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[Commentary] Israel: A Problem the World Created (And Now Appears Unable to Solve)

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Abstract

The article takes the view that the conflict in Gaza, involving Israel and Hamas cannot be viewed objectively by assuming that the conflict started on October 7th, 2024. Rather is the conflict a reflection of the pattern of such events and related actions by Israel as the occupying power over 75 years since the declaration of the state of Israel on May 24th, and indeed related conflicts in Palestine prior to that declaration.

The article briefly examines to origins of Zionism as an ethnic nationalism in the rise of nationalisms in the final 30 years or so of the 19th century. It remarks in particular on the rise of and persistence of Revisionist Zionism and its European neo-liberal roots. It explores the development of Zionism and how it has morphed into a political instrument, going well beyond a benign ethnic nationalism.

However, aside from documenting many of the repressive actions of the successive government of Israel since the inception of the state and arguing that Israel's action following October 7th have been disproportionate, the article explores two potential permanent and practical solutions to the successive conflicts in Palestine: a two-state solution and a confederal solution, both to be guaranteed internationally.

The aim of any settlement, it is argued, must provide security and integrity for the state of Israel and the establishment of a similarly recognized and protected Palestinian state.

A variety of sources, including Jewish sources, have been used and referenced.

Introduction

It will be argued that the Israeli/Palestinian issue is too complex for an objective stance to be possible to be achieved. The tensions and fears of both Israelis and Palestinians are both valid human emotional reactions to be acknowledged. Yet rational analysis and objectivity are possible. To deny the possibility of a rational, objective analysis, while still understanding the societal and emotional complexities, is to deny our very humanity. Moreover, we are acutely aware that violence and war represent both a failure of political imagination and a surrender to our base human instincts for revenge and the exercise of power over other human beings.

It is also the case that we have memories, individual and collective, that inform the positions we adopt, and biases too that we need to recognize. However, there are also facts, that should objectively determine the narratives woven around them. A problem exhibited by the competing narratives surrounding the Israeli/Palestine conflict and its complexities.

In an objective historical context, the success of the 100 years of Zionist struggle to establish the artificial state of Israel in 1948 may eventually be regarded as an egregious historical and political error. This challenging assertion needs to be set in a historical context. The rise of Zionism during the second half of the 19th century was part of a series of linguistic, ethnic, religious, and civic nationalist movements arising within empires such as the Hapsburg and the Ottoman empires. This unstoppable political pressure continued into the 20th century, linked to the ending of the colonial era. It was both amplified and accompanied by the victors of World War 1 and World War 2 adopting an approach of creating countries by delineating rigid cartographic territorial boundaries for new nation-states.

In attempting an objective assessment of the position of Israel it will be necessary to provide a 100-year context, summarizing key verifiable historical facts over that period, before developing an analytical framework. The framework will provide a new perspective on the creation of the state of Israel and the issues arising from it. From the analysis, a potential political solution to the unending, almost 80-year conflict between Israel and the Palestinians will be offered. A two-state solution which will respect the self-governing rights and security of both peoples.

Current Situation

October 7, 2023: Hamas Incursion and Israeli Response

Any analysis must take account of the military incursion into southern Israel by Hamas fighters in the military wing (*Qassam Brigades*) and the taking of hostages. Followed by the subsequent slaughter of innocent civilians, including women and children, by other Palestinians. We have no independent objective account of what happened on that day, and no accessible account published from Hamas. The initial Israeli account set the figure of dead at 1500, subsequently reduced to 1200. There is little doubt that horrific acts of violence were visited on a number of civilians, especially women and children. The recent understandable horror at the rape and mutilation of women should be set in the context of scores of women across the world who have been similarly mistreated in many recent and historical conflicts. Whether these heinous acts were committed by the Hamas fighters, who appear to have killed sleeping soldiers, or by other Palestinians who followed them in and attacked the Nova music festival is unclear but is of little consequence.

Nonetheless, what does matter is the Israeli government response to the incursion, the slaughter of civilians, and the hostage-taking. Rather than attempting to calm the inevitable fears and anxiety of the Israeli population the government sought immediately to exacerbate those fears and insecurities by an unnecessary and illogical link of the October 7th atrocity to the Holocaust. Clearly this was an attempt to play on the feelings of Jewish victimhood, no longer valid in the context of the past 50 years of successive Israeli governments as the aggressor towards Palestinians. Amplified by government media, including in other Western countries, this approach has led to the encouragement of a psychological

need for revenge, and, for many Israelis, though not all, the collective punishment of Palestinians, in the guise of destroying Hamas.

No ethical theory or moral calculus can justify Israel's collective punishment of Palestinians and the indiscriminate slaughter of thousands of women and children in Gaza, as a result of the Hamas attack on October 7th. For many millions of people around the world the Israeli government military action, including the illegal displacement of 85% of the population in Gaza, is regarded as heinous act. Nor should the suggested link with the Holocaust, appalling though was that racist slaughter of 6 million Jews, lead to any current feeling of collective guilt, in order somehow to justify the current Israeli slaughter of thousands of innocent Palestinians, many of whom are women and children.

What is required is an *immediate*, complete ceasefire. The current position of Israel is not only untenable, but also illogical. Hamas, with around 30,000 fighters versus the Israeli defence forces - of 170,000 regular forces (and 465,000 reservists) currently has 300,000 troops on the Gaza border. Moreover, 34,000 of the IDF are in the air force, which is equipped with 225 F16 and 75 F35 fighter planes, plus Apache attack helicopters – *hence, Hamas cannot* be said to pose an *existential* threat to Israel as recently stated by Netanyahu. In addition, the suggestion that a ceasefire can only occur when Hamas has been destroyed clearly contradicts the meaning of the term ceasefire. This nonsensical Israeli trope is trotted out not only by Israeli spokespersons, but also by US, EU, and UK politicians.

Plainly there is no possibility of completely destroying Hamas. The Israeli current estimate - impossible to verify - is that some 7000 Hamas fighters have killed, out of the estimated 30,000. In so doing Israel has killed some 23,000 Palestinian civilians, an estimated 70% of whom are women and children. Israel's horrendous and disproportionate action will, as in previous such actions (2014), is to radicalize a further generation of the 7 million Palestinian population. Of course, as some argue, the underlying objective of this latest and most severe military bombardment and invasion may be aimed at driving the Palestinians out of the Gaza strip completely, by making the area uninhabitable. The current state of Gaza appears close to this position at the moment. The world community must make any such outcome untenable.

The last December UN Security resolution did not call even for a suspension of hostilities. It called for the combatants to allow humanitarian aid to be provided to the Palestinians trapped in the war zone of Gaza, and even then, the US failed to vote for the resolution. By signalling the concern of the world community, including the US, the resolution might afford a window of opportunity to provide some humanitarian aid to the suffering population of Gaza, but the area is an active warzone. The underlying, apparently irreconcilable, political conflict delineated in this article remains to be addressed and military action will continue until the fundamental political issue of Israel recognizing the need for Palestinian self-government is addressed. Not only do the Israeli governing elites appear entirely unwilling to even address this fundamental issue, but so also do the US governing elites appear similarly incapable of recognizing that the time has come to decisively bring about a sustainable political resolution to this running sore on global polity.

Aside from the continuing Israeli military and civil destruction of Gaza and the killing and injuring of its civilian population, three developments related to the conflict have recently occurred (January 2024).

First, in a case brought before the UN ICJ by South Africa, accusing Israel of committing genocide in relation to its actions

against the civilian population of Gaza the court has issued a *preliminary ruling* that there is: a) plausible evidence that Israel has the intent to commit genocide; and b) there is plausible evidence that Israel is committing genocide. The Court has ordered the Israeli government to take immediate steps to prevent genocide and to report back to the Court on the steps having been taken. Whether the ICJ goes on to confirm that genocide has taken place (a high bar), it is clear that collective punishment of the Gaza population appears to have occurred.

Second, it has been alleged that several, named UNRWA staff in Gaza were involved in some manner with the October 7th Hamas incursion into Israel and the subsequent killing of Israeli civilians and the taking of hostages. The UN is conducting an inquiry into the allegation.

Thirdly, the Houthis have been targeting, with drones and some missiles, cargo ships in the Red Sea in an attempt to put pressure on the Western powers, especially the US, to, in turn, pressurize Israel into accepting a ceasefire.

