

**T.C.
IŞIK UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**MASTER THESIS
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS PROGRAM**

Zahra SHEIKHA

**POST-COLONIAL DIPLOMACY IN PALESTINE:
NAVIGATING STATEHOOD AND SOVEREIGNTY IN
INTERNATIONAL POLITICS**

**SUPERVISOR
Prof. Özlem KAYHAN PUSANE**

İSTANBUL, January 2025

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ÖZET

FİLİSTİN'DE POST-KOLONYAL DİPLOMASİ: ULUSLARARASI SİYASETTE DEVLET OLGUSU VE EGEMENLİĞİNİ YÖNETMEK

Bu tez, Filistin örnek olay incelemesi üzerinden post-kolonyal diplomasi, devlet olma arzuları ve egemenlik arasındaki karmaşık etkileşimi incelemiştir. Tarihsel sömürgecilik miraslarının, jeopolitik dinamiklerin ve uluslararası hukuk çerçevesinin, Filistin liderliğinin devlet olma ve özerklik arayışını nasıl şekillendirdiğini ele almıştır. Çalışma, İngiliz Mandası ve Balfour Deklarasyonu ile başlayarak, sömürge politikalarının ve 1948'de İsrail'in kurulmasının Filistinlilerin yerinden edilmesi ve dağılmasındaki rolünü araştırmıştır. Tez, özellikle 1967 Altı Gün Savaşı'nın Batı Şeria, Gazze ve Doğu Kudüs'ün işgaline yol açan etkisini, toprak egemenliği ihtilaflarında kritik bir dönüm noktası olarak analiz etmiştir.

Bu analiz, Filistin liderliğinin Birleşmiş Milletler ve Uluslararası Adalet Divanı gibi uluslararası kurumsal yapıları da içeren alanlarda manevra yapmak için kullandığı mikro-politik taktikleri ve diplomatik teknikleri incelemiştir. Filistin'in tanınmasını ve egemenliğini ilerletmede ittifaklar, müzakereler ve hukuki yolların etkinliği eleştirel bir şekilde değerlendirilmiştir. Araştırma, Filistin'i post-kolonyal çalışmaların geniş çerçevesine yerleştirerek, modern devlet inşa çabaları üzerindeki sömürge miraslarının kalıcı etkisini vurgulamıştır. Bu çalışma, tarihsel adaletsizliklere dayanan küresel çatışmaları anlamada önemli bilgiler sunarken, post-kolonyal bir dünyadaki kendi kaderini tayin, egemenlik ve uluslararası hukuk konularındaki tartışmalara katkıda bulunmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Post-kolonyal Diplomasi, Devlet Olgusu, Egemenlik, Sömürge Mirasları, Uluslararası Hukuk.

ABSTRACT

POST-COLONIAL DIPLOMACY IN PALESTINE: NAVIGATING STATEHOOD AND SOVEREIGNTY IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

This thesis examined the complex interaction between post-colonial diplomacy, statehood aspirations, and sovereignty through the case study of Palestine. It explored how historical colonial legacies, geopolitical dynamics, and international legal frameworks have shaped the pursuit of Palestinian leadership of statehood and autonomy. Starting with the British Mandate and the Balfour Declaration, the study investigated how colonial policies and the establishment of Israel in 1948 played a role in the displacement and dissolution of the Palestinians. The thesis particularly analyzed the 1967 Six-Day War, which led to the occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, as a critical turning point in territorial sovereignty disputes.

The ways the Palestinian leadership has used diplomacy and subtle political moves to build its presence and influence internationally are discussed in this research—particularly within institutions like the United Nations and the International Court of Justice. It takes a critical look at how effective legal routes, international agreements, and key alliances have been in supporting Palestine’s pursuit of recognition and sovereignty. The research highlighted the enduring influence of colonial legacies on modern state-building efforts by situating Palestine within the broader framework of post-colonial studies. This study provided significant findings for understanding global conflicts grounded in historical injustices while contributing to debates on self-determination, sovereignty, and international law in a post-colonial world.

Keywords: Post-colonial Diplomacy, Statehood, Sovereignty, Colonial legacies, International Law.

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Zahra SHEIKHA

DEDICATION

To the phoenix inside me who always rises out of the ashes.

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ABBREVIATIONS LIST

AHC:	Arab Higher Committee
BDS:	Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions
DFLP:	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
EU:	European Union
GA:	General Assembly
ICC:	International Criminal Court
ICJ:	International Court of Justice
ILS:	International Legal Subalternity
MA:	Master of Arts
NGOs:	Non-Governmental Organizations
PA:	Palestinian Authority
PFLP:	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PLO:	Palestine Liberation Organization
PMA:	Palestinian Monetary Authority
PNA:	Palestinian National Authority
UN:	United Nations
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNGA:	United Nations General Assembly
UNSC:	United Nations Security Council

CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The functions of statehood and sovereignty in international politics have consistently affected global relations, illustrating the intricate interaction of power, identity, and self-determination. (Jackson, 1990). The impact of colonialism has profoundly shaped the global arena, transforming diplomatic interplay and redefining objectives of emerging nations from imperialism. (McCoy & Scarano, 2009). The case of Palestine occupies a central place in the post-colonial discourse, serving as a poignant example of the intricate challenges associated with achieving statehood and sovereignty in an international framework influenced by historical legacies and modern geopolitical dynamics. (Haddad, 2016).

The sovereign state is a distinct political entity defined by established borders, governing institutions, and a population sharing common attributes (Paris, 2020). At the core of the modern nation-state framework lies the notion of statehood and the assertion of sovereignty. However, the journey toward statehood is rarely straightforward, especially for post-colonial territories grappling with historical injustices, external interventions, and fragmented national identities. (Babanovski, 2023).

The Palestinian predicament embodies complexities that extend beyond the political sphere, encompassing cultural, economic, and humanitarian dimensions. The term "post-colonial" emerged not due to a deficiency of terminology within political-cultural studies. The widespread adoption of this phenomenon in the late 1980s coincided with and depended on the decline of the prior framework termed the "Third World" (Shohat, 1992). In the postcolonial context, the 1967 War, which led to Israel's acquisition of the West Bank and

Gaza, did not significantly alter the dominant narrative for some observers (Moore-Gilbert, 2018).

Sovereignty and diplomacy are inextricably interwoven in international affairs. Sovereignty is defined as a nation's inherent and absolute right to rule itself without undue external influence. This authority is upheld and governed by diplomatic means. Diplomacy is the principal means of defending a country's sovereignty by negotiating treaties, resolving disputes, and defining territorial boundaries. While states interact in diplomatic discussions and sign international treaties to voluntarily decrease specific aspects of their sovereignty, promoting cooperation in areas such as trade, security, and environmental protection, international institutions, such as the United Nations, provide diplomatic platforms for sovereign states to discuss global issues. The art of diplomacy enables nation-states to harness soft power, build strategic alliances, and improve their influence on a global scale. The organization shows its essence through meetings, group discussions, promoting collaboration, conflict resolution, and the pursuit of national interests in the field of international relations.

In 1974, the United Nations granted the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) "observer status" in accordance with Resolution 3236. This decision acknowledged the Palestinian people's right to self-determination without foreign intervention, as well as the right to national sovereignty (Moore-Gilbert, 2016). Rather than being a symbolic gesture alone, this moment represented a critical juncture in the evolving relationship between postcolonial struggles and international law. This study's primary goal is to investigate the complex interaction between postcolonial diplomacy, statehood ambitions, and sovereignty assertion within the Palestinian context. Using Palestine as a case study, it seeks to uncover the problems faced by nations seeking to restore their identity and sovereignty in the aftermath of colonial rule. The thesis will examine historical precedents, crucial diplomatic moments, and contemporary geopolitical forces that have all weaved a complicated tapestry determining the course of Palestinian statehood goals. The ongoing territorial disputes and

foreign involvement show the complicated and numerous challenges to obtaining Palestinian statehood. This desire for self-government is strongly based in past colonial legacies, particularly the British Mandate, and is further influenced by geopolitical events like as the Arab-Israeli conflict and Cold War dynamics.

The push for Palestinian statehood has been shaped by a long history of colonial control and shifting geopolitical forces, often resulting in such problems as territorial disputes and outside interventions. In this thesis, I argue that the Palestinian leadership's ability to navigate global diplomacy—through negotiation, alliance-building, and strategic positioning—has played a key role in keeping the statehood effort alive on the world stage. These efforts, I believe, will remain central to any future progress.

The rest of the thesis proceeds as follows: The next section begins with a review of the current debates in international relations surrounding recognition, sovereignty, and UN membership. From there, I take a step back to explore the historical evolution of Palestinian statehood efforts. I also analyze how Palestine's repeated appeals for UN membership have been received, paying close attention to the language used by member states in General Assembly and Security Council discussions. Finally, I connect these diplomatic moments to the broader historical experience of marginalization in international law, exposing a pattern of International Legal Subalternity.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Palestinian aspirations for statehood have their origins in both geopolitical considerations and the lingering effects of colonialism. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire paved the way for the British Mandate to control over Palestine. It was formed by the League of Nations, which greatly influenced it. The Balfour Declaration, calling for a "national home for the Jewish people," laid the groundwork for long-lasting animosity between Jewish and Arab cultures. In 1948, during the Arab-Israeli War, the Palestinians' fight for self-determination

reached a turning point with the founding of the State of Israel. This led to forced displacements and growing confrontations. On top of all that, the history mentions how the complex aftermath of the 1967 Six-Day War is still having an effect on the area today, making matters more complicated.

The Palestinians' desire for independence has long been shaped by complex geopolitical challenges, particularly during the Cold War. After the Six-Day War, Israel annexed the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip, putting the Palestinian hopes for self-rule and territorial control under immense strain..

