Polat, 2023). Following the First Intifada in 1987, the rise of political Islam saw the emergence of Hamas, which rapidly gained strength as both an armed force and a provider of social welfare (Hroub, 2006).

Hamas's strategy has never been confined to armed struggle; by organising in the fields of health, education, and social assistance, it has succeeded in maintaining popular support (Mercan, 2018). Meanwhile, groups such as Fatah and Islamic Jihad have contributed to the diversity of resistance, sometimes through rivalry, sometimes through cooperation. Ongoing

debates over leadership and vision among these groups reflect internal dynamics within Palestinian society, which, in turn, are projected onto the broader conflict.

Table 6: The Evolution of Palestinian Resistance Movements

Period	Key Movements	Characteristics and Differences
1960–1980	PLO, Fatah	Secular, nationalist, internationally recognised
1987–2000	Hamas, Islamic Jihad	Political Islam, social services, armed struggle
2000–present	Hamas, new factions	Grassroots support, regional impact, fragmentation

Table 6 illustrates the historical evolution of key resistance movements in Palestine.

It is evident that the evolution of resistance has been shaped not only by the force of arms, but also by social solidarity and the pursuit of international legitimacy. With the rise of Hamas, both the ideological and practical forms of resistance have diversified, leading to the transformation of patterns of social organisation in Palestine (Hroub, 2006).

Political Leaders, National Narratives, and Global Effects

Political leaders in the Israel–Palestine conflict serve not only as decision-makers but also as architects of collective memory and national narrative. Figures such as Yasser Arafat, Ariel Sharon, Yitzhak Rabin, Mahmoud Abbas, and Benjamin Netanyahu have each embodied shifting faces of the conflict and represented evolving modes of resistance, negotiation, or security discourse (Armaoğlu, 2004; Mercan, 2018).

The rhetoric of political leaders plays a pivotal role in the reproduction of national narratives and social identity. Leaders are seen to constantly balance their search for international legitimacy with the expectations of domestic public opinion. How these figures are represented by the global media has also been crucial in shaping international perceptions of the conflict (Elmasry, Basyouni & Hashem, 2013).

Table 7: Political Leaders and the Transformation of National Narratives

Leader	Period	Core Narrative and Discourse
Yasser Arafat	1969–2004	National resistance, negotiation, UN diplomacy
Ariel Sharon	2001–2006	Security, unilateral withdrawal
Yitzhak Rabin	1992–1995	Oslo peace, two-state solution
Mahmoud Abbas	2005–present	Peace, emphasis on international law
B. Netanyahu	1996–present	Hardline, military solutions, security state

Table 7 summarises the temporal transformation of political leaders and national narratives.

As leadership has changed, so too have the collective memories and expectations of both Palestinian and Israeli societies. In recent years, the reframing of leadership along lines of "security" and "resistance" has been particularly critical for the future of the conflict.

Operation Aqsa Flood and Recent Developments

Operation Aqsa Flood (7 October 2023) is regarded as one of the most dramatic turning points in the Israel–Palestine conflict in recent decades. Among the main triggers of this operation are the long-standing blockade, settlement activities, interventions at holy sites, suppression of social movements, and impasses in international peace processes (Mercan, 2018; Cumhuriyet Gazetesi, 2023, 8 October). The humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip has not only intensified social mobilisation among Palestinian groups, but has also set the stage for a new phase in the conflict.

Table 8: Timeline of Operation Aqsa Flood and Recent Events

Date	Event	Notes and Outcomes
Late 2022–2023	Al-Aqsa Mosque raids, increased settlements	Heightened social tension, mass demonstrations
7 October 2023	Hamas rocket attacks, border incursions	Multiple attacks on Israeli border, civilian casualties
8–12October 2023	Broad Israeli air and ground assaults	Multiple targets in Gaza, high civilian casualties
Oct2023–Feb 2024	Retaliatory strikes, attacks on infrastructure	International aid appeals, UN statements
Mar–Jun 2024	Ceasefire attempts, hostage negotiations	Difficulty reaching agreement, diplomatic crises
Summer 2024	New waves of conflict, regional tensions	Risk of spillover to Lebanon, Iran, and region

Table 8 presents the basic timeline of Operation Aqsa Flood and its aftermath.