Historical Background

The 75-year perennial violent Israeli-Palestinian conflict, since the state of Israel was declared, is not unique, though it is perhaps one of the most egregious in terms of sustained violence without any successful attempt at resolution, rather than the failed management of the conflict. There are many such “tribal” conflicts around the world and other areas where tensions may well engender further conflicts. Sadly, they show humanity at its tribalistic worst, though interspersed with examples where common bonds on communitarian solidarity shine through. Unwinding this embedded historical narrative of a global polity of sovereign nation states is not possible. Certainly, such an unwinding not possible in the case of Israel and the Palestinians. The Israeli state exists, but its very existence in its current geographical form, plus resource constraints, prevents any practicable two-state solution from being achieved. But it also the case that successive Israeli governments, whatever the rhetoric, are adamantly opposed to a Palestinian state neighbouring Israel. There is a potential *practical* solution, as discussed in the final sections of this article, though its feasibility is problematic, given the considerable *political* constraints involved. What is essential is the need to review the historical and political narrative that has led to the contemporary unsatisfactory situation, with irreconcilable conflicts.

During the period 1860 to 2020, not only did the German and Italian unifications take place but new nation-states of Hungary, Serbia, Montenegro, Romania, Turkey, Bulgaria, Albania, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Czechs, and Russia (Hirschi, 2011), were established. This process of creating new nation-states intensified again following World War 2, especially across the Middle-East, Africa, and India, with new cartographic boundaries being drawn by colonial powers, such as the one drawn unrealistically across India by the British, with only a cursory concern about ethnic, cultural, and religious identities.

It is important to note that ethnic nationalisms are frequently built on ill-remembered myths, mostly oral though sometimes written. They often contain an amalgam of earlier tribal identities. Moreover, their attribution over centuries and sometimes millennia can be misleading. Modern Greeks have little common identity with Ancient Greeks. An exception, though only a *partial* exception, is the Jewish people because of the continuous adherence to the religious faith of Judaism via the

Torah, and through its rabbinic interpretation in the Talmud (the substantial oral and written tradition developed by Rabbis following the destruction of the Temple) in a similar manner as Islam has been modified by Hadith interpretations of Islam.

Ethnic nationalisms, coupled with the establishment of civic nationalisms (though these tend to ignore and sometimes suppress ethnic and religious nationalisms) have delivered a global polity of some 220 independent, sovereign, territorially-bounded nation-states (193 of which are UN members and with 120 of these sovereign states have less than 5 million inhabitants). It is unclear whether this culmination of the drive towards sovereign independent nation-states, with strictly enforced territorial boundaries, was perceived as a desirable endpoint for our current global polity. Almost certainly little concern was given to the potential for plethora of tensions and conflicts, between and within these independent nation-states. It was into this developing late 19th and early 20th century nationalistic political vortex that the various Zionist factions launched themselves.

Zionism: A Driving Force in the 20th century

As indicated above, the rise of Zionism occurring towards the end of the 19th century was not the only nationalist movement seeking nationhood and state sovereignty. In 1897, Alexander Herzl, an Austrian Jew of Hungarian origin, convened the [First Zionist Congress in Basel](#), Switzerland, and was elected president of the Zionist Organization (.However, Herzl was certainly not the first Jewish nationalist. His pamphlet – the Jewish State - repeated what earlier writers on ethnic Jewish nationalism in the 1880s, such as Nathan Birnbaum had argued. But ethnic nationalism did not automatically entail either the establishment of a state, or a sovereign state that would be set up in the geographical area of Palestine.

Herzl himself was uncertain about the need for a sovereign state established on a specific territory. He toyed with a number of ideas of creating a distinctive Jewish Community which would be a “home” for Jews wherever they lived. As he told the assembled delegates at the First Zionist Congress, “Zionism is a return to Judaism even before there is a return to the Jewish land.” He was, however, persuaded by Eastern European Jews with whom he discussed the issues that a territorially-based state in Palestine was required. It should be observed that at the time this position was not favoured by Jews based in the US. The movement of 'Reformed Jews' in the US rejected this idea of a return to Zion. In 1885 the Pittsburgh Conference, supported the Messianic idea of reformed Judaism, stating that *“we consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community; and we therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning a Jewish state.”* This is still the position of a proportion of Jews, though tempered by obvious concern for their fellow Jews in the Israeli state.

Nonetheless, the first two decades of the 20th century saw considerable, successful lobbying by Zionist organizations and individuals for a Jewish national home, linked to ethnicity, customs, and religion. However, it needs to be understood that there are three main groups defined in this manner, both in modern Israel and worldwide. In Israel, Ashkenazi Jews who still dominate leadership roles in public institutions. For much of Israel's history, Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews have been disproportionately under-represented in the government. Yet now, the latter [make up more than half](#) of the population. Worldwide, Ashkenazi Jews make up 70% of the total.

Eventually original non-specific demand for a “home” transformed into a demand for a Jewish *homeland*. To be sited in part of the geographical area called Palestine. Palestine is generally defined as a region bounded on the east by the Jordan River, on the north by the border between modern Israel and Lebanon, on the west by the Mediterranean Sea (including the coast of Gaza), and on the south by the Negev, with its southernmost extension reaching the Gulf of Aqaba. The term Palestine has been used variously to describe an extended area, including Syria, since antiquity. The granting of this demand by the UN, on its own post-World War2 inception in 1947/48, with insufficient consideration of its consequences, has been played out in aggression and violence of the past 75 years of the existence of the state of Israel. It is worth cataloguing this history.

World War 1

During World War 1 the “Yishuv” came into being:

The Yishuv was established to pass information to the British in the hope of defeating the Ottomans and ending their rule over Palestine. The purpose and members of the Nili were discovered. All involved were executed by the Ottomans except its founder, Aaron Aaronsohn, who escaped to Egypt. During World War I, the Jewish population in Palestine diminished by a third due to deportations, immigration, economic trouble, and disease. During World War I, there were two British battalions of Jews, called the Zion Mule Corps, who were to fight on the front in Palestine. They helped in the British capture Ottoman Syria (including Palestine), leading to the Turkish surrender. The members of the Zion Mule Corps later made up the Yishuv's main defence groups that would fight against the British. (Wikipedia)

The Balfour Declaration

Also during World War 1, in 1917, the Arthur James Balfour, the British foreign secretary in a letter to Baron Rothschild, a leader of the Anglo-Jewish community in the UK, indicating British support for “the establishment in Palestine of a national *home* for the Jewish people.” This statement was soon promulgated via the Zionist leaders in London. However, it is not clear whether this was an endorsement of the establishment of a sovereign Israeli state in Palestine. What is clearer is that the British expected this “declaration” to incline the settlement of a pro-British Jewish population in Palestine to help protect access to the Suez Canal as a vital colonial trade route from India.

Revisionist Zionism

During the 1920s amore militant form of Zionism, *Revisionist Zionism*, was launched by Ze'ev Jabotinsky, a Russian Jew. This form of Zionism broke with the World Zionist Movement in 1935. Jabotinsky's position, he was a Russian, was that in cultural terms the Jews identified broadly with the Western liberal tradition, opposed to communism and socialism. He viewed the return of the Jews to Eretz Israel as a means of establishing an outpost of 'Western civilisation' among the Arab nations and to be permanently allied with the Western bourgeois interests in the Middle East. Jabotinsky also

stressed that the aspirations of Zionism should be solely national, and he rejected completely Labour Zionism. The Revisionists even established their own New Zionist set of institutions, encompassing health, employment, trade union, and military organizations, including Etzel or Irgun, effectively a terrorist group. After 1940 a splinter terrorist group formed named the Stern Gang.

Following the 1935 split there were essentially five groups of Jews operating within Palestine, still under the British Mandate: the organised Yishuv (comprising the Labour Zionists, the General Zionists, and the religious Zionists); the Revisionists), and the ultra-Orthodox and the Communists. Effectively, these groups still exist today in 2023, but with the Revisionists the major political force in government. Labour Zionism has substantially weakened since 1976 with the defeat of the then Labour government.

The mantle of Jabotinsky, who died in 1940, was taken over by Menachim Begin, a Polish Jew, replacing the legalistic nation state advocacy of Jabotinsky with a more militaristic approach. He had previously founded the Etzel, sometimes known as Irgun armed resistance organisation (classified by the British as terrorists). Eventually Begin would lead the Herut party - committed to an approach which may be designated 'neo-liberal', with a minimalist state and a liberal economic policy approach. Herut morphed into the current leading political party Likud, led currently by Benjamin Netanyahu whose roots go back to Herut, and which eventually, in 1976, replaced the socialist Mapai/Labour party. Likud has been in power, though often in coalition, since 1977. It formally rejects the idea of a separate Palestinian state. Recently (January 2024) confirmed by Prime Minister Netanyahu.