Although there have been several international efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, efforts, including various UN resolutions and the Oslo Accords ultimately have failed to provide a long-term solution. In this thesis, I explore how colonial legacies as well as changing geopolitical realities have shaped and at times redirected Palestinian aspirations for statehood. Here, I am particularly interested in demonstrating how the Palestinian leaders have responded to external pressures through diplomacy, negotiations, and alliance formation. My main argument is that these tools have not only helped sustain the Palestinian movement for statehood, but also constitute central mechanisms to any meaningful progress in this regard.

The study also takes a closer look at the role of micropolitics — the behind-the-scenes diplomatic maneuvering and local political dynamics that do not always make headlines, but significantly influence the bigger picture. By tracing how past colonial frameworks intersect with today's power structures, I hope to better understand how Palestinian leaders work within (and sometimes around) global systems to push for sovereignty and recognition. My goal here is to assess how effective these diplomatic efforts have been in advancing Palestinian self-determination, despite ongoing territorial disputes and international involvement. Thus, this thesis asks the question of “to what extent diplomatic strategies, alliances, and negotiations have helped Palestinian leaders to navigate international politics and work toward their agenda to achieve statehood and sovereignty”.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Understanding the historical context: In order to analyze in detail the historical roots of the Palestinian struggle for statehood, it is important to grasp how colonial legacies, regional dynamics, and international power structures have shaped Palestinian identity and political demands over time. These legacies continue to influence how the statehood issue is understood and debated today.

Diplomatic Efforts: This research also presents an analysis of the diplomatic initiatives Palestinian leaders have, so far, utilized on the global stage, focusing on which strategies, alliances, and negotiations have worked and have been effective in promoting Palestinians' statehood endeavors.

Sovereignty: One major challenge that Palestine faces today is its limited ability to govern without interruption. With ongoing land disputes, security issues, and influence from external actors, achieving full sovereignty is likely to be more complicated than being recognized as a state within the international system.

Micropolitical Efforts: Beyond major international decisions, smaller, more localized political actions — what is often called micropolitics — also play an important role in how the Palestinian statehood movement evolves. In this part of the study, I explore how everyday power struggles affect the bigger picture about the issue of Palestinian sovereignty.

Lessons and Prospects: This thesis also discusses those lessons the Palestinian experience might offer for other communities trying to gain recognition or independence. While every situation is unique, certain strategies and challenges tend to repeat themselves in post-colonial struggles.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The research in this thesis is significant because it can shed light on the complex historical, geographical, and diplomatic elements that have influenced the evolution of Palestinian statehood ambitions. The study sheds light on the

origins of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by thoroughly investigating the role of historical colonial legacies and geopolitical elements. Furthermore, the analysis of diplomatic tactics, discussions, and partnerships offers a detailed comprehension of the Palestinian leadership's efforts to traverse the intricacies of global politics and establish authoritative control over land and people. This thesis aims to address significant deficiencies in the scholarly conversation by providing policymakers, historians, and scholars with a thorough examination of the various complex factors influencing the quest for Palestinian statehood. The research has implications that go beyond mere academic interest. It serves as a basis for making well-informed decisions and developing policies, therefore enhancing our understanding of current conflicts and possible solutions to resolve them. The pertinence of post-colonial policy to the importance of this subject is in the manner in which the historical legacies of colonialism, especially the British Mandate and the geopolitical impact of external powers, have influenced Palestine's persistent quest for independence. Post-colonial policy underscores the enduring influence of these legacies on Palestinian diplomacy, wherein the pursuit of statehood is interwoven with the navigation of international frameworks established by former colonial powers. This study highlights the distinct obstacles Palestine encounters as a post-colonial entity in its pursuit of sovereignty and global recognition, while contending with the legacies of colonialism and external intervention. In this research, I draw on post-colonial theories to better understand the Palestinian experience. The aim is to show how both historical injustices and today's global political pressures continue to stand in the way of Palestinian statehood. At the same time, I focus on how diplomacy — in all its forms — has been used as a key tool in the effort to gain self-rule and international recognition.

1.5 METHODOLOGY

This thesis uses a qualitative approach to explore how Palestinian efforts for statehood have developed over time, especially through diplomacy and

responses to challenges around sovereignty. To do this, I apply the process tracing method, which helps track how events unfold and how certain decisions or actions lead to specific outcomes. It is a useful and effective method to uncover causal mechanisms of complex historical and political events and phenomena (Beach & Pedersen, 2013).

The study is built around two main theoretical perspectives: post-colonial theory and micropolitics. Post-colonial theory helps us understand how past colonial rule continues to influence the ways in which international political entities pursue statehood today (Said, 2000; Krasner, 1999), whereas micropolitics focuses on the small-scale, often behind-the-scenes political efforts, particularly those initiatives related to diplomacy, international law, and institution-building. Utilizing both of these perspectives allows for a better and deeper understanding of the Palestinian case and offers insights for both scholars and policy makers about other post-colonial state-building contexts.

This thesis uses a case study approach alongside process tracing in order to better understand how historical events, diplomatic choices, and present-day politics all interact in shaping Palestinian efforts toward statehood (Yin, 2014). The case study method allows for a detailed analysis of how Palestinian statehood initiatives have progressed over time, uncovering causal relationships and identifying turning points. I focus on Palestine as a case study mainly due to its historical, theoretical, and practical significance. The Palestinian case represents a powerful experience of how colonial legacies can continue to shape issues of sovereignty and nation-building today. The existing studies on Palestine are also well-supported by a wide range of primary and secondary data sources, including United Nations resolutions, treaties, archival materials, and academic studies. On the theoretical side, Palestine fits closely with the ideas behind post-colonial theory, which discusses how old imperial systems still shape the ways in which new states try to emerge and gain recognition in the international system.

The research utilizes both primary and secondary data sources. Primary sources comprise official documents, including United Nations resolutions (e.g.,

Resolution 3236), legal texts pertaining to Palestinian sovereignty, and archive records of diplomatic negotiations, such as the Oslo Accords. This research also draws on a range of secondary sources, including academic studies on post-colonial theory, international law, and the political landscape of the Middle East. In addition, it incorporates news coverage and expert commentary that help capture the current perspectives on Palestinian diplomatic initiatives and obstacles.

My analysis here is based on the period between 1987 and 2012 because it marks a major shift in how Palestinian micropolitical strategy evolved on the ground and in the international arena. It begins with the First Intifada (1987–1993), a key moment when grassroots organizing became a central force. Then come the Oslo Accords (1993), which opened the door to new diplomatic efforts and the creation of institutions. The Second Intifada (2000–2005) brought another shift — this time toward legal strategies and international advocacy. Finally, in 2012, the UN recognized Palestine as a non-member observer state, showing just how far the movement had come in terms of global diplomacy. Taken together, this period offers a clear window into how micropolitical strategies developed and what they achieved. The analysis leverages process tracing to identify causal mechanisms and develop a detailed chronological sequence of key events, such as the British Mandate, the establishment of Israel, and the Oslo Accords. Critical junctures and decision points are analyzed to illustrate the interplay between historical legacies and geopolitical factors.

Key terms are defined to maintain conceptual clarity. Statehood refers to the recognition of a territory as a sovereign entity with defined borders, governance structures, and population (Cassese, 1995). Sovereignty is understood as the authority of a state to govern itself without external interference, encompassing territorial integrity and autonomy (Krasner, 1999). Post-colonialism is defined as a framework for examining the enduring impacts of colonialism on political, social, and cultural systems in formerly colonized regions (Shohat, 1992).

While process tracing provides a detailed understanding of causal mechanisms, its reliance on qualitative and historical data introduces potential interpretive biases. Additionally, the dynamic and complex nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict may limit the study's ability to fully account for rapidly evolving contemporary developments.

This research contributes to the academic field and discourse on sovereignty and global politics by offering a nuanced analysis of Palestinian statehood efforts. The study plays a critical role in examining the intersection of historical legacies, diplomacy, and international law. I believe that the study provides valuable insights into the wider challenges of post-colonial state-building and highlights the complex dynamics of global politics in the context of Palestine.

CHAPTER 2

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

To provide a comprehensive context for this thesis, the literature review will focus on three key areas: international law and statehood, the definitions and core theories that shape the concept of statehood in international politics, and the specific literature addressing Palestinian sovereignty and statehood.

In my readings in the literature of international law, Naza Yammine (2024) raises the question of how acknowledgment of statehood benefits the Palestinian cause in his MA study titled “International Law and the Question of Recognition of Palestinian Statehood: A Legal Subaltern Reality.” Gaining formal state recognition is a dominant feature in making Palestine’s diplomatic efforts strengthened. The research of Khalidi (2016) sheds the light on the value of international law and diplomacy in supporting the Palestinian cause and calls for a change in strategy. I support his thought in arguing that the PLO’s current approach, particularly its reliance on U.S. mediation through the Oslo Accords, is no longer viable, especially given the lack of U.S. interest in pushing for Palestinian statehood. Instead, Khalidi suggests that a broader global campaign should be launched that goes beyond the Oslo framework. The goal would be to build wider international support and reduce the overreliance on American involvement in the peace process. Yammine brings in another important angle by looking at how the declaratory and constitutive theories of statehood apply to Palestine. These legal theories help explain how states are recognized. However, neither framework quite fits in the case of Palestine. The situation is too complex to be fully explained by the existing models. That is where the idea of ILS becomes useful. It offers a way to think about how some statehood claims are consistently sidelined or overlooked in international law. This analysis delineates the difference between the rule of law and the rule by law, providing insight into the historical and contemporary context of Palestine’s quest for

international recognition and the influence of international law in this endeavor. Yammine's study advocates for the integration of additional insights via the framework of ILS.

Rosaline Higgins (Higgins, 1963) emphasizes that an analysis of United Nations practices concerning subsequent membership demonstrates the application of conventional legal requirements for statehood, offering significant insights. Conversely, Dugard observes that conventional standards for statehood continue to be cited, suggesting that in some instances, strict compliance with the criteria of independence and effective governance has been overlooked in favor of self-determination (Dugard, 2013).