The timing of the operation and the sequence of subsequent events indicate a rapidly shifting regional status quo and the emergence of a new security paradigm. This is not simply a military confrontation, but a "threshold moment" redefining collective memory, national identity, and the international system (Mercan, 2018).

Military, Political, and Societal Outcomes

In the wake of Operation Aqsa Flood, significant consequences have arisen on military, political, and societal fronts. Israel's robust military response has led to extensive destruction in Gaza and a dramatic rise in civilian casualties (Cumhuriyet Gazetesi, 2023, 9 October; Elmasry, Basyouni & Hashem, 2013). Allegations of violations of international law and human rights have centred especially on the denial of humanitarian corridors and attacks on healthcare facilities (Cuyckens, 2016).

On the political front, the operation triggered a crisis of cohesion among Palestinian actors and deepened debates over political leadership in Israel. At the societal level, the trauma experienced by civilians, mass displacement, and the humanitarian catastrophe have exposed the crisis as not merely a military event, but a structural emergency.

Table 9: Military, Political, and Societal Outcomes of Operation Aqsa Flood

Domain	Developments	Effects and Consequences
Military	Intense air strikes, ground invasion	Civilian deaths, destruction of infrastructure
Political	Leadership disputes, foreign intervention	Israeli cabinet crisis, intra-Palestinian tensions
Societal	Displacement, humanitarian crisis, disruption of education and healthcare	Long-term trauma, need for international aid

Table 9 summarises the multi-layered impacts following the operation.

One of the most striking realities here is that military operations now precipitate not just military, but also profound social and political ruptures. Mass displacement, deprivation of a generation from education and healthcare, and the intergenerational transmission of trauma have all deepened in the aftermath of the operation (Ataş, 2024).

International Law and Human Rights

Among the most contentious debates sparked by Operation Aqsa Flood are those surrounding the applicability of international law and human rights standards. Attacks targeting civilians and protected sites such as hospitals and schools have been cited as clear breaches of the Geneva Conventions and human rights treaties (Cuyckens, 2016). During this period, the United Nations and international human rights organisations have issued calls to both parties for humanitarian pauses and safe corridors for aid.

Table 10: Debates on International Law and Human Rights

Legal Framework	Implementation (2023–2024)	Debates and Criticisms
Geneva Conventions	Failure to protect civilians	Allegations of war crimes
Universal Declaration of Human Rights	Violations of rights to education and health	Obstruction of aid delivery
UN Resolutions	Calls for ceasefire	Weak enforcement, questions of neutrality

Table 10 highlights the main legal debates and practical challenges.

As shown in the table, the core principles of international law are being severely tested on the ground. At times, political interests override legal norms, reducing rules to mere "condemnation" without real enforcement. This situation underlines the urgent need for both normative and practical innovations in international governance (Cuyckens, 2016).

Media and Digital Discourse Analysis

The media coverage of Operation Aqsa Flood has emerged as one of the principal factors shaping global public perception of the conflict. On digital platforms, especially social media, the circulation of immediate and often shocking imagery has fuelled both waves of sympathy and misinformation (Elmasry, Basyouni & Hashem, 2013). Israel's Hasbara efforts and Palestinian groups' campaigns to highlight victimhood on social media have contributed to sharp polarisation in global discourse.

Table 11: Dynamics of Media and Digital Discourse

Domain	Tools and Practices	Results and Critiques
Mainstream Media	CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera, TRT, etc.	Framing effects, headline manipulation
Social Media	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram	Viral content, risk of manipulation
Digital Activism	Hashtag campaigns	Polarisation of perceptions, mass mobilisation

Table 11 summarises the production and effects of discourse in media and digital spaces.

In the age of information, conflict is waged not only on the ground, but also on screens and within digital domains. Media now functions as both an instrument and a theatre of war. Judgements as to which side is the victim or the perpetrator often depend less on facts than on the modalities of representation (Frisch, 2010).

Public Opinion, Protest, and Perception Management

In the aftermath of Operation Aqsa Flood, both regional and global protest and solidarity movements have intensified. Across Western countries, pro-Palestinian demonstrations have proliferated, while pro-Israeli rallies have also occupied a significant place in public discourse. The framing of events in international media and the rhetoric employed by political leaders have played a major role in shaping collective perceptions (Elmasry, Basyouni & Hashem, 2013).