Post World War 1

The British Mandates

World War I had ended, along with the Ottoman Empire. Britain gained control of Palestine and Transjordan. The British Mandate of Palestine was formalized in 1922 based on the Balfour Declaration. The British were supposed to help the Jews build a national home and promote the creation of self-governing institutions. Transjordan, though formally part of the mandate of Palestine, was administered separately. A smaller and, at that time, less complex country, it settled down more easily under another of Hussein's sons, Abdallah. The British recognized the virtual independence of the territory in 1928, although the formal mandate was not terminated until 1948. In many ways, it was the most successful element of the British Palestine mandate.

The problems for the Palestine Mandate developed during the late 1920s and the 1930s. By the end of World War 1 there were about 56,000 Jews and 600,000 Arabs living in the Mandate area of Palestine. By 1930 Jews constituted 17% of the total population. However, at the outbreak of World War 2 they accounted for one third of the population of Palestine. This proportion was maintained through World War 2 up to 1948, though by then there were 600,000 Jews, with twice as many Arabs (Muslims and Christians).

The mandate provided for an agency in which the Jews could represent Jewish interests and promote Jewish immigration.

It was called the Yishuv, acting as the [Jewish Agency for Palestine](#), created in 1932, serving as the de facto governing organization (Halamish 2009). The term *Yishuv*, which is usually defined as “the Jewish community in pre-State Palestine,” actually relates only to those Jews who aspired to the national revival of the Jewish people in Palestine or *Eretz Yisrael*, the Land of Israel. The *Yishuv* was made up of those who were involved in the political life of the Jewish community through elections, who accepted the authority of the elected leadership and who took part in the cultural life, based on the Hebrew language. From the 1920s, two groups, the Ultra-Orthodox and the Communists remained outside the Yishuv.

Both the Zionist Jewish community and the Arab/Palestinian community, separately organised, operated under the Mandate, though the Yishuv organization was more cohesive, despite internal disagreements. The Arab/Palestinian group was more factionalized. The Arabs, opposed to the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate, instigated riots against the Jews. The British limited immigration through yearly quotas; only to those who received “certificates”. The rapid growth of the Jewish population, via immigration, inevitably caused tension and violence between Arabs and Jews in Palestine.

Along with a Jewish agency and the equivalent Arab organization there was to be a general self-governing institution including Jews and Arabs created in Palestine. The Yishuv feared such an institution due to the Arab majority, but none was created in the end due to the Arabs' refusal to cooperate with the Jews or the British. The optimism that existed in the beginning of the British mandate soon diminished due to continued hardships in the Yishuv, as most of the European funds that supported the Jewish settlements before World War I were terminated.

With the already burgeoning Arab/Jewish conflicts, the British Mandate of Palestine was highly problematic. The British task of building a state embracing the diverse population groups collided with the Zionist project to make Palestine not just the vague “national home for Jews” supported by the Balfour Declaration, but a state in which Jews would be the majority. Britain was caught between conflicting Jewish and Arab nationalisms. Faced with the determination of the Zionists and the flood of new Jewish immigrants on one side, and the revolt by Arabs beginning in 1936, the British toyed with the idea of forming a small Jewish state in Palestine, enraging Arabs without satisfying Zionists, who wanted much more.

The 1936–39 Arab Revolt

The increasing numbers of Jewish immigrants and land purchases, unchallenged by the British Mandate, angered and radicalized many Arabs. In April 1936, Arabs attacked a Jewish bus, leading to a series of incidents that escalated into a [major Arab rebellion](#). The British were caught by surprise and were unable to prevent the deaths of thousands of Arabs and hundreds of Jews in the revolt. The Haganah (the main Yishuv para-military force) protected the Yishuv's settlements while the [Irgun](#), a more radical terrorist group, attacked Arab settlements. A coalition of recently formed Arab political parties formed the [Arab Higher Committee](#) (AHC). It declared a national strike in support of three basic demands: cessation of Jewish immigration, an end to all further land sales to the Jews, and the establishment of an Arab national government. The Arab nations threatened that if the British didn't comply with their demands, then they would join the adversaries of the British and they knew they would need Middle Eastern oil.

Post World War 2, the Ending of the British Mandate, and the UN Partition Plan

The UN partition plan

The British were between a “rock and a hard place” and having failed to affect a solution—for instance with the ill-fated and eventually abandoned Peel Commission Plan—handed the problem over to the UN in 1947, while waiting for their Mandate to end in May 1948.

The UN created the Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) comprising representatives of Australia, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, India, Iran, the Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, Uruguay, and Yugoslavia. UNSCOP's September 1947 report listed eleven unanimous recommendations on general principles, including the transition of Palestine from Mandated territory to independence, preservation of the pre-existing “status quo” on the holy places and rights of the religious communities as well as of the foreign privileges conceded by the Ottomans, and—crucially—linking the Palestine question to a solution to the postwar Jewish refugee problem. In addition to its unanimous recommendations, UNSCOP presented two plans devised by two different working groups: a Plan of Partition with Economic Union (supported by Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, the Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, and Uruguay) and a Federal State Solution (supported by India, Iran, and Yugoslavia).

The announcement of the UN acceptance of partition was met in Arab Palestine by a general strike and demonstrations; some—in Jerusalem and elsewhere—turned to destructive riots. Meanwhile, emboldened by the international imprimatur given by the UN decision, the Zionist military organizations attacked Arab villages and residential quarters before launching the highly organized campaigns of Plan Dalet starting in early April 1948. Villagers together with the more organized Arab volunteer and irregular forces defended their territory and attacked Zionist areas. This “civil war” phase of the 1947–49 Palestine War ended with Israel's declaration of statehood on 15 May 1948.

The UN vote was originally scheduled for 26 November, but proponents of partition feared that the proposal would not receive the required two-thirds majority and succeeded in delaying the vote for three days, giving more time for the intense lobbying and pressures brought to bear on member states, primarily by the US political elites (including President Truman) and Zionist organizations. The partition resolution was finally adopted on 29 November with 33 votes in favour, 13 votes against, and 10 abstentions. The announcement of the UN acceptance of partition was met in Arab Palestine by a general strike and demonstrations; some—in Jerusalem and elsewhere—turned to destructive riots.

Arab-Israeli Conflict and War 1947-1948

Emboldened by the international imprimatur given by the UN decision, the Zionist military organizations, including the Irgun and Stern Gang terrorist groups, attacked Arab villages and residential quarters before launching the highly organized campaigns of Plan Dalet (whose objective was to gain control of the areas of the Hebrew state and defend its borders, while operating also to gain control of the areas of Jewish settlement and concentration which are located outside the borders of the Hebrew state against regular, semi-regular, and small forces from bases outside or inside the state).

(Plan Dalet 1948), starting in early April 1948. From the Arab side, villagers together with the more organized Arab volunteer and irregular forces defended their territory and attacked Zionist areas.

When the [British Mandate of Palestine](#) finally expired on 14 May 1948, and with the accompanying [Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel](#) (see below), the surrounding Arab states—[Egypt](#), [Transjordan](#), [Iraq](#) and [Syria](#)—invaded what had just ceased to be Mandatory Palestine, and immediately attacked Israeli forces and several Jewish settlements. The British, despite having the obligation to maintain order, organized their withdrawal and intervened only on an occasional basis. The conflict thus escalated into a war (see [Wikipedia](#)).

Ultimately, it could be argued that the UN failed to implement an unwieldy and biased partition plan and in so doing failed the Palestinian Arabs. The Arab opposition, inside and outside Palestine, was perhaps politically naïve and they were militarily outmanoeuvred by the Zionist forces. Nonetheless, it is difficult to resist the conclusions of the *Interactive Encyclopaedia of the Palestinian Question*:

On 29 November 1947, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 181 recommending the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states (along with an international zone encompassing Jerusalem and Bethlehem). Specifically, the plan proposed a Jewish state on more than half of Mandate Palestine at a time when Jews comprised less than a third of the population and owned less than 7 percent of the land. Passage of the UN Partition Plan, in the face of strong Arab opposition, is among the most significant dates of modern Palestinian history, for in essence it gave international legitimacy to the Zionist conquest of Palestine by force of arms.

By emphasizing their acceptance of the idea of partition and Arab rejection of it, while ignoring the deep injustice written into the details of the proposal in terms of both land and population, Zionists were able to cloak the ensuing conquest and displacement of Palestinians as both legitimate and defensive. The UN Partition Plan thus represents both the fruits of Zionist efforts to secure international recognition of Jewish sovereignty in Palestine and the immediate precursor to the establishment of the State of Israel in May 1948, predicated as it was on the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their lands. (Winter n.d.)