Recognition plays a critical role in the broader struggle for Palestinian statehood, as emphasized by Quigley (2010) and reflected in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 67/19 (2012). Quigley explores how recognizing Palestine as a state carries significant geopolitical weight, functioning as a tool for legitimization within the international system. This interpretation is supported by the General Assembly's decision to grant Palestine non-member observer state status, a major milestone in its diplomatic journey and global recognition.

In contrast to this argument, a number of researchers have reported a critical position like Kattan (2009) and Bhungalia (2024). The disadvantage of extra focusing on recognition increases the likelihood of reinforcing the existing power structures that often exclude the marginalized actors rather than challenging them. This perspective of the two researchers contrasts with Nabli's more optimistic point of view. Nabli believes that identifying recognition as an impetus for political transformation is a better option. Meanwhile, Palestinian efforts toward self-determination continue to face serious international obstacles. Power imbalances between Israel and Palestine, alongside the influence of great Powers, such as the United States, make it quite difficult for Palestinian diplomacy to gain equal footing on the global arena.

John Quigley (2010) analyzes the concept of Palestinian self-determination, not only as a legal right, but also as a political and diplomatic

challenge. He asserts that achieving self-determination also requires careful strategic negotiations and strong alliances within the international community. Palestine's path toward self-determination has been slowed down by external political pressures, the ongoing Israeli occupation, and internal divisions. Thus, Khalidi (1997) highlights how national identity and collective awareness are just as important as legal arguments in efforts to build a sovereign state. Bhungalia (2024) takes this argument a step further asking whether statehood should even be the ultimate goal, pointing to broader ideas such as justice and freedom. Parasram (2023) echoes this call to rethink the struggle beyond traditional ideas of statehood. At the same time, Khalidi points to the practical reality that statehood remains crucial for gaining international support. Jessop's (2015) broader analysis of how states function legally, institutionally, and globally adds further perspective to the Palestinian experience. The questions emphasize the diverse viewpoints on statehood, with a particular emphasis on its international presence, which encompasses relationships with other nations, and its national composition and capacity, which include institutions, legal systems, and population.

This study focuses on the concept of statehood in relation to its international recognition, addressing Jessop's inquiry about the relationship between the state and its sovereign position within the international system. Jessop, utilizing Max Weber's insights on the modern state, argues that a clear methodology for defining the state—and thereby addressing the related inquiries—can be understood through four distinct components. The initial three points illustrate Weber's contributions, encompassing the conceptualization of the state as a collection of apparatuses (i.e., institutions and organizations), its territorial characteristics (i.e., land and borders), and the population subject to decision-making processes. The fourth element is an original contribution: the concept of the state. This suggests that the state should be examined and understood in relation to other states and systems. His concept of the state encapsulates the central thesis of his book, asserting that the state is not static but inherently relational. He asserts that states do not exist in isolation; instead,

they are interconnected with various institutions, legal frameworks, economies, and other states. In the concluding chapter, he emphasizes the importance of understanding the state beyond general principles, self-evident truths, and academic constructs. He asserts that a deep comprehension of its essence necessitates an exploration of “how its boundaries are delineated through particular activities both within and beyond the State” (Jessop, 2015 p 246).

In examining the case of Palestine through a post-colonial lens, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2007) expand on fundamental concepts, emphasizing the significance of resistance and hybrid identities within post-colonial discourse. Parasram (2023) examines the ongoing operation of settler-colonialism in the context of Palestine, highlighting its role in undermining Palestinian sovereignty and perpetuating dependency within international politics. This aligns with Bhungalia’s (2024) critique of state-centric liberation ideologies, which frequently neglect the wider colonial dynamics affecting post-colonial nations.

Central debates in this field revolve around the relevance of traditional statehood models in post-colonial contexts. While scholars like Khalidi (1997) emphasize statehood as a crucial tool for resistance and legitimacy, others, such as Mbembe (2001), call for a reexamination of sovereignty to better address the unique challenges confronting post-colonial nations. A critical perspective to better grasp the lasting impact of colonialism and its implications on the notions of statehood and sovereignty today is suggested by the post-colonial theory, particularly for the Palestinian case. Said and Fanon both agree that the modern and past politics are controlled by the system of control and resistance, and culture in those territories that were once colonized (Said, 2000; Fanon, 1963). Regarding the ongoing Palestinian struggle for sovereignty, post-colonial theory provides a clearer understanding about how colonial histories as well as more modern forms of international influence shape the struggle for independence and recognition. Scholars like Edward Said (2000) and Homi Bhabha (1994) have explicitly demonstrated that colonial structures and relations do not completely disappear with independence. They often linger in how power works internationally and how the legitimacy of state institutions is judged. These

patterns are especially visible in Palestine's diplomatic efforts, which take place within an international system that still reflects colonial hierarchies and limits full sovereignty for marginalized nations (Massad, 2006).

I apply in this thesis the post-colonial theory to shed light on how Palestinian diplomacy challenges deep-rooted injustices, raises questions about traditional notions of sovereignty, and works through the challenges of historical dispossession as well as the ongoing realities of occupation. In other words, this study applies post-colonial theory to examine the intricate interactions between historical experiences, power dynamics, and diplomatic initiatives in the Palestinian struggle for recognition and self-determination.

Furthermore, the post-colonial framework also helps explain why self-determination has been so difficult to achieve in Palestine. Scholars, such as Edward Said (2000), have indicated that colonialism and its implications in the Middle East did not disappear in the aftermath of formal decolonization. Instead, they persist today, shaped by previous colonial frameworks and current Western political and economic interests. The interaction of historical elements and current geopolitical dynamics renders the Palestinian quest for self-determination not merely a local concern but also a manifestation of global power structures that frequently undermine or use the right to self-determination for political purposes.

2.1 PALESTINIAN QUEST OF STATEHOOD

What are the defining characteristics of a state? One interpretation of "statehood" is defined as "the property of being a state or the condition of being a state or a territory seeking statehood" (Webster Dictionary). Statehood requires a regulated government, a defined territory, and a population. (Nelson 2006, p. 73). In Palestine, self-determination encompasses both the pursuit of an independent and sovereign state and the need to address enduring historical, geographical, and legal challenges dating back to the British Mandate. Scholars such as Antonio Cassese (1995) assert that self-determination is a fundamental

legal right for populations under colonial rule and foreign occupation, reinforcing Palestine's claim to statehood. Cassese emphasizes that this right extends beyond independence, including the right to resist foreign domination and seek self-governance—an essential component of the Palestinian struggle.

The right to self-determination is widely supported in international law, especially through several key United Nations resolutions, including Resolution 3236 (1974). This resolution confirmed that the Palestinian people possess the right to self-determination, independence, and sovereignty. Indeed, this legal background has allowed Palestinian policy makers to make a stronger case at the international stage, such as by acquiring observer status at the United Nations.

However, such an accomplishment does not necessarily signify that all major obstacles have been overcome. Dugard (2013), for example, argues that the ongoing occupation of Palestinian territories as well as the political divisions among Palestinian leaders still act as major barriers for the ideal of self-determination. These challenges inevitably constrain and complicate the ability of the Palestinian leadership to effectively seek sovereignty.

Thus, this thesis also presents an important discussion regarding how Palestine's diplomatic efforts have worked in the path toward self-determination despite the above-mentioned setbacks. Palestine's long-lasting struggle for sovereignty and international recognition shows to what extent the quest for sovereignty is about the acquisition of legal rights, and to what extent it is constantly shaped by historical experiences, outside interventions, and shifting international dynamics. The concept of self-determination is central to this analysis because it helps demonstrate how negotiations, alliances, and diplomatic efforts have been effective in the pursuit of this Palestinian goal.

Within this framework, both Visoka (2018) and Sending (2015) argue that the study of micropolitics remains an underexplored area of research in the academic literature about Palestinian politics. Although the concept of statehood receives a lot of criticism, it remains the ultimate objective for those communities that seek collective self-determination.

Although considerable research has focused on the politics, legality, and ethics surrounding the right to self-determination, there remains a paucity of studies addressing the micropolitics and daily practices involved in attaining independent statehood. Micropolitics is the delicate, often informal power dynamics and negotiations that take place within institutions, organizations, and social movements, impacting decision-making and policy results. It describes how individuals and groups traverse power systems, engage in strategic relationships, and assert influence in localized or institutional settings (Ball, 1987). According to Foucault (1980), power functions at numerous levels, not just through formal political structures but also through everyday behaviors and discourses, hence micropolitical activities play an important role in determining bigger political and social processes. Micropolitics is important in social movements because it determines leadership dynamics, internal conflicts, and mobilization techniques (Scott, 1990).

The daily diplomatic practices are primarily associated with marginal sites of authority, the distinctiveness of sovereignty, and non-elite practices and knowledge forms. Despite their prevalence, the roles of elites, institutions, and diplomatic practices in the construction, definition, limitation, and articulation of sovereignty through linguistic and performative actions have not received adequate examination. (Sending OJ, 2015).

2.2 NAVIGATING SOVEREIGNTY IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

Conventional analyses of sovereignty, as demonstrated by the writings of Stephen D. Krasner (1999), emphasize the importance of international recognition as a crucial aspect of achieving and maintaining sovereignty. Obtaining international recognition has been a vital component of the Palestinian leadership's objective. The achievement of a non-member observer state status at the United Nations in 2012 was a notable accomplishment in this particular situation. Krasner's paradigm asserts that true sovereignty requires both territorial control and a monopoly on justifiable aggression, despite the symbolic

importance and potential for international diplomacy that come with recognition. This pertains to the Palestinian predicament, wherein despite international recognition, they have not achieved full independent authority over their territory due to the continued Israeli occupation and internal political fragmentation.

Sovereignty has been the primary medium of exchange and most essential component of the state-based international order for many years. (Lake, 2003)

Sovereignty is one of the major concepts underpinning contemporary domestic and inter-national politics, while states continue to remain core units of international society (James, 1999).