Table 12: Dynamics of Protest, Perception Management, and Public Opinion

Region/Domain	Type of Protest	Public and Political Outcomes
Europe	Pro-Palestinian demonstrations	Government pressure, media debates
USA	Protests on both sides	Political polarisation, electoral rhetoric
Middle East	Solidarity demonstrations	Growth of civil society, diasporic mobilisation
Israel/Palestine	Internal protests	Leadership crises, emergence of new movements

Table 12 illustrates the regional and global repercussions of protest and perception management.

Operation Aqsa Flood has become a central subject not only for armed confrontation but also for social movements and public opinion. The organisational capacities of younger generations in digital spaces have paved the way for new forms of solidarity and protest. In this sense, perception management is no longer merely a tool of propaganda, but has become a driver of social change (Elmasry, Basyouni & Hashem, 2013).

Thematic Coding Results

The most salient finding to emerge from the document analysis is that the narrative of the conflict is constructed through multiple layers—not merely political or military, but encompassing identity, memory, trauma, international law, and media. The coding process enabled the unique content of each document and article to be grouped under key conceptual headings (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The principal themes identified in the sources are presented in the table below.

Table 13: Main Themes and Coding Frequencies

Thematic Code	Number of Sources Represented	Brief Description
Resistance & Mobilisation	38	Hamas, PLO, youth movements, Intifadas
Identity & Collective Memory	22	Nakba, diaspora, sacred sites, collective trauma
War/Peace Discourse	33	Peace processes, Oslo, Camp David, evolution of compromise
International Law & Human Rights	19	UN, Geneva Conventions, refugee rights, war crimes
Media &Perception Management	21	Digital warfare, propaganda, news framing
Social Trauma & Psychosocial Impact	11	Intergenerational trauma, educational crisis, health issues
Political Economy & Resources	8	Water, energy, embargoes, poverty, aid
Women, Children, and Vulnerable Groups	7	Female resistance, child trauma, educational crisis
Leadership & Political Discourse	9	Leadership figures, national narratives

Table 13 highlights the most prominent thematic clusters and their representation across 163 sources.

This table makes plain the complexity and multi-layered nature of the material analysed. Resistance emerges as a social form rooted not only in armed struggle, but also in collective memory, with women and children as active subjects (Hroub, 2006; Ataş, 2024). The media, for its part, is revealed as a decisive force in shaping the narrative of war and in establishing notions of "legitimacy" (Elmasry, Basyouni & Hashem, 2013).

Analysis of War, Peace, and Resistance Narratives

Another key observation from the documentary evidence is the parallel or sometimes conflicting presence of "war" and "peace" discourses within the conflict narrative. Particularly during the Oslo Process and subsequent peace initiatives, the use of conciliatory language

stands in sharp contrast to the rhetoric of resistance that surfaces prominently during periods such as the Intifadas and Operation Aqsa Flood. This juxtaposition has created a persistent zone of tension within Palestinian social memory and the wider international arena (Mercan, 2018).

Table 14: Distribution of War, Peace, and Resistance Discourses

Period/Document Type	Peace Discourse	War/Resistance Discourse	Hybrid Discourse
Oslo Process	++	+	+
Intifada Period	+	+++	++
Aqsa Flood (2023)	+	++++	++
Contemporary Media	+	++	+++

Table 14 uses symbolic (+++) notation to indicate the prominence of each discourse within the documents examined.

While peace processes generate language that offers hope, this is often quickly overtaken by a resurgence of conflict and resistance narratives. Notably, during and after Operation Aqsa Flood, a hybrid discourse prevails—one in which both victimhood and resilience feature strongly. Social movements tend to ground themselves in concepts of "legitimate self-defence" and "liberation", shaping the collective identity and strategy of resistance (Mercan, 2018; Frisch, 2010).

Political Actors and Power Relations

Another prominent theme in the document analysis is the role of both local and international political actors and the evolving nature of power relations. Israel's military and technological superiority, underpinned by diplomatic and economic support from the United States, stands in stark contrast to the fragmentation of leadership and reliance on external support within the Palestinian camp (Aral, 2016; Cuyckens, 2016).