The State of Israel is Formally Established in May 1948

About a month before the scheduled end of the Mandate, and during the war the Yishuv formed two governing organs: (1) a parliament or People's Council, a 37-member temporary legislative body, representing the full spectrum of the Jewish population of Palestine, including all the Yishuv parties as well as the Communists, the Revisionists, and the ultra-orthodox; and (2) a 13-member Cabinet – The People's Administration. This executive body convened on May 12th, 1948, to decide whether to declare independence. Ten members attended the crucial meeting (with two members stuck in besieged Jerusalem and one on mission in the United States) with six voting in favour of declaring independence when the Mandate ended and four against. Two days later, on Friday, May 14th, 1948, the independent State of Israel was declared. All the members of the Cabinet signed the Declaration of Independence. The Provisional State Council became

the Provisional Government. About two weeks later, the IDF was officially formed out of the Haganah, incorporating the Etzel (Irgun) and Lehr (Stern) as well. The official and practical transformation of the Yishuv into a sovereign independent state was completed.

Interestingly, what was supposed to follow the Declaration of Independence as a written Constitution for the new state. 75 years on there is still no Constitution! The recent manifestation of substantial public opposition to the so-called constitutional reforms proposed by the Israeli government, now overshadowed by the current Gaza conflict, is testament to an unstable democratic popular democratic consensus in Israel. Perhaps this startling omission of a formal constitution will be able to be rectified during the negotiations to bring about a resolution of the damaging, interminable Israeli/Palestinian conflict, as suggested in the final sections of this article.

Arab-Israeli War Ends in 1949

As suggested above, the new Israeli state was born in an environment of violence, aggression, and terrorism, from both the Zionist groups and by Arab militias. It may be argued that Israel's integrity as a nation-state was in jeopardy from without. In 1967 and 1973, it was militarily challenged, albeit unsuccessfully, by neighbouring Arab states. Internally, civil disobedience and armed resistance by the indigenous Palestinian population took place in the three occupied or severely constrained territories. Given that Israel acted as an occupying power this resistance is neither surprising, nor should it be condemned as terrorism (recalling the earlier Zionist Irgun and Stern gang).

The situation at the end of the war is critical to understanding Palestinian resentment of Israel and the "superiority" of the Israeli political and military elites towards the Palestinian Arabs. The ejection of 750,000 Palestinians as refugees from the UN-designated Palestine to Gaza is well-described by [Jean-Pierre Filiu](#) in a recent 2024 article in *Foreign Affairs* (Filiu 2024):

By January 1949, the Israelis had not only defeated the Arab armies but also driven some 750,000 Palestinians from their homes, in what became known as the nakba, or catastrophe. The armistice signed between Israel and Egypt under UN auspices in February of that year created the Gaza Strip, a territory under Egyptian administration and defined by the cease-fire lines in the north and east and by the 1906 border with Egypt in the south. After centuries as a strategic crossroads and vital commercial hub for regional trade, Gaza had been reduced to a "strip" of land, cornered by the desert, and cut off from what had been Palestine.

Interestingly, Filiu includes a quote from 1956 by Moshe Dayan

In April 1956, the security officer of a kibbutz close to the Palestinian enclave was killed by infiltrators from Gaza, causing Moshe Dayan, the Israeli chief of staff, to warn Israelis of the unresolved grievances simmering in the territory: "Let us not, today, cast the blame on the murderers," Dayan said. "For eight years now, they have sat in the refugee camps in Gaza, and before their eyes we have turned their lands and villages, where they and their fathers dwelt, into our home."

This is not an appreciative understanding to be heard from the mouths of his latter-day IDF successors in that role!!

The Israeli counter-violence, using the substantial armed force of the IDF, has been, since 1948, accompanied by arbitrary attacks on Palestinians and civil and human rights and the creation of the occupied territories, much of it illegal under international law. Hence, the ending of the initial Arab-Israeli War in 1949 was, sadly, not the end but the start of a cycle of wars and violence in which Israel has prevailed, but at the cost of not achieving a resolution of the conflict that provides the Palestinians with the UN-envisaged separate, genuine self-governing state. The increasingly superior firepower of the IDF has been provided via US-supplied armaments (\$124 billion since 1948) not only enabled the defeats of external aggression in 1967 and 1973, but also the continued suppression of the indigenous Palestinian population. Additionally, the US has provided permanent annual economic/financial support to Israel of \$4 billion. No other country receives such US *largesse*.

It is possible, therefore, over the period from 1948 to the present day - and especially from 1973 - to demonstrate how the original *benign* claim of ethnic nationalism (Zionism) has been translated into a militant, aggressive form of ethnic nationalism, even after the establishment of a, sovereign nation-state. The presence in the population of a minority of Arab Israelis does not invalidate this description, especially as there are no formal constitutional protections available.

Successive attempts to resolve the conflict and underlying political problem have been thwarted since 1973 (such as the 1993 Oslo Accords) by the duplicity and intransigence of successive, increasingly right-wing, Israeli governments. One partially mitigating factor has been the tight physical land and resource constraints which the UN-agreed borders established. Essentially, there is no room for a two-state solution, nor have successive Israeli governments (especially those informed by the Revisionist Zionist ideology) ever seriously entertained the proposal for a separate, neighbouring Palestinian state. We may now begin to examine a summary of the historical record to illustrate how Israel's understandable need for security has translated into its maintaining of an effective apartheid state.

The State of Israel: The Years after 1948/49

The early days of Israel as a nation-state witnessed the Labour Zionist approach of Ben-Gurion the first prime-minister of Israel continuing the expansionist drive for more land. He insisted on kibbutzim being established close to the internationally set boundaries. Nonetheless, Ben Gurion had been an avowed earlier opponent of the Revisionist Zionism of Jabotinsky, whom he named 'Vladimir Hitler', and of Begin, who he never addressed directly in the Knesset (Israeli parliament). However, despite these disagreements the Labour government shared the other Zionist parties drive to maximize the Jewish population expansion. Inevitably, this drive had exacerbated the Arab- Israeli conflict. Following the end of the war the Israeli's were emboldened to continue to expand settlements, driven by the need to accommodate the influx of Jews from around the world, especially from Russia, Ukraine, and the USA. Hence, the aggressive expansion of Israel, well beyond its initial, UN-designated borders, started from the inception of the Israeli state, resulting in the expulsion of several hundred thousand indigenous Palestinians (the *Nakba*) during 1948.

1956 The Suez Crisis

Strictly, this conflict did not happen on Israeli territory, but (with support from France and the UK) was an Israeli invasion of the Gaza Strip and Egypt by Israeli forces, the French and British troops arrived slightly later.

The Egyptian Government seized control of the Suez Canal from the British and French owned company that managed it, had important consequences for U.S. relations with both Middle Eastern countries and European allies. On July 26, 1956, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the British and French owned Suez Canal Company that operated the Suez Canal. Nasser's decision threatened British and French stock holdings in the Company and, as the Canal afforded Western countries access to Middle Eastern oil, also threatened to cut off Europe's oil supply. The ensuing Suez Crisis threatened regional stability and challenged the U.S. relationship with two primary Cold War allies, Britain, and France.

Although the United State was concerned about Nasser's nationalization of the canal, it sought a diplomatic solution to the problem. Britain and France, however, viewed the situation as a threat to their national interests. Accordingly, they sought a military solution that involved Israel. They secretly contacted the Israeli Government and proposed a joint military operation in which Israel would invade the Sinai and march toward the Suez Canal zone after which Britain and France would issue a warning to both Egypt and Israel to stay away from the Canal. Britain and France would then land paratroopers in the Canal Zone on the pretence of protecting it. Israel willingly agreed to this scenario since it gave Israel the opportunity to gain control of the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula, end the Egyptian blockade of the Straits of Tiran, and retaliate against Egypt over its support for Palestinian commando raids on Israel's western border during the previous two years.

On October 29, 1956, Israeli forces moved across the border, defeated the Egyptian army in the Sinai, captured Sharm al-Sheikh and thereby guaranteed Israeli strategic control over the Straits of Tiran. Britain and France issued their ultimatum and landed troops, effectively carrying out the agreed upon operation. However, the United States and the Soviet Union responded to events by demanding a cease-fire. In a resolution before the United Nations, the United States also called for the evacuation of Israeli, French, and British forces from Egypt under the supervision of a special United Nations force. This force arrived in Egypt in mid-November. By December 22, the last British and French troops had withdrawn from Egyptian territory, but Israel kept its troops in Gaza until March 19, 1957, when the United States finally compelled the Israeli Government to withdraw its troops. Although Israel withdrew from Egyptian territory gained in the fighting, it regained access to the Straits of Tiran, while the United Nations adopted a larger role maintaining a peacekeeping force in the Sinai. (US State Dept Archive." (US State Dept Archive).