The approach taken by the Palestinians in seeking international legal recognition and utilizing international law, including appeals to the International Criminal Court, aligns with a wider pattern noted by academics such as Anne-Marie Slaughter (2004). These specialists highlight that countries frequently employ international legal structures to reinforce their assertions of sovereignty. The objective of this strategy is to enhance the legitimacy of the Palestinian stance in the lack of territorial governance.

Although Israel's military occupation hinders Palestine from exercising autonomous governance over its territory, the occupation itself signifies that this land is under de jure Palestinian sovereignty. Consequently, it is imperative for the EU and its member states to acknowledge it as a legitimate sovereign entity, even if this does not equate to a formal recognition of statehood. In a comparable manner, Namibia attained sovereignty despite remaining under the governance of South Africa. I concur with John Quigley that the European Union ought to incorporate this element into its foreign relations, notwithstanding the fact that the majority of member states have yet to recognize the State of Palestine. (J. Quigley, 2010)

The Palestinians' quest for independence was further hindered by geopolitical factors, including the intricacies of the Cold War. The geopolitical rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union had a substantial impact on the creation of alliances and activities in the Middle East, thus influencing the trajectory of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Palestinian people's territorial and

sovereignty aspirations were significantly complicated by the Six-Day War in 1967, which led to the subsequent occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip by Israel.

The concept of the state must possess significance both in its theoretical framework and in its practical application. Therefore, it is crucial to formulate a precise definition that can systematically lead our comprehension of the situation. A concise definition of the state can be proposed as follows: a political entity that governs a community inside a certain territory and possesses sovereignty. The definition of modern states is comprised of four key components. Most Western modern governments, characterized by the fundamental principles of sovereignty and territoriality, typically include a central government and establish a society that identifies itself collectively as a nation. (Shayebhilal, 2020)

Sovereignty entails that states are self-governing in internal matters and independent in external affairs. Thus, all states possess equal sovereignty and independence. General acceptance is known as Westphalian sovereignty or absolute sovereignty, which encompasses total equality. Unequal states exist in the international system across various characteristics including physical, military, economic, and demographic factors. Absolute equality is an unattainable claim. Various characteristics such as physical geography, political structure, economic status, population size, and military strength prevent all states in the globe from being considered equal. A hierarchical system exists that benefits major powers.

Thus, it is accurate to suggest that large governments have a significant impact and provide guidance to international organizations. Small and weak governments can navigate the global system and achieve sovereignty by engaging with different international regimes, even when their approaches appear contradictory. By examining Palestine's quest for statehood and sovereignty, we can identify broader principles of state sovereignty in international politics while also recognizing the unique obstacles that define the Palestinian experience.

2.3 COLONIAL LEGACIES AND THE STRUGGLE FOR PALESTINIAN STATEHOOD

Achieving Palestinian sovereignty and statehood requires addressing both the deeper historical and geopolitical complexities underlying the conflict and the immediate territorial disputes. The trajectory of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the challenges faced by the Palestinian national movement, and the potential for a just and lasting resolution have all been shaped by colonial legacies and geopolitical influences. Understanding these historical and political dynamics is essential to fully grasp the evolution of Palestinian statehood aspirations and the broader struggle for sovereignty.

It is fundamental to say that the Palestinian struggle for independence is deeply grounded in the colonial history. Political marginalization of the local people as well as regional fragmentation were imposed by the policies of the British Mandate (1920–1948). Even before the introduction of the British Mandate, the 1917 Balfour Declaration, which promoted the idea of a Jewish national home in Palestine, increased regional tensions by disregarding the potential consequences of this move for the existing inhabitants of the Palestinian territories. The consequences of these decisions are still felt today.

Khalidi (2006) points out that colonial policies of the time ignored the aspirations of the indigenous Palestinian population, setting the stage for future conflict and displacement. This historical background highlights how imperialism continues to shape political tensions in the region today. Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, British control over Palestine after World War I laid the groundwork for the rise of modern Israeli and Palestinian nationalist movements. The Balfour Declaration of 1917, which pledged to provide a "national home" for the Jewish people in Palestine, added a colonial dimension to the conflict by supporting Zionist ambitions in Palestinian land (Andersen, 2020).

The arrival of Jewish immigrants to Palestine during the British Mandate period intensified conflicts with the native Palestinian Arab population, resulting

in violent confrontations and, eventually, the United Nations' proposal for division in 1947. The proposal, which was approved by Jewish authorities, was not accepted by Arab leaders, leading to the outbreak of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and the subsequent expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, commonly referred to as the Nakba or "catastrophe" (Morris, 2008).

Pingeot and Pouliot (2024) emphasize how colonial structures continue to shape global diplomacy. They argue that agency in international politics is not equally distributed but instead depends on an actor's position within long-standing hierarchies, leaving entities like Palestine both constrained and influenced by colonial legacies. Similarly, Parasram (2023) critiques the ongoing settler-colonial practices that undermine Palestinian aspirations for statehood. What we can conclude from the researchers' studies that post-colonial legacies are central to understanding the diplomatic challenges Palestine faces today.

By contrast, Kattan (2009) takes a different approach, questioning whether traditional, state-centered frameworks are still effective for addressing the Palestinian issue. Instead, Kattan calls for a new research agenda focused on exploring alternative sources of recognition and legitimacy, moving beyond the structural limitations highlighted by Pinget and Pouliot.

The Six-Day War of 1967 was a decisive event in the conflict, leading to Israel's acquisition of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights through military occupation. The occupation not only intensified Palestinian grievances, but also established the basis for long-lasting territorial conflicts and the gradual collapse of Palestinian self-governance (Quandt, 1993).

The colonization and displacement of Palestinians profoundly shaped their aspirations for statehood, giving rise to the Palestinian national movement, symbolized by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The PLO's struggle for self-determination and the creation of a sovereign state became central to Palestinian identity and resistance against Israeli occupation (Khalidi, 2006). Efforts to build a viable Palestinian state have been further complicated by the fragmentation of Palestinian territories, exacerbated by Israeli settlement

expansion and the construction of the separation barrier. Although the Oslo Accords of the 1990s initially raised hopes for progress toward Palestinian statehood, they failed to address critical issues such as borders, the status of refugees, and Jerusalem. Consequently, rather than resolving the conflict, the accords perpetuated cycles of violence (Farsakh, 2011). External interventions, such as diplomatic attempts and peace procedures, are frequently driven by greater geopolitical considerations rather than a sincere dedication to ending the conflict. The United States, given its role as a significant mediator, has received criticism for its perceived favoritism towards Israel, which has eroded its reputation as an impartial intermediary (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007).

The involvement of regional actors, especially neighboring Arab governments, has played a key role in supporting the ambitions for Palestinian statehood to different extents. The normalization agreements between Israel and certain Arab states in recent years, which have not resulted in substantial advancements towards the establishment of a Palestinian state, underscore the intricate nature of regional politics and their effect on Palestinian sovereignty (Hinnebusch, 2003).

The Palestinian case provides a valuable framework to help develop a better understanding about the complexities of post-colonial diplomacy, especially in the pursuit of statehood and sovereignty within the current dynamics of the international system. A variety of different geopolitical factors have, so far, shaped the Palestinian experience, ranging from colonial legacies and regional power dynamics in the Middle East to international rivalries, and the role of international organizations, such as the UN.

The Palestinian cause has encountered complications because of the regional powers. For example neighboring states often balance their own national interests with expressions of support for Palestine. Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia provide clear examples of this pattern; despite voicing solidarity, they have frequently prioritized their security needs and political alliances, resulting in fragmented and inconsistent diplomatic efforts (Quandt, 1993). The Camp David Accords of 1978 highlight this tension clearly, focusing on

strengthening Egypt-Israel relations while sidelining the Palestinian issue. These complexities underscore the persistent challenges in achieving a unified regional stance on Palestinian statehood. The Palestinian struggle has been deeply influenced by rivalries among major global powers. During the Cold War era, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was allied with the Soviet Union, which intensified the already existing ideological tensions in international relations. In the aftermath of the Cold War, the United States maintained its close relations with Israel, whereas China and Russia began to advocate a two-state solution (Brown, 2003). These disagreements among the major powers of the time have made it increasingly difficult for the international community to mediate and find a lasting resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

While this thesis addresses the complexities of the Palestinian issue, it also shows that this conflict has long been a major focus for the United Nations and other international organizations. Important turning points, such as the 1947 Partition Plan (UN Resolution 181) and more recent debates in both the UN General Assembly and the Security Council, illustrate sustained international involvement. However, the involvement of these institutions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has not always been effective due to deep geopolitical divisions at the international level. For example, the United States' veto of a Security Council resolution in 2024, which advocated full UN membership for Palestine, clearly shows how difficult it still is to reach an international agreement on the matter of Palestine's recognition as a sovereign state (Gertheiss, 2017).

In recent decades, globalization and transnational activism have also made it more difficult in the picture to achieve statehood. Social movements, NGOs, and non-state actors increasingly take advantage of digital platforms today to promote Palestinian rights and raise global awareness. For example, the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement has gained traction worldwide, reshaping international perceptions of the conflict and challenging traditional diplomatic boundaries (Munayyer, 2011). These changes are fast becoming shown in non-state actors' demonstration in playing a bigger role in shaping

international diplomacy than ever before. The complexities of economic geopolitics significantly exacerbate the Palestinian struggle, especially in relation to the control of natural resources and the accessibility of strategic trade routes. The issue of water scarcity, particularly within the Jordan River basin, continues to provoke considerable debate, carrying profound implications for the sovereignty and sustainability of a prospective Palestinian state (Selby, 2003). The economic dimensions highlight the significant implications of resolving the conflict, influencing both local communities and the overall stability of the region.

The Cold War rivalry exacerbated tensions in the region, as both the United States and the Soviet Union sought to assert their influence over Middle Eastern affairs. The support of Western nations, particularly the United States, for Israel, with the backing of Arab nations by the Soviet Union, further complicated efforts to resolve the conflict. (Said, 2000).