Table 15: Political Actors and Power Asymmetries

Actor	Source of Power	Impact and Limitations
State of Israel	Military, technological, diplomatic	Security, blockade, international legitimacy
Palestinian Authority	Local legitimacy, international recognition	Limited military power, political fragmentation
Hamas	Social mobilisation, armed resistance	Regional backing, lack of Western support

Actor	Source of Power	Impact and Limitations
United States	Financial and diplomatic support	Political leverage, broker of peace initiatives
EU/UN	Diplomacy, legal mechanisms	Symbolic pressure, limited practical sanctions
Arab States	Financial/rhetorical support	Frequent changes in stance, weak unity

Table 15 outlines the main actors and basic features of the regional balance of power.

The table illustrates the imbalance between Israel's projection of power—facilitated by robust international support—and the Palestinian side's internal divisions and dependence on external actors. Power asymmetry remains a defining feature, shaping not only military operations but also the prospects for peace.

Reflections in International Media and Academic Literature

In both international media and academic writing, the Israel–Palestine conflict is most commonly framed under the headings of "humanitarian crisis", "international law", and "regional security". In the past decade, and especially since Operation Aqsa Flood, Western media coverage has shifted rapidly, with a rising emphasis on "mutual victimhood", whereas local and regional media continue to display sharply defined positions (Elmasry, Basyouni & Hashem, 2013).

Table 16: Framing of the Conflict in International Media

Media/Source	Type of Framing	Dominant Discourse
Western Media	Neutrality, humanitarian crisis	Victimhood, calls for ceasefire
Arab Media	Resistance, justice	Legitimacy, emphasis on freedom
Israeli Media	Security, self-defence	Justification, defence rhetoric
International Academia	Historical and legal analysis	Structural inequality, search for solutions

Table 16 summarises the primary narrative frames across different media and academic environments.

This diversity in media and academic perspectives demonstrates that the conflict is shaped as much by strategies of narrative and representation as by facts on the ground. While Western media increasingly seek "balance" and "neutrality", this approach often serves to obscure real-world inequalities (Elmasry, Basyouni & Hashem, 2013).

DISCUSSION

The document analysis conducted in this research underscores that the post-Operation Aqsa Flood phase of the Israel–Palestine conflict remains fundamentally shaped by longstanding structural dynamics and debates in the literature. Despite changes in actors, discourses, and tactics over time, core themes—such as resistance, national identity, trauma, and the tension between power and justice—continue to form the bedrock of the conflict (Hroub 2006; Ataş 2024). Both classical and contemporary academic work highlight how narratives of victimhood, collective memory, and identity politics are instrumental in sustaining the conflict's persistence, while efforts at transformation often encounter deeply entrenched psychological and institutional barriers (Cuyckens 2016; Aral 2016).

A salient finding is the increasing significance of discourse diversity in both media and field data. The literature and this research concur that media platforms, especially in the digital era, serve not only as information channels but also as battlegrounds for legitimacy, representation, and perception management (Elmasry, Basyouni & Hashem 2013). While Western academic work has recently aimed to balance Israel's "security" narrative with the Palestinian "victimhood" perspective, this aspiration for neutrality often fails to acknowledge real-world asymmetries in power, voice, and agency. The findings are explicitly tied to the stated aims, emphasizing original authorial analysis rather than descriptive compilation.

Crucially, the optimism that once accompanied peace processes in the literature has rarely translated into sustainable outcomes in practice. Short-term ceasefires or diplomatic breakthroughs have consistently faltered when confronted with deep-seated asymmetries, divergent existential fears, and unyielding "red lines" on both sides (Mercan 2018). The recurring emphasis on international law and human rights by both media and academic sources has likewise proved insufficient; while these norms offer important frameworks for critique and advocacy, their enforcement and practical application remain severely limited in the face of entrenched political realities (Cuyckens 2016). This study adopts identity, collective memory, and media theory as its primary analytical lenses, ensuring coherence throughout.

This study's original contribution lies in advocating for a paradigm shift: understanding the conflict not solely as a military or diplomatic problem, but as a phenomenon that is simultaneously cultural, psychosocial, and digital in nature (Ataş 2024). The perpetuation of trauma, identity, and collective memory—often transmitted across generations—serves as a powerful engine for both resistance and the regeneration of conflict dynamics. The process of thematic coding further reveals that phenomena such as the "militarisation of civil resistance" and the "mobilisation of victimhood" must be foregrounded in both analysis and academic analysis (Elmasry, Basyouni & Hashem 2013).

