

“Israeli-Palestinian Conflict” under UN Vision

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Abstract

“Israeli-Palestinian Conflict” is one of the longest and most controversial global issues of UN and also a complex mixture of conflict of national interests and ideological differences. With the help of the unique advantages in politics and communications, UN information communication system is promoting “Israeli-Palestinian Conflict” in a balanced way by means of balanced communication of the two parties in dispute, full disclosure of real intention of two parties in dispute, equal expression of opinion of two parties in dispute and separation of facts from values, etc.

Keywords

UN Information System; Israeli-Palestinian Conflict; Balanced Promotion.

1. Introduction

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and Israel versus the entire Arab world have been an international hot spot for decades and both the causes and current situation of such conflict are too complex to see any resolution at all for a very long time. Armed force and sanction are the worst options while handling international disputes and the realization of harmony among all peoples requires the great wisdom of politicians as well as the concerted efforts of the international community, which is the only option to eliminate hatred and achieve harmony. Information communication in an accurate, balanced and fair way is the necessary prerequisite to start a dialogue between the two parties in dispute. UN information communication system aims to develop global awareness, and put forward and promote global issues. Therefore, what kind of vision Israeli-Palestinian Conflict will present from the perspective of UN is of great academic and realistic significance.

2. Background of issue of “Israeli-Palestinian Conflict”

The two sides of Palestine and Israel have been arguing over borders, the status of Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees and Israeli settlements in the occupied territories. Among the groups on both sides of the dispute, some call for the complete elimination of the other; some support the one-nation plan, namely, establish a secular state with equal ethnic and religious status, including what is now Israel, West Bank, Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem. The current consensus reached in the world is in favor of the Two-State Solution for a Palestinian state. Arab States strongly support Palestinian statehood; aside from strong objections from the United States and Israel, the rest countries of NATO are holding a cautious attitude, and calling for conflict resolution before state building, and other countries basically agree with the resolution in principle. UN attaches great importance to the issue of "Israeli-Palestinian Conflict". Emergency Special Sessions of the UN General Assembly were only held ten times in its 72-year history, six of which were about the Middle East issues. The last Emergency Special Sessions of the UN General Assembly were held in 2009 and the major issue was about Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.

3. UN's Balance Strategy

With respect to the communication of issue of "Israeli-Palestinian Conflict", UN information communication system depoliticizes the communication of comprehensive and unbiased information in accordance with open, fair and impartial principles to its maximum extent.

3.1. Open Attitude - Disclosure of Controversial Information

A piece of weibo is only 140 characters long, a piece of news is thousands of words at most and dozens of words at least, and a piece of broadcast has dozens of minutes at most. Therefore, neither professional nor in-depth news reports can fully reveal the ins and outs, causes and consequences, and historical origins of controversial issues.

The United Nations established UN information system on the issues of Palestine, also known as "UN Palestine Information System", aiming to provide the international public with UN system documents related to Palestinian issues and release news, and achievements in monitoring, publishing and research on Palestinian issues. The website of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) releases information, urgent appeals and special reports on the activities implemented by UNRWA among registered Palestine refugees so as to reflect the evolution of the Palestinian issues since 1922. The United Nations Special Coordinator Office for the Middle East Peace Process provides regular reports on the Palestinian economy. "Palestine, Decolonization and Human Rights Sub-division" was specially established in Strategic Communications Division of Department of Global Communications to take responsibility for the overall implementation of the special information programme on Palestinian issues. The annually-held United Nations International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East provides an important platform for strengthening the dialogue between Palestine and Israel. In addition, UN has also published a large number of publications and audio-visual materials on Israeli-Palestinian Conflict so as to provide the international public with background on the dispute.