2.4 DIPLOMATIC RECOGNITION AND UN EFFORTS

The main strategy has been to seek international recognition through the United Nations. The Palestinian National Authority's 2011 proposal for full membership in the United Nations garnered significant attention. Although the United States rejected and the UN Security Council lacked backing, the Palestinian quest to achieve full membership was a crucial move in their international strategy. In 2012, Palestine's status was upgraded to that of a non-member observer state at the UN General Assembly following a vote that received significant support. Palestine's status, akin to that of the Holy See, allowed it to join treaties and specialized United Nations organizations. The Oslo process exemplifies the capacity of negotiations to produce tangible, albeit restricted, advancements in self-governance. However, the deterioration of the process and the inability to achieve a definitive agreement on the final status highlight the constraints of negotiations that fail to comprehensively tackle

crucial matters such as settlements, refugees, and the status of Jerusalem. (Sayigh, 1997).

On October 31, 2011, while the United Nations Security Council's Committee on the Admission of New Members was still reviewing the Palestinian membership application, UNESCO's General Conference made the decision to accept Palestine as a Member of the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (Eden, P, 2013)

The global community acknowledges the existence of the Palestinian people; however, many entities have not yet recognized their claim to statehood. Despite recognition from 139 nations (Imseis, 2021 p 872), Palestine has not achieved a comprehensive international consensus, evidenced by its unsuccessful bid for United Nations (UN) membership. In 2011, member states failed to reach a consensus on whether the state of Palestine fulfilled the criteria outlined in Article 4 (1) of the UN Charter.

The admission of peace-loving countries that are willing to accept and satisfy the organization's requirements is regulated by Article 4 of the UN Charter, which allows for membership in the United Nations. A recommendation from the Security Council and a decision from the General Assembly are required for admission. The concept of conditional membership has evolved into the concept of unconditional universal membership over time.

Resolution 52/250 was passed by the UNGA on 7 July 1998. This resolution granted Palestine additional rights and privileges in relation to its involvement in the UN's activities. These rights were previously only available to Member States. They include the right to participate in the general debate of the GA, the right to respond to others' statements, the right to raise concerns about proceedings related to Palestinian and Middle East matters, and the right to jointly propose resolutions and decisions on Palestinian and Middle East issues. Resolution 52/250 granted Palestine the right to be promptly seated following non-member States and preceding all other observers. Additionally, the number of seats assigned to Palestine was raised to six, whereas observers typically receive two seats. (UN, 1998)

According to Rule 58 of the Provisional Rules of Procedure of the Security Council, any country seeking membership in the United Nations must submit a written declaration stating its acceptance of the commitments outlined in the Charter. The Palestinian request for UN membership explicitly stated that 'the State of Palestine is a nation that seeks peace and willingly agrees to abide by the responsibilities outlined in the United Nations Charter, committing to fulfill them with utmost seriousness. UN Doc A/66/371-S/2011

During the UNGA session on 21 September 2011, President Obama stated that the United States would not back the Palestinian application for UN membership. At the same session, the former French President (Nicolas Sarkozy) proposed an intermediate stage where Palestine would be granted the status of a UN Observer State. This would enable them to participate in the subsidiary bodies and treaties of the United Nations, which could be a significant advancement. To the extent that this may be achieved through a UNGA resolution, it circumvents the risk of a US veto. Considering the current deadlock in the peace negotiations, it seems more probable that Palestine will elect to pursue this course of action. Mahmoud Abbas declared during his speech to the UN General Assembly on September 27, 2012, that his government will persist in its endeavors to secure complete membership for Palestine at the United Nations:

We have begun intensive consultations with various international organizations and Member States aimed at having the General Assembly adopt a resolution considering the State of Palestine as a non-Member State of the United Nations during this session. (UNGA 67th session, 12th plenary meeting (27 September 2012) UN Doc A/67)

The United Nations Charter, Article 1, asserts that individuals have the right to autonomously establish their political status and advance their economic, social, and cultural development, a principle known as self-determination. This principle is rooted in international law and political philosophy. This concept, which was initially introduced during the decolonization period, continues to be a critical concern for post-colonial states, particularly for populations that have

been subjected to colonial oppression. Within the complex realities of a post-colonial geopolitical landscape, the Palestinian quest for independence exemplifies a broader struggle for self-determination.

CHAPTER 3

3. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF PALESTINIAN STATEHOOD

3.1 PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP NAVIGATING ATTEMPTS FOR A PALESTINIAN STATE

As they work toward the goal of statehood, Palestinian policymakers have turned to a mix of diplomatic, political, and legal strategies to navigate an increasingly complicated geopolitical landscape. A key part of this approach has been soft diplomacy, where power, influence, and negotiation are carefully balanced between state and non-state actors. These efforts have been shaped not only by the unequal power relationship between Israel and Palestine but also by the shifting interests of both regional and global players.

Despite facing major challenges, Palestinian political strategies—such as seeking symbolic recognition and building strong relationships or alliances with supportive states—have played an important role in advancing the Palestinian cause. Thrall (2017) argues that these efforts helped raise international awareness, win diplomatic support, and gradually shape a global narrative that strengthens the legitimacy of Palestinian statehood aspirations. Similarly, Erakat (2019) highlights how Palestinian policymakers have used international law and multilateral institutions to push back against structural inequalities embedded in the peace process. Together, these studies show that the micropolitics of diplomacy has been a powerful tool for Palestine to assert its identity and agency within an international system dominated by unequal power dynamics.

In this thesis I argue that Palestinian strategies combine diplomatic, legal, and institutional efforts aimed at securing both independence and international recognition. I am also inclined to believe that yet their overall impact remains limited by ongoing Israeli occupation, internal Palestinian political divisions, and the varying levels of foreign support.

For decades, Palestinian leaders have worked to establish diplomatic relations, take part in international talks, and form alliances, all in pursuit of statehood and sovereignty. The evolution of these efforts demonstrates both the strengths and shortcomings of diplomacy regarding the advancement of Palestinian national goals.

The fight for Palestinian statehood before 1967 was heavily influenced by the political turmoil that followed the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the beginning of the British Mandate. The 1917 Balfour Declaration, which supported the creation of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine, prompted many Palestinians to mobilize politically in response to increasing Zionist immigration and British colonial rule. A key milestone in consolidating Palestinian leadership came in 1936 with the formation of the Arab Higher Committee (AHC), led by figures such as Hajj Amin al-Husseini. The AHC pursued self-determination primarily through diplomatic channels. It engaged with the British government and participated in the 1939 London Conference, where Palestinian representatives called for independence and demanded a halt to Jewish immigration (Khalidi, 2006).

However, these efforts did not pave the way to Palestinian diplomacy to overcome obstacles. Internal divisions among the leadership, the strategic interests of colonial powers, and the broader escalation of the Arab-Israeli conflict, particularly following the 1948 war, all undermined unified efforts to achieve Palestinian statehood.

Following the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and Israel's occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, Yasser Arafat adeptly consolidated the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the exclusive legitimate representative of the Palestinian populace through political strategy, military operations, and diplomatic initiatives. In 1969, Arafat assumed leadership of the PLO as the chairman of Fatah, the predominant Palestinian group, centralizing the organization and developing it into a cohesive political and military entity with the explicit objective of Palestinian self-determination. The support Arafat gained by guerilla warfare and prominent assaults on Israel assisted his revolutionary

persona. While augmenting the PLO's legitimacy through humanitarian and welfare initiatives in Palestinian refugee camps, Arafat effectively handled opposing factions, including the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), by integrating them into the PLO framework while retaining authority over the Executive Committee. His most significant achievement occurred in 1974, when the Arab League formally acknowledged the PLO as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people," a status that was further reinforced by the United Nations granting the PLO observer status later that year. This global acknowledgment reduced rival factions, compelling them to function under the PLO's aegis, while dissenting or radical parties, such as certain Marxist factions, experienced a decline in power. Despite subsequent Islamist parties such as Hamas contesting the PLO's secular nationalism, Arafat's leadership guaranteed the PLO's preeminence in Palestinian political representation throughout the 1970s and thereafter. (Khalidi, 2006; Cobban, 1984).

After the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) focused on establishing itself as the only legitimate representation of the Palestinian people. Under the skillful use of diplomacy, particularly under Arafat's leadership, the PLO achieved observer status at the United Nations in 1974. This was a notable, albeit symbolic, progress in its worldwide reputation. The status granted to the Palestinians enabled them to promote their case on an international level (Quigley, 2010). This time demonstrated the importance of diplomatic recognition as a vital means of legitimizing a national liberation movement, even though it did not immediately result in effective statehood.

From 1974 to the 2000s, the Palestinian leadership underwent substantial changes in its political approach, influenced by achievements, failures, and evolving regional and international forces. In 1974, the Arab League and the United Nations acknowledged the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people," conferring upon it observer status at the UN. This diplomatic achievement allowed the PLO to

participate in international forums and enhance global awareness of the Palestinian cause. (Cobban, 1984; Khalidi, 2006). Nevertheless, the subsequent decades saw significant hurdles. The PLO's participation in the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990) and Israel's 1982 incursion into Lebanon substantially diminished its military and political standing, necessitating the transfer of its headquarters to Tunis. (Sayigh, 1997).

The emergence of Islamist factions, notably Hamas, during the First Intifada (1987–1993) exacerbated the fragmentation of Palestinian leadership and posed ideological challenges to the secular PLO. (Tessler, 2009). Notwithstanding the ratification of the Oslo Accords (1993–1995), which established the Palestinian Authority (PA) and permitted restricted autonomy in certain regions of the West Bank and Gaza, the peace process did not fulfill Palestinian ambitions for statehood. The ongoing construction of Israeli settlements, along with the failure of discussions at the 2000 Camp David Summit, resulted in disillusionment and the outbreak of the Second Intifada (2000–2005).