1967 - The Six Day War

Britannica (A) provides a useful summary description of the war and its resolution. Here are selected extracts:

Prior to the start of the war, attacks conducted against Israel by fledgling Palestinian guerrilla groups based in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan had increased, leading to costly Israeli reprisals. In November 1966 an Israeli strike on the village of Al-Samū' in the Jordanian West Bank left 18 dead and 54 wounded, and, during an air battle with Syria in April 1967, the Israeli Air Force shot down six Syrian MiG fighter jets. In response to the apparent mobilization of its Arab neighbours, early on the morning of June 5, Israel staged a sudden pre-emptive air assault that destroyed more than 90 percent Egypt's air force on the tarmac. A similar air assault incapacitated the Syrian air force.

Egyptian Pres. Gamal Abdel Nasser however, he moved to unambiguously demonstrate support for Syria: on May 14, 1967, Nasser mobilized Egyptian forces in the Sinai; on May 18 he formally requested the removal of the UNEF stationed there; and on May 22 he closed the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping, thus instituting an effective blockade of the port city of Eilat in southern Israel. On May 30, King Hussein of Jordan arrived in Cairo to sign a mutual defence pact with Egypt, placing Jordanian forces under Egyptian command; shortly thereafter, Iraq too joined the alliance. Without cover from the air, the Egyptian army was left vulnerable to attack. Within three days the Israelis had achieved an overwhelming victory on the ground, capturing the Gaza Strip and all of the Sinai Peninsula up to the east bank of the Suez Canal.

An eastern front was also opened on June 5 when Jordanian forces began shelling West Jerusalem—disregarding Israel's warning to King Hussein to keep Jordan out of the fight—only to face a crushing Israeli counterattack. On June 7 Israeli forces drove Jordanian forces out of East Jerusalem and most of the West Bank. Photos and films of Israeli troops taking control of the Old City of Jerusalem have proved to be some of the war's iconic images.

The Arab countries' losses in the conflict were disastrous. Egypt's casualties numbered more than 11,000, with 6,000 for Jordan and 1,000 for Syria, compared with only 700 for Israel. The Six-Day War also marked the start of a new phase in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. The conflict created hundreds of thousands of refugees and brought more than one million Palestinians in the occupied territories under Israeli rule. Months after the war, in November, the United Nations passed UN Resolution 242, which called for Israel's withdrawal from the territories it had captured in the war in exchange for lasting peace. That resolution became the basis for diplomatic efforts between Israel and its neighbours, including the Camp David Accords with Egypt and the push for a two-state solution with the Palestinians. NB Trading land for peace is no longer in 2023 an extant Israeli policy.

Although it is undeniable that Israel retained territory following their success in the war, the Israeli view indicates a different perspective. Hence,

Despite the success of the air campaign, Israel lost 45 of its 200 fighter planes. By the end of the war, Israel had captured enough territory to more than triple the size of the area it controlled, from 8,000 to 26,000 square miles. The victory enabled Israel to unify Jerusalem. Israeli forces had also captured the Sinai, the Golan Heights, the

Gaza Strip and the West Bank

Israel's leaders fully expected to negotiate a peace agreement with their neighbours that would involve some territorial compromise. Almost immediately after the war, Israel's leaders expressed their willingness to negotiate a return of at least some of the territories. Israel subsequently returned all of the Sinai to Egypt, territory claimed by Jordan was returned to the Hashemite Kingdom, and nearly all of the Gaza Strip and more than 40 percent of the West Bank was given to the Palestinians to establish the Palestinian Authority.

To date, approximately 93 percent of the territories won in the defensive war have been given by Israel to its Arab neighbours as a result of negotiations. This demonstrates Israel's willingness to trade land for peace. (Jewish Virtual Library)

A further unfortunate impact of the 1967 war was that all Palestinian water resources were brought completely under Israeli control. This has meant, especially in Gaza, serious overall water shortages and poor water quality as a norm.

1973 Yom Kippur War

A useful summary description of this war and its resolution is provided by *Britannica* (B):

On the afternoon of October 6 Egypt and Syria attacked Israel simultaneously on two fronts. With the element of surprise to their advantage, Egyptian forces successfully crossed the Suez Canal with greater ease than expected, suffering only a fraction of the anticipated casualties, while Syrian forces were able to launch their offensive against Israeli positions and break through to the Golan Heights. The intensity of the Egyptian and Syrian assaults, so unlike the situation in 1967, rapidly began to exhaust Israel's reserve stocks of munitions. Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir turned to the United States for aid, while the Israeli general staff hastily improvised a battle strategy. The reluctance of the United States to help Israel changed rapidly when the Soviet Union commenced its own resupply effort to Egypt and Syria. U.S. Pres. Richard Nixon countered by establishing an emergency supply line to Israel, even though the Arab countries imposed a costly oil embargo and various U.S. allies refused to facilitate the arms shipments.

The war did not immediately alter the dynamics of the Arab-Israeli conflict, but it did have a significant impact on the trajectory of an eventual peace process between Egypt and Israel, which culminated in the return of the entire Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in exchange for lasting peace. The war proved costly for Israel, Egypt, and Syria, having caused significant casualties, and having disabled or destroyed large quantities of military equipment. Furthermore, although Israel had staved off any advance by Egypt to recapture the Sinai Peninsula during the war, it never restored its seemingly impenetrable fortifications along the Suez Canal that Egypt had destroyed on October 6. The results of the conflict thus required the two countries to coordinate arrangements for disengagement in the short term and made more immediate the need for a negotiated permanent settlement to their ongoing disputes.

In an effort to maintain the cease-fire between Israel and Egypt, a disengagement agreement signed on January 18, 1974, provided for Israel to withdraw its forces into the Sinai west of the Mitla and Gidi passes and for Egypt to reduce the size of its forces on the east bank of the canal. A United Nations (UN) peacekeeping force established a buffer zone between the two armies. The Israel-Egypt agreement was supplemented by another, signed on September 4, 1975, that included an additional withdrawal of forces and the expansion of the UN buffer zone. On March 26, 1979, Israel and Egypt made history by signing a permanent peace agreement that led to Israel's full withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula and to the normalization of ties between the two countries.

The 1973 war was the last one involving an attack launched by neighbouring Arab states. It was unfortunate that the Cold War hostility between the US and Russia, led to the US overcoming its initial reluctance to support Israel. It confirmed the relatively uncritical backing of Israel that has continued to the present day and has made the US complicit in support the increasing violent aggression of Israel towards the Palestinians, despite several US involvement (1978 Camp David Accords and the two Oslo Accords in 1993 and 1995) in attempts to restrain Israeli aggression and to broker peace agreements.

However, over the last two decades the salience of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict in US foreign policy has been low. Latterly, the aim has been to normalize relations between other Middle-Eastern states and Israel, such as Saudi Arabia. Any hope is that such normalization may lead to a settlement between Israel and the Palestinians has been naive. The October 7th Hamas attack and the resulting excessive bombardment of Gaza by the IDF, in order to “destroy” Hamas, has buried this diplomatic approach, at least for a while, though the US has not given up.

From 1973

From 1973 onwards neighbouring Arab states no longer threatened Israel with invasion. This situation has not stopped intermittent “pre-emptive” attacks being launched. Israel continues with impunity to attack Lebanon, Syria, and Iran as it interprets *potential* threats from these states, against international law. Moreover, Israel as an occupying power has, within Israel, mounted continuous aggression against Palestinians, in both civilian and military terms. This repression - severely curtailing of human rights in the three Palestinian occupied enclaves of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem - has incrementally increased since the advent of the Likud controlled governments from 1976. During this period Israel has turned from a beleaguered country to an aggressive occupying power in an effective apartheid state.

The Intifadas 1987 and 2000-2006 and the Oslo Accords¹

The intifadas represent civil protests and a collective uprising by Palestinians, effectively rebelling against Israel as the occupying power. Perhaps not surprisingly Israelis find these protests and physical assaults frightening and leading to a permanent feeling of insecurity. Both perceptions are valid. The answer lies mainly with Israel to end its illegal occupation and negotiate a peaceful settlement to be accepted by the Palestinians. As we are discovering this solution is proving impossible.

The intifadas involved two separate Palestinian uprisings against Israel, the first in the late 1980s and the second in the early 2000s. The intifadas had a dramatic effect on Israeli-Palestinian relations; the second, in particular, is widely seen as marking the end of the 1990s era negotiating process and ushering in a new, darker era in Israeli-Palestinian relations. The first intifada began in December 1987 and ended in September 1993 with the signing of the *first Oslo Accords*, which provided a framework for peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. The second intifada, sometimes called the Al-Aqṣā intifada, began in September 2000, and ended in 2006.