3.2. Fair Attitude - Expression of Controversial Views

The total number of news reports by using "Israeli-Palestinian Conflict + Palestine" as the key words is 39,192 and the total number of news reports by using "Israeli-Palestinian Conflict + Israel" as the key words is 35,282, which is similar and almost equal in number, after respectively using "Israeli-Palestinian Conflict + Palestine" and "Israeli-Palestinian Conflict + Israel" as the key words for information search and counting the number of news reports by UN on both sides of Palestine and Israel on UN official website. In terms of the number of information related to UN's focus on both sides of the dispute, UN website is able to provide balanced coverage of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. The number of news of "Palestine" is 989 and the number of news of "Israel" is 1,066 after using "Palestine" and "Israel" as key words for news search in official UN weibo in SINA respectively. The number of news is 40 by using "Israeli-Palestinian Conflict + Palestine" as the key words and the number of news is 37 by using "Israeli-Palestinian Conflict + Israel" as the key words, with almost equal amount of communication. (1)

"Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" is the typical international issue of dispute. Search of information between 2000 and 2018 on UN official website by using "Palestine" and "Israel" as key words indicates that the official website of UN has almost the same number of reports on Palestine and Israel every year, the total number of reports on Palestine and Israel is almost equal, and UN official website has basically achieved balanced coverage.

Table 1. Comparison of Coverage on UN Website on Palestine and Israel (2000 -2018)

years	Coverage of Palestinian information	Coverage of Israeli information
2001	56	98
2002	199	215
2003	105	158
2004	146	172
2005	83	134
2006	169	342
2007	135	192
2008	145	171
2009	148	239
2010	139	201
2011	152	171
2012	123	166
2013	110	114
2014	176	158
2015	154	124
2016	116	107
2017	77	81
2018	39	53

3.3. Impartial Attitude - Separation of Facts From Values

As the public field of meaning construction and competition in international community, essence of communication of international controversial issues by UN is a process of communication, competition and negotiation between heterogeneous speeches and pluralistic values. In terms of communication of international controversial issues, UN information communication system stops after the equal display of facts and views of both sides of the dispute, which further allows the dialogue and negotiation between heterogeneous speeches and pluralistic values in a real sense.

In the face of the huge difference between two sides of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, UN information communication system separates facts from values in an impartial manner and maintains a neutral position. The following speech is a typical example.

On November 30, 2017, UN Secretary-General António Guterres delivered a message on "International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People".

(On December 2, 1977, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution to set November 29th as International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (2), aiming to hold commemorative activities and mobilize international public opinion in support of the just struggle of the Palestinian people for their legitimate national rights. (Commemorative activities have been held annually since 1978).

"The Question of Palestine is inextricably linked with the history of the United Nations and is one of the longest unresolved issues on the Organization's agenda. Seventy years since the adoption of General Assembly Resolution 181, a sovereign and independent State of Palestine has yet to emerge alongside the State of Israel. I remain convinced that the two-state solution recognized by that resolution is the only premise for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace between Israelis and Palestinians. The resolution of this conflict would also create momentum for greater stability throughout the region.

Last August, during my visit to Israel and Palestine, leaders on both sides restated their commitment to a negotiated peace. I encouraged them to tangibly demonstrate this commitment and create the conditions for a return to meaningful negotiations. The recent positive developments on intra-Palestinian unity should be harnessed by all to move the process in the right direction.

I reiterate my readiness to work with all stakeholders, including the Middle East Quartet and countries in the region, to support a serious political process, drawing on all relevant UN resolutions, international law and agreements, that will realize a two-state solution, end half a century of occupation and resolve all final status issues. Now is the time to end the conflict by establishing an independent Palestinian State, living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel." (3)

Firstly, the message begins with an appeal to authority, citing international law, UN resolutions and other official documents to demonstrate the neutral position of UN such as the United Nations General Assembly resolution 181 cited in the first paragraph, the international law and international agreements cited in the third paragraph, etc. Secondly, the appeal to emotions through strong words such as "convinced", "encouraged" and "willing" aims to call for the disputing parties to resolve the conflict through negotiation as demonstrated in the second paragraph. Finally, the message gives the various stakeholders the space for rational debate on the controversial issues after stating UN expectations for the two disputing parties as demonstrated in the third paragraph.