The collapse of the peace process, coupled with the significant power disparity between Israel and the Palestinians, necessitated the Palestinian leadership's strategy of internationalizing the conflict in the 2000s. The failure of bilateral negotiations underscored the Palestinians' incapacity to attain their objectives through direct interaction with Israel, due to Israel's military and economic superiority and its increasing settlements in the West Bank. Furthermore, regional backing for the Palestinian cause waned as Arab nations grew more focused on internal issues, including the Iraq War and the initial manifestations of the Arab Spring. Globally, attention switched to counterterrorism after the events of 9/11, severely sidelining the Palestinian struggle. (Sayigh, 1997)

Confronted with these challenges, the Palestinian leadership under the Palestinian Authority, initially headed by Yasser Arafat and subsequently by Mahmoud Abbas, sought international institutions as a new avenue for promoting their political aims. This strategy depended on utilizing international

legal frameworks, including the United Nations and the International Criminal Court (ICC), to obtain legitimacy and contest Israeli policy. Diplomatic lobbying, especially in Europe, emerged as a vital instrument for securing international backing. The apex of this endeavor occurred in 2012 when the UN General Assembly conferred upon Palestine the designation of a non-member observer state, a symbolic but consequential advancement toward world acknowledgment. The Palestinian leadership aimed to garner support for statehood, hold Israel accountable under international law, and influence global perceptions of the conflict by transitioning the dispute into international forums. This strategy shift highlighted the constraints of military opposition and bilateral discussions, establishing diplomacy and international legitimacy as the principal means for attaining Palestinian self-determination in the 21st century. (Cobban, 1984; Sayigh, 1997).

By adopting the Palestinian leadership for the strategy of internationalizing the conflict, with the goal of gaining wider international sympathy and support, this encompassed a substantial effort to achieve acknowledgment of statehood in global organizations. This strategy not only strengthened the international legal and diplomatic position of the Palestinian pursuit of statehood, but also emphasized the utilization of international legal and diplomatic frameworks as means to promote national objectives. (Kattan, 2009).

3.2 STRATEGIC MANEUVERS: THE MICROPOLITICS OF PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP IN PURSUIT OF STATEHOOD

The Palestinian leadership undertook comprehensive institution-building initiatives as a fundamental tactic to demonstrate the feasibility of a Palestinian state. Institution-building was based on the premise that establishing the administrative, political, and economic underpinnings of statehood would benefit Palestinians and showcase their readiness for sovereignty to the international community. This trend accelerated notably with the signing of the Oslo Accords in the 1990s, which established the PA as a governing entity with

restricted autonomy over segments of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The PA's created diverse initiatives in institutional development including governing frameworks, economic systems, and social services. Given the current situation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is a suitable moment to scrutinize and assess the definition of international legal standards for the creation of new nations, as well as the acknowledgment of Palestinian statehood.

State recognition is commonly understood as a political reality that has legal implications. In the setting of state recognition in the real world, the legal element accurately represents the conditions of the proto-state, including its political foundation. This makes it difficult to clearly differentiate between the political reality and the legal implications. Examining the potential for a proto-state necessitates a thorough examination of international legal procedures, which can provide guidance for the resolution of specific instances. The proposed change in proto-Palestine is an example of such a situation.

In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, both parties contest the factual and legal issues, as well as the significance of rapidly addressing them. The parties' hesitance (as evidenced by their established leadership) to acknowledge legitimate concerns of cohabitation corresponds with a pervasive ambiguity around legal regulations that offer efficient answers. By adopting an appropriate approach for international law, we can effectively identify and understand issues that require resolutions in accordance with a dynamic legal and political environment.

The desire for Palestinian statehood and the quest for sovereignty have been significantly impacted by historical colonial legacies and geopolitical considerations. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is defined by territorial conflicts and external interventions, both of which have been significantly influenced by these factors. To conduct a comprehensive analysis, it is necessary to consider the historical context, colonial legacies, geopolitical forces, and how they have influenced the aspirations for Palestinian statehood.

3.2.1 Governance Frameworks

Ministries, legislative institutions, and security forces were crucial to the PA's state-building agenda. The creation of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) was a major step toward parliamentary democracy. Brown (2003) asserts that the PLC served as a forum for formulating laws and policies that bolstered Palestinian government, however its efficacy was hindered by external limitations, including Israeli occupation and internal political disunity.

The Palestinian leadership also sought to consolidate control through centralized government. This need ministries for education, health, and infrastructure. These institutions represented established government frameworks, demonstrating governance readiness. (Brown, 2003).

3.2.2 Financial Institutions

Economic development constituted a vital element of the institution-building process. The PA emphasized the establishment of financial institutions, including the Palestinian Monetary Authority (PMA), which oversees banking and monetary policy in the territories. The PMA was regarded as a progression towards fiscal autonomy, establishing the foundation for a prospective Palestinian currency (Brynen, 2000). Additionally, the PA executed development initiatives in partnership with international benefactors to enhance infrastructure, augment public services, and foster economic growth.

Notwithstanding these endeavors, the Palestinian leadership encountered considerable obstacles in attaining economic self-sufficiency owing to Israel's dominance over borders, commerce, and natural resources. Roy (1999) emphasizes that the constraints imposed by Israel significantly curtailed the PA's ability to execute extensive economic changes, resulting in a reliance of many of its institutions on external assistance.

3.2.3 Law Enforcement Agencies

Security was a primary emphasis in institution-building, intended to preserve internal order and meet commitments under accords with Israel. The PA instituted multiple security forces, including the Preventive Security Force, tasked with both internal police and fighting opposition factions such as Hamas. Sayigh (1997) posits that the establishment of security institutions was crucial for the PA to reinforce its internal authority and enhance its international legitimacy. This was a difficult domain, as the forces frequently faced criticism for dictatorial behavior and insufficient accountability. The PA additionally allocated resources towards the advancement of health, education, and welfare systems. These activities were both pragmatic necessities and emblematic of a functional state. The Ministry of Education implemented reforms to establish a Palestinian-centric curriculum, enhancing national identity and unity (Massad, 2006). Likewise, the Ministry of Health endeavored to enhance healthcare services despite constrained resources and the obstacles presented by the Israeli siege.

3.2.4 Constraints and Reproaches

Although these institution-building initiatives demonstrated the PA's dedication to statehood, they faced criticism and constraints. External forces, including Israeli military dominance and political meddling, substantially limited the PA's ability to exert true autonomy. Internal schisms, especially between Fatah and Hamas, severely undermined the institutional system. Furthermore, several academics contend that the PA's emphasis on institution-building during occupation may have entrenched the status quo instead of promoting liberation (Tartir, 2015).

Nevertheless, the diplomatic accomplishments in establishing control over Palestinian territory have been significantly hindered by the ongoing construction of Israeli settlements and the political rift between the two primary Palestinian organizations, Fatah and Hamas. The division between the West

Bank, which is ruled by the Palestinian Authority (PA), and Gaza, which has been under the control of Hamas since 2007, has greatly hindered the Palestinian leadership's capacity to establish full control over its territory and population (Brown, 2003). The internal strife within the Palestinian community has not only undermined their bargaining power in discussions with Israel but has also diminished the significance of their diplomatic progress on the global platform.

Ultimately, despite the utilization of diplomatic tactics, negotiations, and alliances, the Palestinian leadership has only been able to achieve symbolic triumphs and restricted self-governance. However, these endeavors have proven inadequate in surmounting the strategic challenges presented by internal conflicts and the ongoing occupation. Attaining statehood and sovereignty is a challenging endeavor that is greatly impacted by external geopolitical factors and the ability to articulate a cohesive national plan (Le More, 2008). Today, one of the major challenges for Palestinian diplomacy is translating international support and legal recognition into tangible progress on the ground. This effort has become even more difficult as the political landscape of the Middle East continues to shift. With changing global priorities and new regional alliances, Palestinian policymakers face growing pressure to turn diplomatic victories into real, lasting progress in governance and self-determination. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has become more and more focused on the acknowledgment of Palestinian statehood. Particularly with the participation of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the Supreme Court of Canada, international focus has grown. I believe that these events have enhanced the legal and political status of the Palestinian cause. They have also created fresh tensions, therefore highlighting the delicate balance in international relations between political possibility and legal intricacy.

The growing international recognition of Palestinian sovereignty has had a profound impact on diplomatic strategies, sovereignty claims, and human rights efforts. It also contributed significantly to the increasing acknowledgement of Palestinian statehood. These diplomatic actions continue to shape the broader direction of the conflict. Legal decisions by the International

Court of Justice and the Supreme Court of Canada have provided strong support for Palestinian self-determination movements. They have also played a major role in shaping global discussions around justice, sovereignty, and the rights of peoples under international law.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has been instrumental in determining the legal status of the Palestinian territories and clarifying Israel's obligations under international law. In its landmark Advisory Opinion issued in 2004, the International Court of Justice determined that the construction of the separation barrier within the occupied Palestinian territories violated international law. This ruling also reaffirmed the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, giving more legal weight to their claims for statehood and sovereignty. The ICJ ruling created a significant impact on the international discourse about the Palestinian cause and provided Palestinians with more ground to hold Israel accountable for breaches of international law. The ICJ further stated that Israel, as the occupying power, must fully comply with international humanitarian and human rights law, confirming the notion that Palestinians have the right to sovereignty over their own country (International Court of Justice, 2004). This ruling provided further strength to the Palestinian claims for sovereignty and helped draw greater international attention to Israel's conduct in the occupied territories. The ICJ's declarations have a significant moral and legal impact, influencing the positions of states and international organizations, despite the absence of enforcement power in advisory opinions (International Court of Justice, 2004).