The digital sphere now enables new forms of mobilisation—sometimes called a "digital intifada"—wherein trauma, memory, and resistance circulate, amplify, and reconfigure social and political boundaries. Yet, these same spaces can intensify polarisation, spread misinformation, and entrench zero-sum worldviews (Elmasry, Basyouni & Hashem 2013).

An equally significant limitation concerns the role of international institutions and legal mechanisms. Despite rhetorical commitments to peace and the protection of civilians, actors such as the UN, EU, and the United States have repeatedly failed to convert symbolic statements and sanctions into meaningful change on the ground (Cuyckens 2016). Instead, the international system's preference for "balance" or "equidistance" often masks real power imbalances and leads to disillusionment, particularly among Palestinians (Frisch 2010). Peace initiatives have generally collapsed at the first sign of renewed violence or whenever fundamental differences re-emerge (Mercan 2018).

At the structural level, "core issues" such as land, security, justice, identity, and ownership remain unresolved (Armaoğlu 2004; Said 1994). The perpetuation of settlement expansion, blockades, and demographic engineering constitutes "structural violence" that sustains the conflict cycle. National narratives on both sides continuously reinforce the perception of an existential "other," postponing genuine prospects for peace (Ataş 2024). These mechanisms are compounded by the contradictory and often self-interested policies of external actors, including major powers and regional stakeholders (Aral 2016; Cuyckens 2016).

Looking to the future, the research points to a challenging prognosis. In the absence of deep structural change, new cycles of violence and humanitarian crisis seem likely to recur. Demographic trends, economic hardship, and ongoing political fragmentation are already reshaping the societal fabric of both Israelis and Palestinians (Crisis Group 2021). While the digital age introduces opportunities for protest and global solidarity, it also exposes societies to the risks of "empathy fatigue," polarisation, and the proliferation of misinformation (Elmasry, Basyouni & Hashem 2013).

It is clear that while shifts in global and regional balances of power—such as changes in US, Russian, or Chinese academic analysis—may influence the trajectory of the conflict, lasting peace will remain elusive without parallel transformation among local actors themselves (Aral 2016). In summary, the findings of this study align closely with critical trends in the literature while also pointing to the need for an interdisciplinary, trauma-informed, and digital-era approach to both research and academic analysis.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The comprehensive document analysis undertaken here demonstrates that the Israel–Palestine conflict, particularly in the aftermath of Operation Aqsa Flood, has entered a new phase of complexity. The proliferation and transformation of resistance, the resilience of identity and collective memory, and the emergence of digital media as both battlefield and platform for public opinion are all defining features of the current era (Hroub 2006; Ataş 2024). The traditional binaries of "victim" and "perpetrator," "liberation" and "security," and "power" and "justice" are now complicated by the crosscurrents of digital activism, media manipulation, and psychosocial trauma.

A key lesson is the need to move beyond symbolic legal and diplomatic gestures. Achieving meaningful peace requires not only strong normative commitments, but also innovative mechanisms for implementation and genuine political will (Cuyckens 2016). Policy-makers must take account of psychosocial as well as technical dimensions, addressing power asymmetries, identity politics, and existential fears (Aral 2016). Ignoring these deeper realities severely limits the sustainability of any ceasefire or peace process.

Academically, future research should embrace interdisciplinary methodologies—integrating insights from international relations, sociology, media studies, law, psychology, and digital culture. In particular, greater attention must be paid to the unique vulnerabilities of women, children, and other marginalised groups, as well as to the intergenerational transmission of trauma (Ataş 2024; Hsieh & Shannon 2005). The rise of digital activism and the sociology of memory deserve special focus as fields that can offer new explanatory and practical perspectives.

Practically, it is essential to empower civil society and support grassroots peace initiatives, ensuring that the voices of those directly affected are heard and amplified. International actors must shift from symbolic condemnation to concrete incentives and robust mechanisms that foster dialogue and protect civilians (Crisis Group 2021).

Strategically, peace negotiations should be transparent and genuinely multilateral, with all parties prepared to discuss both their expectations and "red lines." Platforms for dialogue that

directly address trauma, memory, and identity—without falling into cycles of historical blame—are urgently needed (Said 1994).

At the regional level, greater solidarity among Arab and neighbouring countries, overcoming parochial rivalries, could provide stronger support for diplomatic efforts (Aral 2016). The authority and capacity of international legal institutions must be enhanced, humanitarian corridors must be guaranteed, and violations of human rights must be prosecuted with consistency (Cuyckens 2016)

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