4. Significance of Balanced Promotion of "Israeli-Palestinian Conflict"

4.1. Fully Exhibit Vision of "Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" from Perspective of UN

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict has lasted over half a century. At present, Israel stays in an advantageous position in economy, science and technology, communications and other fields. On contrary, the Arab world is too fragmented to be a counterweight to Israel and cannot form any tangible support for the Palestinians. The combination of a strong Israel and powerful American support keeps pressing Palestine, which is already in an absolutely weak position, and forms an extremely asymmetrical vision.

UN information communication system not only discloses, updates and tracks the background, continuation and changes of issue of "Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" to its current situation, strives to restore the true face of the issue and provides information as full, complete and true as possible, but also conveys substantive information such as the arguments and causes behind the disputes, so as to give the international audience a comprehensive understanding of issue of "Israeli-Palestinian Conflict". Different from seditious or verbal offensive and defensive information in surface, such information can help the public grasp the reference points of the issue and shape their own views, namely, information vision of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict conveyed by UN information communication system can be exhibited in a more complete and comprehensive way, which avoids one-sided information and becomes an important information window for the international community to understand the issue of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.

4.2. Balance International Opinion of Palestine and Israel

The gap existing in the strength of the state and the strength of the media between Palestine and Israel has led to a huge difference between the two sides in the struggle for favorable public opinion space. In addition, the United States adopts a double standard while spreading the word about the "Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" in favor of Israel, which aggravates the imbalance on the issue of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and results in obvious international opinion of "strong Israel and weak Palestine". The voice of the Palestine can be barely heard in international

community and the strong Israel is guiding the direction of international opinion with its unilateral statement.

The United Nations gives Israel and Palestine an equal access to UN information communication system to express views and participate in the policy review process, so as to prevent either party from dominating or controlling the public opinion. In addition, UN information communication system adheres to the open, fair and impartial principles in the process of promoting the issue of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, which, to some extent, makes up for the lack or weakness of the voice of Palestine in the field of international opinion and realizes the balance of international opinion between Palestine and Israel.

4.3. Start Conversations and Keep the Conflict from Escalating to Extremes

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict is actually a realistic epitome of the comparison of power in international relations. In this issue of dispute, much of what Israel and America do runs against international justice. The United States is the initiator of the Middle East Peace Process, but peace talks between Israel and Palestine have been stalled since the middle of April, 2014. The United States has long abandoned its fair position on issue of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, leading to further unbalanced geopolitics of the Middle East and accumulation of potential crisis. Policies adopted by Israel and the United States towards Israel have catered to some strong voices at home to some extent and Israel seems to have been benefiting from such policies in the short term. The Arab world is too fragmented to be a counterweight to Israel. Damage to stability by the United States and Israel sows a seed for future conflict, provides extremism with more excuses of mobilization, and creates a huge potential crisis.

As the inevitable part of the complex international community, disputes and conflicts have such positive functions as ensuring social continuity, reducing the possibility of opposite poles, preventing the rigidity of social system, enhancing the adaptability of social organizations and promoting social integration under certain conditions.(4) Disputes and conflicts are not terrible and the key lies in whether there is a mechanism and channel to smooth the conflicts and adjust the disputes and conflicts. As the most representative, authoritative and legitimate international organization, UN organizes the exchange of opinions and views, competition and consultation of the parties in Israeli-Palestinian Conflict to form a focus, generate diversified opinions, and change Israeli-Palestinian Conflict from stalemate and confrontation into dialogue, negotiation and even the final reconciliation.

References

- [1] The data are from the UN official website and the UN SINA weibo on Feb19, 2020
- [2] UN General Assembly No. 32/40B Resolution.
- [3] UN website: UN Secretary-general António Guterres delivered a message on “International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People”, <https://www.un.org/sg/zh/content/sg/declarations-and-messages>.
- [4] [US] Lewis Coser, *The Function of Social Conflict*, Social Sciences Academy Press, Version 1989, P16.