Simultaneously, national courts, like the Canadian Supreme Court, have tackled legal issues pertinent to Palestinian recognition, though in a more indirect manner. The Canadian government officially endorses a negotiated two-state solution; yet, legal challenges concerning trade, immigration, or human rights have integrated Palestinian issues into the Canadian judicial system. The Canadian judiciary has considered issues with the labeling of items from Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory. In 2019, the Federal Court of Canada determined that wines produced in settlements cannot be designated as

“products of Israel,” as this misrepresentation infringes upon consumer rights and contravenes international standards for the acknowledgment of occupied areas (Canadian Federal Court, 2019). This decision, although not an explicit recognition of Palestinian statehood, demonstrates judicial cognizance of the prevailing international legal consensus regarding the illegality of settlements and their ramifications for Palestinian sovereignty (Canadian Federal Court, 2019). By considering these matters, national courts like those in Canada indirectly enhance the ongoing discourse regarding Palestinian self-determination and the disputed legal status of occupied territories.

The increasing involvement of international and national judicial institutions indicates a broader trend in which legal frameworks are utilized to address the conflict and advance claims for Palestinian statehood. These rulings underscore the growing alignment between international legal norms and Palestinian aspirations for autonomy. Moreover, they underscore the role of law as a mechanism for challenging Israel's actions and promoting awareness of Palestinian rights globally. Although Israel and its allies frequently challenge these verdicts, they augment the escalating international pressure on Israel to adhere to international law and participate substantively in peace negotiations (Khalidi, 2006; Tessler, 2009).

3.2.5 Public Relations and Advocacy

Public relations efforts have served as a vital micropolitical strategy in shaping global perceptions of the Palestinian struggle for independence. The Palestinian leadership has strategically leveraged media and cultural diplomacy to amplify the lived experiences of Palestinians under occupation and to reinforce the legitimacy of their claims to sovereignty. Said (2000) underscores the power of narrative construction in garnering international sympathy and support—a perspective that continues to be echoed in contemporary academic analyses of statehood campaigns. By controlling and disseminating their own narratives, Palestinian diplomats and activists have sought to counter dominant geopolitical discourses and build a more compelling case for self-determination

on the global stage. Palestinian representatives have strategically engaged with the international forums, academic platforms, and cultural events, in order to effectively frame their cause in relation to universal values, such as self-determination, human rights, and justice. By doing this, they have managed to reach wider audiences and emphasize the fundamental rights they continue to struggle for.

The strategy of connecting a local struggle to international norms reflects what Galtung (1996) discusses with his concept of “constructive peace”, where movements gain strength by aligning with widely shared values. Historical examples illustrate that this approach in diplomacy has helped Palestinian leaders challenge those international efforts to weaken and delegitimize the Palestinian cause. By framing their struggle as part of a broader global movement for decolonization, Palestinian leaders have placed their aspirations firmly within international political debates (Khalidi, 2017).

Advocacy efforts in the Palestinian situation indicate a smart and well-coordinated campaign that combines public relations and cultural diplomacy. Palestinian representatives attempted to drive policymaking and impact global public opinion by shaping their narrative at the United Nations and other major international forums. Andersen (2020) notes that through these initiatives, Palestinian leadership succeeded in building coalitions and securing support for statehood from a range of international organizations. These examples show how lobbying, diplomatic outreach, and narrative construction are all central elements of the micropolitics involved in building statehood.

Nagan and Haddad (2011) also present a relevant example. These authors examine the ICJ’s decision regarding Kosovo’s unilateral declaration of independence and their analysis offers useful lessons for Palestinians, especially as they make an effort to formulate legal strategies to strengthen their claims to sovereignty.

The Palestinian leaders have given priority to institutional development as a foundation for their statehood project. This led them to concentrate on building civil and security structures, which could deliver essential services for people

and support stable governance. By 2011, the United Nations and several other international organizations had already acknowledged the progress made by the Palestinian Authority (PA), particularly in key areas of education, health, and security. They mentioned that the PA's institutional performance had reached a level comparable to that of internationally recognized sovereign states. The advancements that the Palestinian leadership placed have played a role in strengthening the foundations for a future Palestinian state. By doing that, it enhanced its governance capabilities and institutional resilience (Khalidi, 2017).

The international law has been utilized by Palestinians to aid their assertions for statehood. In 2015, Palestine acquired the capacity to examine accusations of Israeli war crimes in the occupied territories by joining the International Criminal Court (ICC). The objective of this legal strategy is two-fold: to seek justice and to enhance the international standing of the Palestinian state via active engagement with international legal institutions (Kattan, 2009). Concurrently, the Palestinian leadership has pursued bilateral acknowledgement from certain governments. As of the late 2010s, about 130 nations have officially recognized the state of Palestine. The diplomatic campaign has garnered significant acclaim, particularly from nations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Despite lacking territorial control and facing continued occupation, Palestine's status as a state has been significantly solidified in accordance with international law, thanks to its essential role.

The Oslo Accords of 1993 were significant in the Palestinian quest for statehood as they involved direct negotiations with Israel. The Oslo agreements, which resulted from clandestine negotiations in Oslo, Norway, enabled the PLO and Israel to formally acknowledge each other's existence and also led to the creation of the Palestinian Authority (PA). The main goal of the Palestinian Authority (PA) was to bestow upon the Palestinians the ability to govern themselves in designated areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. However, the lack of a definitive agreement on the ultimate outcome has led to a multitude of unresolved issues, including boundaries, the status of Jerusalem, security, and refugees (Sayigh, 1997).

CHAPTER 4

4. DIPLOMATIC STRATEGIES AND SOVEREIGNTY CHALLENGES

4.1 NEGOTIATIONS AND SOVEREIGNTY

The Oslo Accords illustrate the application of negotiations in the pursuit of sovereignty. Thomas Franck (1990) posits that the legitimacy of a state's authority can be bolstered by international treaties and agreements that are regarded as equitable and ethically sound. The Oslo process initially appeared to align with this paradigm by seeking to establish a basis for peaceful coexistence and mutual recognition between Israel and the Palestinians. The effort stagnated and failed to address critical issues, including boundaries and security. Consequently, it failed to establish Palestinian control that is acknowledged both globally and by local populations.

4.2 OSLO 1994

The Palestinian leadership utilized diplomatic tactics and micro-political strategies during the Oslo Accords negotiations from 1993 to 1994 to establish political legitimacy and obtain concessions from Israel while managing asymmetrical power dynamics. The leadership, under Yasser Arafat and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), aimed to reestablish itself as a credible negotiating partner after experiencing marginalization post-Gulf War of 1991. The PLO employed a pragmatic strategy by acknowledging Israel's right to exist in return for Israel's recognition of the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. This mutual recognition constituted a significant diplomatic strategy that resolved years of impasse and established a basis for subsequent negotiations (Sayigh, 1997). The Palestinian leadership engaged in micro-politics by concentrating on incremental gains, exemplified by the

establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in Gaza and portions of the West Bank, which facilitated limited self-governance. This incremental strategy demonstrated the Palestinian leadership's recognition of their disadvantaged negotiating stance and the importance of focusing on attainable results rather than immediate statehood aspirations (Khalidi, 2006). The PLO utilized its international networks, leveraging relationships with European states and regional powers to secure political and financial support for the emerging Palestinian Authority. Arafat's team concurrently managed internal Palestinian politics, addressing the needs of grassroots organizations, civil society, and rising opposition movements such as Hamas, which condemned the Oslo process as a betrayal. The strategic integration of these tactics enabled the Palestinian leadership to secure limited autonomy while framing the Oslo Accords as a precursor to statehood, despite substantial concessions on critical matters such as borders, refugees, and Jerusalem (Tessler, 2009).

Joel Beinin agrees that the Oslo agreement functions as a pathway to achieve sovereignty for Palestine. The Declaration of Principles (DOP), established on September 13, 1993, between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, mirrored the existing global and regional power dynamics, as is customary in diplomatic agreements. The key factors in this case were Israel's significant military advantage over its Arab neighbors and its alliance with the United States. The DOP established a negotiation framework and a five-year transitional phase lacking a specific objective, postponing critical Palestinian issues of land, self-governance, and the refugee situation for subsequent final status negotiations. The initiation of these negotiations, originally scheduled for May 1996, was postponed until late 1999. According to Yasser Arafat and his advisors, the Oslo process is still expected to result in the creation of a Palestinian state that includes a large chunk of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, even if there are many unknowns and unanswered questions in the agreements. (Beinin, J. 1996).

The post-colonial framework offers a significant perspective for analyzing the agreements reached in Oslo and their consequences for Palestinian statehood

and sovereignty. Post-colonial theorists, such as Edward Said (1995) and Rashid Khalidi (2006), contend that agreements such as Oslo typically operate within a global framework influenced by colonial legacies, so sustaining power imbalances instead of resolving them. The Oslo Accords, executed in the 1990s, were acclaimed as a progression towards peace and state formation for Palestine. Nonetheless, post-colonial analysis demonstrates that these agreements solidified neocolonial processes, positioning Palestinian self-determination inside a framework that prioritizes Israeli security interests and international donor agendas over authentic sovereignty.

According to Edward Said (2000), the Oslo Accords represent neocolonialism. He claims that, while the Oslo Accords looked to grant the Palestinian Authority some autonomy, it was nonetheless required to work inside political systems that reinforced Israeli supremacy. Rashid Khalidi (2010) contends that the accords failed to handle fundamental concerns such as borders, refugees, and settlements, indicating that deeper problems were not adequately addressed.

Indeed, these difficulties mirror the larger problems of postcolonial government. Since the 1990s, Palestinian policymakers have been caught between two opposing realities, as illustrated by Homi Bhabha's (1994) idea of hybridity. While they have attempted to act as a partially sovereign entity, they have been severely limited by external subjection.

4.3 THE CONSEQUENCES OF INTERNAL DISUNITY

The political differences between Fatah and Hamas continue to make it impossible for Palestinians to successfully rule themselves. These internal divides are strongly related to Robert Jackson's (1990) idea of "quasi-states," which refers to political organizations that have international legal sovereignty but struggle with internal control due to inadequate institutions. In the Palestinian scenario, this leadership schism has gravely hampered efforts to administer effectively and exert authority over the territory they claim. Similar

patterns of internal strife may be seen in other divided states, where domestic problems undermine national unity and stymie efforts to achieve full sovereignty.