The first intifada was a largely spontaneous series of Palestinian demonstrations, nonviolent actions like mass boycotts and Palestinians refusing to work jobs in Israel.

Eventually these peaceful protests morphed into physical attacks (using rocks, Molotov cocktails, and occasionally firearms) on Israelis. Palestinian fatalities dramatically outpaced Israeli ones, as the Israeli military responded to the protests and attacks with heavy force. Late in 1987, tensions between the Palestinians and the Israelis boiled over in what became known as the first intifada—the uprising. Two days after a Jewish worker was stabbed and killed in Gaza, an Israeli tank transport killed four Palestinians in a traffic accident. Palestinians declared the collision an intentional act of revenge for the earlier murder, which sparked mass rioting among the Palestinians of the West Bank, Gaza, and Jerusalem.

Rioters also bombed the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem. A number of Palestinians were killed or wounded during attacks on Jewish troops; another large group was killed by other Palestinians after being accused of collaborating with Israel. It is believed that as many as 2,000 may have died during the six years of sporadic fighting and violence. The staggering Palestinian unemployment rate, the relative incompetence of the PLO leadership, and the cramped living conditions in the West Bank and Gaza all contributed to the uprising that continued until the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 ended the uprising.

Negotiations on the *Oslo Accords* were initiated by between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and held in the Norwegian capital, initially without the active involvement of the US government. To an extent Barak was responding both to pressure from the Israeli peace movement and the Israeli population who were becoming tired of the continuous rioting. Whether Barak was motivated by a genuine desire to advance the idea of a two-state solution seems unlikely, though seeking a peaceful end to the violence was certainly a major motivation.

The second, and far bloodier, intifada grew out of the collapse of the long, ongoing peace process in 2000, linked to the earlier Oslo Accords. Negotiations between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat broke down, and the second intifada began shortly afterwards. Typically, Israelis blame a conscious decision by Arafat to turn to violence for the intifada's onset, while Palestinians point to an intentionally provocative visit to the contested Temple Mount by Israeli politician (and soon to be Prime Minister) Ariel Sharon. While both Arafat and Sharon played some part, the central cause was likely a basic mistrust between the two sides that made conflict inevitable after peace talks broke down..

The second intifada, together with subsequent waves of rocket fire from Gaza after the Hamas takeover, had a transformative effect on Israeli attitudes toward the conflict. The Israeli peace camp's traditional argument, that Israel would be eventually rewarded for trading land for peace, became significantly less popular. Scepticism of the peace process grew, complicating future efforts to arrive at a two-state agreement for those in Israel supporting such a potential solution.

During the following six years, off-and-on fighting between Israeli troops and Palestinian militants continued, along with suicide bombings and missile and mortar attacks against Jewish civilian populations. Some Palestinian claims of Israeli atrocities were found to be baseless, but they contributed to the continuing unrest and violence. An uneasy truce was declared in 2006, which is generally considered to mark the end of the second intifada.

During the second intifada substantial attempts were made by the US to broker a peace deal between the PA and the Israeli government. Although this failed, largely because of the duplicity of Prime Minister Sharon in refusing to accept concessions built into the potential agreement, it did result in Israel pulling out of Gaza militarily, though maintaining external control of the occupied territory, including power and water supplies.

Since, 2006, conditions in both the West Bank, governed by the Palestinian Authority (now committed to non-violence) and Gaza governed by Hamas (committed to armed resistance to the occupation) have continuously deteriorated. Israel has imposed increasing restrictions on Palestinians, especially in Gaza, but also in the West Bank. With now increasing support for the Orthodox religious settler, including now arming them with military weapons.

2002 to 2021 The Separation Barriers/Walls

The idea of building "separation barriers" to enclose a Jewish state was first suggested by the Revisionist Zionist Jabotinsky, see above. He put forward the idea of an "Iron Wall". However, this idea was rejected by the early Labour governments in Israel after its establishment as a nation-state. From the early 2000s, for security reasons, linked initially to the second Intifada, the building of such separation barriers has become the policy of successive Israeli governments. Since that time the policy has become a key element in establishing an increasingly isolationist Israeli security "Jewish state". Whatever the rationale for this arbitrary policy with regard to the Palestinians the effect has been to rigidly separate the three Palestinian enclaves and destroy any practical prospect of a viable, separate Palestinian state. The continued and expanded Israeli settler programme in the West Bank indicates, further land expansion by Israel effectively negates any real possibility of a Palestinian state, confirming the long-held opposition of Israeli government to this solution. The opposition of Hamas is recognition of this position and is hence irrelevant.

For a separate Jewish perspective on the barriers (Bard 2023) - the justification is nominally one of ensuring security against Hamas-led, Palestinian "terrorism", with the barrier fence acting as a deterrent.

Hence, Bard notes:

From September 2000 to mid-2005, hundreds of Palestinian suicide bombings and terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians killed more than 1,000 innocent people and wounded thousands of others. In response, Israel's government decided to construct a security fence near the "Green Line" between Israel and the West Bank to prevent Palestinian terrorists from easily infiltrating Israel. The project had the overwhelming support of the Israeli public and was deemed legal by Israel's Supreme Court.

Israel's fence provoked international condemnation, but the outrage is a clear double standard - there is nothing new about constructing a security fence. Many nations have fences to protect their borders - the United States, for example, has one to prevent illegal immigration. When the West Bank fence was approved, Israel had already built a fence surrounding the Gaza Strip that had worked - not a single suicide bomber has managed to cross Israel's border with Gaza.

As Said Saddiki in his 2017 book a "World with Walls" indicates:

The separation-barrier strategy has been a key element in the construction of the Israeli state. The fencing and heavy militarization of Israel's boundaries and the creation of security and buffer zones with Arab nations; whether in Gaza, the West Bank, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, or Jordan; are intended to perpetuate occupation and to control "the other side". This is all in order to guarantee the security of a "Jewish state" and to protect its "Jewish character". It also seeks the annexation of more Palestinian land, thereby defining unilaterally the borders of a future Palestinian State, continuing the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from the oPt, and diminishing the possibility of the creation of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza by interrupting its territorial contiguity.

Despite the enormous efforts and the huge amounts of money spent on constructing these separation barriers, Israel has not achieved security. Israel is still living in a region whose peoples, whether in Palestine or neighbouring countries, reject its existence and have shown over time that they cannot coexist or normalize their relations with the "Jewish state". In fact, the policy of separation not only surrounds and disperses Palestinians; it also places Israel itself in a cage of its own making.

Insofar as this may be regarded as a fair representation of the end-result of 75 years of the state of Israel and its relations with the Palestinians living in three occupied enclaves, it should be regretted by Israelis - and by the outside world which bears a considerable responsibility for helping to perpetuate this tragic situation for both peoples. Moreover, Israeli repression, in the service of achieving security, has failed to achieve its objective, and has intensified Palestinian identity and solidarity, and their resistance to the illegal occupation and repression.

Period 2003 to 2023

West Bank and Jerusalem and the Palestinian Authority (PA)

Although events in Gaza have generally overshadowed events in both the West Bank and Jerusalem, especially given the governing role of Hamas in Gaza and its intermittent, though essentially reactive rocket attacks on Israel. However, over the past year, before October 7th, Israel has paid more attention to the West Bank, where increasing Palestinian militancy has emerged. This possibly partly accounts for the Israeli intelligence neglect of the Southern border with Gaza.

However, the treatment of the PA-run West Bank and East Jerusalem is no better than the situation for Palestinians living in Gaza. The civil restrictions placed on the Palestinians in these enclaves is no better. Latterly, the on-going expansion of Israeli settler villages, displacing Palestinian villages, often involving armed violence, has substantially intensified.

2003 to 2006 - Gaza: Israeli Disengagement and Election Victory of Hamas

The key historical political aspects of this period are summarized by Jonathan Spyer in (2006):

At a summit meeting held in Sharm al-Sheikh on 8th February 2005, the Disengagement Plan was discussed and endorsed by representatives of the Palestinian Authority (PA), Egypt and Jordan. The summit also witnessed the brokering of a ceasefire between Israel and the PA which effectively brought to a close five years of overt hostilities between the two sides which had resulted in heavy loss of both Israeli and Palestinian life.

The Sharm summit was followed by the final endorsing by the Knesset of the Disengagement Plan on 16th February 2005. The first months of 2005 witnessed a determined campaign of opposition to disengagement waged by Israeli residents of the Gaza Strip and West Bank, and their supporters. This campaign began with a strong sense of confidence among its adherents that the Disengagement could be prevented. Public support for the Disengagement Plan, however, remained consistently high in the months leading up to implementation. Polls revealed a rate of support of around 70% among the Israeli public for the plan.

