



The Indian model of coexistence

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(Mains GS 2 : Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting the Indian interests)

Context:

- The cycle of violence between the Israeli and Palestine is neither the first nor likely to be the last of its kind.
- The Palestinians have been losing not only their lives and livelihood but also the very land for which this violence has been raging for over a century now.

The territory in dispute:

- The territory in question is The Holy Land to the three religions of Abrahamic monotheism, viz., Judaism, Christianity and Islam.
- All three religions Jews, Christians and Muslims have accepted that it is the Promised Land of the Beni Israel branch of the descendants of Abraham.
- The Al-Aqsa mosque in Quran is Solomon's Temple which was the first Qibla (direction of prayer) of the Muslims.

A brief history:

- Britain renounced its Mandate over Palestine in 1948, paving the way for the United Nations to divide Palestine between the Jews and Arabs, giving them about 55% and 45% of the land, respectively.
- The Jews, meanwhile, had declared the establishment of the state of Israel for which they had been working for long.
- The Palestinians, who lacked the resources to conceive of a state, failed to form a state of their own in the land allotted to them.
- Instead, a coalition of Arab countries invaded the nascent state of Israel to nip it in the bud.
- Israel not only defeated the Arab armies, but also unleashed what the Palestinians call *Nakba*, an Arabic word which means holocaust.
- Israel destroyed about 600 Palestinian villages and expelled about 80% of Arabs from its territory.

The six day war and aftermath:

- In 1967, in the Six-Day War, Israel captured not just more Palestinian land but also Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and Syria's Golan Heights.
- During the Yom Kippur War of 1973, the Arabs came to realise that Israel is here to stay.
- But the Arab states, while washing their hands off Palestine, failed to impress the same realisation upon their Palestinian brethren, a sizeable number of whom remain committed to seeking a solution through counter-violence.

Vicious cycle of violence needs to end:

- This vicious cycle of violence is not going to end unless there is realism on both sides.
- Hamas should know that Israel will not give up on holding on to land it has held for years, and Israel should understand that total subjugation, expulsion or even decimation of Palestinians will not make it any safer.
- Both sides will have to seek a solution through non-violence.
- A solution based on the common humanity of all stakeholders, one that is not riven by racial and religious schisms, needs to be explored.
- Secularisation of the discourse is an inescapable prerequisite for any workable solution and this is especially more applicable for the weaker side.

Accommodation of all

- The Indian model of democracy and secularism, which accommodates religious, ethnic, linguistic and other diversities, could be a viable model for the peaceful coexistence of formerly antagonistic groups.
- The European model of the annihilation of natives in the Americas and Australia, last tried on the Jews in Nazi Germany, is not a solution which we can morally countenance and practically resort to.
- India, on the other hand, evolved a unique model of accommodating the victors and the vanquished, without ever resorting to the latter's decimation.

A modus vivendi has to evolve:

- A modus vivendi has to evolve on the basis of hard realities, the first of which is that neither the Jews nor the Palestinians are going to vanish into thin air.
- The Palestinians now are sparsely spread over the land in scores of non-contiguous pockets, making a cohesive state unviable.
- The two-state solution can be possible only if Israel frees the occupied territories and removes the Jewish settlements from there, an unlikely scenario in the foreseeable future.

Indian model as an option:

- If the two-state solution is nowhere in the offing, a single state after the Indian model, i.e., a secular, democratic and pluralistic state, may be the only feasible option.
- A nation state only for the Jews would be a relapse into the ghetto mode, with all its concomitant implications.
- The Palestinian refugees have a right to return.
- That the altered demographics would impinge on the religio-racial character of Israel is not an argument which behoves a modern democratic state founded on common humanity with equal rights and opportunities for everyone.

Conclusion:

- It is true that a nation state belongs to the group which constituted itself into a nation and the group's ethos would reflect in national life without it rubbing it in.
- A nation is an imagined community and as imagination expands, the foundations of the nation become deeper.
- Thus for resolving this violent conflict between Israel and Palestine, there could be no better model than India where a peaceful coexistence has been practiced for centuries.