The persistent internal division between Fatah and Hamas has significantly influenced the trajectory of Palestinian statehood, impacting its political, social, and economic dimensions. Since the violent split in 2007, two distinct and frequently opposing political entities have governed Palestinian territories: the Fatah-led Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in the West Bank and the Hamas-controlled administration in the Gaza Strip. This fragmentation has not only disrupted efforts to present a unified front in peace negotiations but has also eroded the credibility and effectiveness of Palestinian leadership and governance structures. The resulting political instability has hindered progress toward statehood, weakened institutional development, and exacerbated socio-economic challenges, further complicating the Palestinian quest for self-determination (Andersen, 2020). Division's biggest impact is the dissolution of a coherent Palestinian national agenda. Lack of unity has hindered efforts to show a united front to Israel and the international world. Bishara(2020) claims that this fragmentation damages Palestinians' sense of unity, reducing their potential to attract international support for statehood. Lack of a single authority to represent the West Bank and Gaza makes it difficult to implement agreements or policies that need coordinated action across Palestinian territory.

Furthermore, the division aggravates Gaza's already dire humanitarian and economic situation. The blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt, combined with Hamas' isolation from the international community, has resulted in a severe economic catastrophe. Failure to cooperate with the PNA exacerbates these issues, as development assistance and resources are typically restricted or misallocated due to competing governance frameworks (UNICEF, 2022).

The internal discord adversely affects Palestinian political engagement and democratic procedures. Elections have consistently been delayed since the division, denying Palestinians the opportunity to refresh their leadership and select representatives capable of reconciling the schism. Quran(2018) contends

that this absence of political rejuvenation fosters stagnation and disappointment within the Palestinian community, especially among the youth, who perceive the leadership as inept in fulfilling their objectives.

Separation also gives Israel an excuse to continue occupying the land and building settlements. In order to justify their continued failure to reach a two-state solution, Israeli officials often use the Palestinian leadership's incoherence as evidence that they have no reliable peace partner (Khalidi, 2017).

Mitigating the repercussions of this internal discord necessitates substantial reconciliation endeavors. Restoring confidence between Fatah and Hamas, establishing a unified administration, and conducting democratic elections are essential measures for reinstating Palestinian credibility and furthering their aspirations for statehood. Until such steps are implemented, the split will persist in undermining the Palestinian quest for independence and sovereignty.

Geopolitical restrictions are the restraints on a country's sovereignty that result from foreign geopolitical pressures. In 2009, academics Alexander Cooley and Hendrik Spruyt conducted considerable investigation on this phenomenon. The political state of affairs in the Palestinian territories demonstrates how much influence outside powers, particularly Israel and the United States, have on decision-making processes. Although Palestine has acquired a significant level of international support and recognition in recent years, there are still major obstacles that stand in the way of full sovereignty.

One important step toward greater independence could be the creation of a Palestinian currency in order to reduce dependence on the Israeli shekel. Establishing a national currency would not only strengthen economic autonomy but also grant greater control over financial stability, inflation, and monetary policy. Having its own currency would not only allow Palestinians to have more control over their economies, but it would also provide Palestinian leaders with more say over issues like inflation, financial planning, and long-term stability. Furthermore, a national currency would be a strong symbol of independence and a real step toward solidifying Palestinian statehood in the eyes of the world.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In this thesis, I argue that self-determination lies at the heart of Palestinian aspirations for statehood—a right firmly rooted in international law and affirmed by UN resolutions like Resolution 3236 (1974). By resisting colonial oppression and foreign occupation, Palestinians assert their undeniable claim to sovereignty and independence. Yet despite its strong legal and moral grounding, turning self-determination into reality remains fraught with challenges. Political instability, contested borders, and the lingering scars of colonialism continue to hinder progress. These obstacles reveal a stark disconnect between the ideals upheld by international law and the messy, often harsh realities on the ground. The study shows that the Palestinian struggle is closely connected to the broader concept of sovereignty, not only in theory, but also in everyday political realities. The UN's 2012 recognition of Palestine as a non-member observer state was an important diplomatic step, but it also showed the limits of symbolic victories. For, recognition on its own is never sufficient for attaining real sovereignty.

In practice, true self-determination requires control over governance, territory, and decision-making—conditions Palestine still cannot fully meet. Despite diplomatic achievements, such as gaining non-member observer status at the UN, Israeli occupation and internal political divisions remain major barriers to statehood. My research suggests that while international recognition strengthens Palestine's claim to sovereignty, its effectiveness hinges on three key factors: establishing functional governance, resolving political fragmentation, and securing broader global backing.

The struggle for Palestinian statehood cannot be viewed in isolation. It is woven into the region's complicated history and shaped by the geopolitical forces that have long influenced it. Colonial legacies — most notably from the British Mandate and the Balfour Declaration — laid the groundwork for fragmentation and political exclusion that continue to affect the region today. In the aftermath of the Cold War, global rivalries further deepened these divides,

as world powers used the Arab-Israeli conflict to pursue their own strategic goals in the Middle East. More recently, normalization agreements between Israel and several Arab countries have introduced new challenges. By prioritizing direct ties with Israel, many Arab states have sidelined collective efforts to support Palestinian self-determination. Taken together, these dynamics expose the entrenched, systemic obstacles that still stand in the way of a fair and lasting resolution. International organizations — especially the United Nations — have played an important role in supporting Palestinian efforts toward statehood. Yet this backing has often run up against major hurdles, particularly due to the veto power held by key members of the UN Security Council and deep geopolitical divisions. The Council’s repeated failure to agree on Palestine’s bid for full membership is a clear example of this deadlock. At the same time, grassroots movements like the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign have gained traction, emerging as powerful non-state actors. These initiatives offer alternative paths to challenge traditional diplomatic roadblocks and influence international public opinion. Together, these shifts highlight how non-state actors have become increasingly vital to advancing the Palestinian cause on the world stage. The global power disparities that frequently push smaller countries to the margins continue to influence the fight for Palestinian statehood. Palestine still faces long-standing structural obstacles in its quest for autonomy under the present great-power-dominated Westphalian framework. This endeavor is made more difficult by ongoing territorial fragmentation, which is made worse by the growth of Israeli settlements and the building of the separation wall. Despite initially being seen as a significant step toward peace and statehood, the Oslo Accords ultimately failed to address important concerns such as Jerusalem’s status, refugee rights, and clearly defined territorial borders. Instead of creating a durable peace, the accords increased mistrust and fueled new cycles of violence.

This study has shown how complex the path to Palestinian statehood really is. This path is shaped by history, international politics, legal structures, and deep inequalities that still have not been addressed. Although international

recognition and legal arguments help build a basis for Palestinian sovereignty, putting these principles into action remains difficult. Unresolved territorial disputes, political divisions within Palestine, and pressure from outside powers continue to stand in the way.

To address these barriers, it is essential to rethink how the international system treats smaller governments and marginalized populations, so they can acquire a real chance to claim their rights to self-determination. Understanding the historical injustices is key to addressing these challenges not only for Palestine, but for other post-colonial states as well.

The Palestinian case embodies the complex interplay of historical, regional, and global factors that have influenced postcolonial diplomacy. Understanding these dynamics is essential to analyzing the broader challenges facing statehood and sovereignty in the twenty-first century. This analysis focuses on the groundwork for examining the geopolitical factors' effect on international responses to the Palestinian struggle and their implications for global diplomacy. In order to build sovereignty and a state, the Palestinian leadership inked multi tactics that appear frequently in international relations theory.

But definite geopolitical obstacles, internal divisions, and the complexity of the Israeli-Palestinian issue have limited their achievements. This contrast with more general studies on sovereignty suggests that successfully achieving sovereignty requires both external political independence and internal political unity. For the Palestinian leadership, these issues remain relevant. A vital update in the Israel-Palestine conflict is the recognition of a Palestinian state by the International Court of Justice and national courts, including the Supreme Court of Canada. By supporting Palestinian self-determination and holding states accountable for violations of international law, these courts are redefining international law. Thanks to these initiatives, the state of Palestine has become a central issue on the world stage, demonstrating how law, politics, and justice are intertwined in the struggle for sovereignty. The unequal nature of legal recognition reveals the growing importance of international legal systems in

shaping global debates and supporting Palestinian aspirations for self-determination in a contested geopolitical landscape. The Palestinian struggle remains a powerful reminder of the continuing complexity of postcolonial state aspirations as global balances of power shift. The Palestinian cause forces us to question the veracity of international rules and institutions at a time when the world is shifting from a unipolar to a multipolar order. One example of how the geopolitical scene is changing and what it can mean for the future of the Palestinian issue is China's growing involvement in diplomacy with the Middle East.

Can Palestine Attain Statehood?

The potential for Palestinian statehood is still attainable, as Palestine has exhibited the ability to cultivate the fundamental attributes of sovereignty and statehood. Although obstacles persist, there is potential for advancement through changes in Israeli politics, public sentiment, and ongoing endeavors to terminate the occupation and establish a contiguous and independent Palestinian state. Following the European Economic Community's Venice Declaration in June 1980, many European nations have acknowledged the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. Explicit acknowledgment has been granted by 136 countries, with numerous others providing implicit endorsement. In November 2012, the United Nations General Assembly formally recognized Palestine as a "non-member state," and the International Court of Justice affirmed Palestinian sovereignty in its 2004 advisory opinion on Israel's construction of a wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. As of May 2024, 146 United Nations member states have officially acknowledged Palestine as a sovereign state, with recent endorsements from Spain, Ireland, and Norway, indicating sustained international backing for a two-state solution.

The quest for statehood is influenced by both internal and external obstacles. Israel's settlement expansion and occupation practices significantly contribute to the stagnation of the peace process, while internal Palestinian divisions exacerbate the situation. The division of leadership between Hamas in Gaza and Fatah in the West Bank has obstructed the formation of a cohesive

PNA, an essential need for legitimate peace negotiations. A truly inclusive and unified PNA showing both territories is key to rebuilding trust and encouraging serious engagement with the world.

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