On 7th August, just a week before the commencement of Disengagement, Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu resigned his Cabinet post, prior to the final Cabinet ratification of the first phase of Disengagement. This vote was carried in the Cabinet by 17 votes to 5. Netanyahu explained his reasons for resigning as deriving from his fears of a surge of terrorism following the Disengagement. He considered that this would take place both because Israel would no longer be able to control events in Gaza, and because the withdrawal would be perceived by Palestinian rejectionists as a vindication of their violent tactics. "The withdrawal," Netanyahu said in a statement following his resignation, "endangers Israel's security, divides its people and sets the standard of the withdrawal to the 1967 border."

The Hamas victory in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections of 25th January 2006 has been cited by some as influenced to some degree by the perception that the movement's violence had produced the Disengagement. Such a contention, however, remains open to question. Other issues -most importantly anger at the perceived corruption of the Fatah-led PA, and the general phenomenon of popularity of Islamist candidates

wherever genuinely free elections have been held in the Arab world- must also be considered in this regard. (E. Yaari: 2005).

There is little to add to this summary account, save to suggest a degree of cynicism involved on the Israeli side - given the Israeli public's unpopularity of Israel's attempt to govern Gaza from within - coupled with the reluctance of successive Israeli governments, to move forward any meaningful peace negotiations.

In this context it is worth quoting from a Jewish source about the post-2006 change in the complexion of successive Israeli governments

The religious Zionist movement began to make the idea of Eretz Yisrael (the biblical land of Israel as opposed to the state of Israel) much more of a central focus of its mainstream ideology. With the energy of the traditional kibbutz movement fading, the religious Zionist movement emerged as the new face of settlement. The ascension of Likud, a party with deep Revisionist roots, launched this ideology into the general mainstream. The popularity of the idea of settling the land, coupled with the strategic desire to be able to control and defend it, led to the increased creation of settlements in these new areas that had been started by Labor. While not all settlers were from the Religious Zionist movement, this group certainly made up the greatest number. (Levine n.d.)

In fact, this had effectively been the case since 1976. With the demise of Labour. Moreover, Menachim Begin who ruled a Prime Minister from 1977 to 1983 was an avowed Revisionist Zionist.

In 2010, Human Rights Watch looked at both the West Bank and East Jerusalem, it found that:

the two-tier system in effect in both areas provides generous financial benefits and infrastructure support to promote life in Jewish settlements, while deliberately withholding basic services, punishing growth, and imposing harsh conditions on Palestinian communities. Such different treatment on the basis of race, ethnicity, and national origin that is not narrowly tailored to legitimate goals violates the fundamental prohibition against discrimination under human rights law.

Israeli policies control many aspects of the day-to-day life of Palestinians who live in Area C (the West Bank) and East Jerusalem. Among the discriminatory burdens imposed on Palestinians that Human Rights Watch found are Israeli practices of expropriating land from Palestinians for settlements and their supporting infrastructure; blocking Palestinians from using roads and reaching agricultural lands; denying access to electricity and water; denying building permits for houses, schools, clinics, and infrastructure; and demolishing homes and even entire communities. Such measures have limited the expansion of Palestinian villages and imposed severe hardships on residents, including leaving them with limited access to medical care. (Human Rights Watch 2010)

In 2014 – Operation Protective Edge

Until the recent 2023 Israeli offensive in Gaza the most severe conflict between Israel and Hamas was Operation Protective Edge in 2014, involving a three-week invasion of Gaza:

On July 8, 2014, in response to a barrage of rockets and missiles on its population centers from the Gaza Strip, Israel launched heavy air and artillery strikes against the Islamist terror group Hamas that had ruled the area since 2007. As these failed to stop the attacks, on July 17, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) invaded the Strip in strength. After three weeks of heavy fighting, the IDF withdrew to the international border and sustained the air campaign until a cease-fire came into effect on August 26.

Operation Protective Edge, as the campaign was codenamed, was Israel's third war against Hamas in five years, and, unlike the previous two encounters, its outcome has been far from conclusive. While Hamas sustained heavy casualties, and its military capabilities were seriously degraded, it tenaciously fought against a superior enemy and managed to subject most of Israel's population to constant rocket and missile attacks for seven full weeks. With both sides claiming victory and Palestinian-Israeli relations on a downward spiral, a fourth Gaza war seems only a matter of time. (Shamir 2015)

In 2023 this prophesy was fulfilled, though with massively increased hatred, violence, and vengeance.

In 2022, Amnesty International reported:

Israeli forces killed 151 Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and injured 9,875, according to OCHA-OPT, amid a surge of military incursions that involved excessive use of force, including unlawful killings and apparent extrajudicial executions.⁴ Defense for Children International-Palestine reported that Israeli forces or settlers killed 36 children across the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

On 11 May, Israeli soldiers killed Shirin Abu Akleh, a Palestinian-US Al Jazeera correspondent, and injured her colleague, while they were covering an Israeli army raid in Jenin Camp. In September, the Israeli authorities admitted that an Israeli soldier “likely” killed the journalist but concluded that no criminal offence had been committed.

In the West Bank, 175 permanent checkpoints and other roadblocks, as well as scores of temporary irregular barriers and a draconian permit regime, supported by a repressive biometric surveillance system, continued to control, and fragment Palestinian communities.

In October, Israeli authorities placed additional restrictions on freedom of movement in the occupied West Bank reportedly in response to Palestinian attacks on Israeli soldiers and civilians, through sweeping and arbitrary closures that severely disrupted everyday life and amounted to unlawful collective punishment. In April, the Israeli army closed checkpoints into Jenin in a move that appeared designed to stifle Jenin’s businesses and trade with Palestinian citizens of Israel. In October, Israeli forces re-imposed a closure on Jenin and closed off Nablus for

three weeks, and Shufat refugee camp in occupied East Jerusalem for over a week, gravely affecting the freedom of movement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian civilians living in those areas and restricting access to medical aid and other essential services.

According to COGAT, a unit of the defence ministry, Israel revoked the permits to work in Israel of 2,500 Palestinians as a means of collective punishment.

A new procedure issued by the Israeli military authorities came into effect in October, restricting the ability of foreign passport holders to live with their Palestinian spouses in the West Bank by limiting their visas to a maximum of six months, requiring couples to request permanent residency status in the West Bank, which is subject to Israeli approval.

These two reports, eight years apart, indicate the nature and control exerted by Israel - via its government and its armed force the IDF - as an illegal occupying power. Small wonder that there is resistance, including non-violent, violent, and armed resistance from the Palestinian people (not simply terrorists).

2006 to 2023 - A Summary

The “optimism” of the Sharon government about any stimulus produced by the Oslo Accords and Disengagement has not been borne out in the period from 2006 to the present. The evidence is of continuing conflict and a resistance from successive and increasingly right-wing Israeli governments to engage in any meaningful peace negotiations, not only with Hamas (explained by the Israelis by designating Hamas a terrorist organization dedicated to eliminating Israel, as it did earlier with the PLO), but also with the Palestinian Authority governing the West Bank. *Britannica* (C) illustrates the problem:

Speaking at the United Nations General Assembly after the withdrawal, Sharon stated that “the end of Israeli control over and responsibility for the Gaza Strip allows the Palestinians, if they so wish, to develop their economy and build a peace-seeking society, which is developed, free, law-abiding, and transparent and which adheres to democratic principles.” In 2006 the PA held the second set of parliamentary elections in its history, and Hamas won the majority of seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). The inclusion of Hamas in the coalition government resulted in international sanctions. A power struggle between the PA’s main factions ensued and became increasingly violent, resulting in a Fatah-led PA in the West Bank and the takeover of the Gaza Strip by Hamas. Concerned over the hostility of Hamas toward Israel, in 2007 the Israeli government implemented a blockade of the territory, limiting both imports and exports as well as movement into and out of the Gaza Strip. Since then, the territory has been the focus of frequent conflict between Israel and Hamas, including notably destructive escalations in 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2021, and the blockade (although eased at times) was never lifted. On October 7, 2023, Hamas conducted the deadliest attack on Israel since its independence in 1948.

It could be argued that the concern of Netanyahu about the security situation following the Israeli disengagement from Gaza has been proven correct. However, this would be to ignore the Israeli external, repressive “management” of the territory. This Israeli continuous military and civil repression (including daily limitation of energy and water supplies), explains even if it does not necessarily justify, the armed resistance of Hamas. This resistance has been principally via, largely unsuccessful, rocket attacks across the border and into Israel.

During this period, the systematic military and civil repression by Israel of Palestinians living in all three Israeli-administered Palestinian enclaves, and the severely constrained and abuses of the civil rights of the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel, is the background to the continued resistance of Palestinians. Israeli Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#)’s right-wing coalition has focused on the West Bank, attempting to create the conditions for annexation. In the first half of 2023, Netanyahu’s government pushed any possibility of a two-state solution further away by advancing or approving permits for 13,000 new housing units in West Bank settlements, the highest number recorded since 2012. However, the concentration on this enclave led to neglect of the security situation in Gaza, leading to the October 7th incursion by Hamas and the resulting loss of 1200 Israeli lives and the taking of over 200 hostages by Hamas and other militant groups.

This horrific event - war crime though it is – must be set in a historical context. In an article in Foreign Affairs by Mark Lynch on October 14, 2023 prior to the Israeli onslaught on Gaza.

Since 2007, Israel and Hamas have maintained an uneasy arrangement. Israel keeps up a stifling blockade over Gaza, which severely restricts the territory’s economy and imposes great human costs while also empowering Hamas by diverting all economic activity to the tunnels and black markets it controls. During the episodic outbreaks of conflict—in 2008, 2014, and again in 2021—Israel massively bombarded the densely populated Gazan urban centers, destroying infrastructure and killing thousands of civilians while degrading Hamas’s military capabilities and establishing the price to be paid for provocations. All of this did little to loosen Hamas’s grip on power.

The difficulties the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) experienced in a brief ground offensive in 2014 tempered its ambitions to attempt more. Israeli officials waved off perennial complaints about the humanitarian effects of the blockade. Instead, the country was content to keep Gaza on the back burner while accelerating its increasingly provocative moves to expand its settlements and control over the West Bank.

Hamas had other ideas. Although many analysts have attributed its shifting strategy to Iranian influence, Hamas had its own reasons to change its behavior and attack Israel. Its 2018 gambit to challenge the blockade through mass nonviolent mobilization—popularly known as the “Great March of Return”—ended with massive bloodshed as Israeli soldiers opened fire on the protesters. In 2021, by contrast, Hamas leaders believed that they scored significant political gains with the broader Palestinian public by firing missiles at Israel during intense clashes in Jerusalem over Israeli confiscation of Palestinian homes and over Israeli leaders’ provocations in the al Aqsa Mosque complex: one of Islam’s holiest sites, which some Israeli extremists want to tear down to build a Jewish

temple. (Lynch 2023)

The situation in October 2023, including the disproportionate Israeli military response to the Hamas atrocities has reached a climactic point in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. There has been widespread international condemnation of the level of ferocity, and arbitrary military attacks by Israel on the people of Gaza Israel has responded by dismissing this condemnation by either disingenuous comments about avoiding civilian targeting or, worse, attempting to justify the measures by elaborating horrific accounts of the October 7th atrocities, with an irrelevant linking of the attacks to the Nazi holocaust, serving only to promote an atmosphere for vengeance among the Israeli population. Hamas will have been expected such a disproportionate response to the events of October 7th and Israel has not disappointed them.

The recent December 22nd, 2023, Security Council Resolution calling for a to permit humanitarian aid to be provided in Gaza is the maximum that could be agreed without incurring a US veto in the Security Council, even then the US abstained. It will be argued that language is important and that this wording, well short of calling for a ceasefire, represents a move forward. On the ground in Gaza little appears to have changed, the Israeli military onslaught continues.

However, language matters in another context. The fact that Hamas is called a terrorist group (essentially at the behest of Israel) is irrelevant. So was the PLO, but negotiation took place with them. In this context it is interesting that the New Zealand government distinguishes between the Hamas military wing that it classifies as a terrorist group and the Hamas political authority which it does not. Hamas is a threat to Israel because Israel is a threat to Palestinians, as the history, especially since 1976 and even more so since 2006, demonstrates. Israel has been the main aggressor during this period, persistently and consistently abusing the human rights of Palestinians. This position is an essential thread in the argument of this article, justified by the historical narrative over the past 75 years.

The Position of Israel in 2023

Israel operates a vast military apparatus where military service is mandatory for citizens over the age of 18. In 2020, the country spent \$22bn (12% of its GDP) on its military, according to a database compiled by SIPRI, a research institute focused on conflict and armaments. For 50 years there has not been any *direct* external threat from any outside state (except the Israeli government's false threat of an attack from Iran) one might ask why this massive defence?

Partly this is because of Western commentators and governments representing Israel as an isolated outpost of liberal democracy set within an alien and hostile environment. Aside from Hezbollah, which is not a state actor and whose threat is not to the integrity of the state of Israel, this picture is misleading. The real threat is from Israel using its massive military defence force turned inwards, targeted on the containment and repression of the Palestinians in their occupied or constrained areas of Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem.

Although 20% of the population of Israel are Palestinian Arabs, and generally they have always enjoyed the same legal rights as Jewish Israelis, there is discrimination. In 2018, among other provisions, the law removed Arabic as an official language but gave it a "special status," declared Israel the nation-state of the Jewish people, and said the Jewish people have a unique "right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel." Moreover, the Palestinian Arabs in East

Jerusalem have only permanent residency status, that can be removed Since 1967, more than fourteen thousand East Jerusalem Palestinians have had their residency revoked, according to a compilation of data from several government agencies by Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem (US Council on Foreign Relations 2023).

In both Gaza and the West Bank continuous constraints on Palestinian civil liberties are imposed with occasional arrests, arbitrary woundings. and even killings by police and the IDF. In the case of Gaza, in retaliation for rockets sent into Israel by Hamas Israel's response is frequently a disproportionate use of military force. With examples in 2014 and the current gross disproportionate bombing, shelling, and substantial illegal displacement of civilians, including UN humanitarian personnel, killing, on current December 2023 estimates. around 20,000 Palestinian civilians, 70% of whom are women and children.

The historical evidence covering the development of the Israeli state, indicated summarily above, clearly illustrates how this development has been punctuated by violent conflicts. Not all of these have been the fault of Israel, especially the 1967 and 1973 wars of aggression threatening the security of the Israeli state. However, the aggressive expansionism of the early years by successive Israeli governments led to resentment among the displaced Palestinians and outside supporters in other countries. Nonetheless, since 1973 there has been no credible external threat to Israel's security. Rather has Israel used its considerable military force internally against the Palestinians, forced to live in the three territorial enclaves, occupied territories, and suffering increasing repression and severely constrained civil rights. Not surprisingly, since 2007, and especially, in Gaza since the advent of Hamas governance, there has been increasing Palestinian resistance, including armed resistance, from the military wing of Hamas. However, resistance has mainly been via civil disobedience, including the non-violent aspects of the intifadas.

No serious attempt has been made by Israel during the period from 2007 to engage in meaningful peace negotiations, either with Hamas or with the PA, the latter having eschewed violence. This unsatisfactory situation culminated, almost inevitably, in the October 7th military incursion by Hamas fighters into southern Israel, accompanied by the atrocities perpetrated by Palestinian groups on Israel citizens following the military incursion. These atrocities have been, and should be, condemned, not only by Israel: they amount to war crimes.

Nonetheless, there are war crimes committed in civil and other wars the world over. The issue now is whether the entirely disproportionate and savage collective punishment, involving many thousands of deaths and injuries, the majority of which are women and children, meted out to the civilian population of the citizens of Gaza in the war, should be similarly condemned. Clearly it should be condemned as a war crime, as many jurists believe.

The recent, January 2004, preliminary judgement of the UN ICJ on there being a prima facie case for genocide being committed by Israel is further proof of the pressure on Israel for a ceasefire and a move towards a two-state solution to the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The question is how to move forward with a solution, made both more urgent but also more difficult since October 7th and its aftermath. Whatever they may think, Israelis need a long-term solution to ensure their security. Neither separation barriers nor collective punishment (or the destruction of Hamas) will provide the security Israelis crave.

Running the current distorted and massively discriminatory single-state solution, as an occupying power, is unviable for Israel. The situation is kept under control only by the regular exercise of disproportionate military power to sustain a virtual apartheid structure. It is to a potentially viable longer-term solution, for Israelis and Palestinians, that we will turn in the final sections. A solution will not be easy to reach but is essential.

The Position if the Palestinians in 2023

The historic catalogue of the key events that have punctuated the political narrative chosen by Israel since its inception, and especially since 1976, to subjugate the Palestinians in order to attempt to achieve security – and the failure to achieve this objective – have exerted a heavy human toll on Palestinians. Additionally, Israel's refusal to countenance a Palestinian state bordering Israel has closed off political options. Inevitably, these outcomes have led to continued resistance from Palestinians, including violence against Israel and Israeli deaths.

Subjected to a dystopian existence, the current options for the Palestinians are severely limited. Neither resistance via civil disobedience, while recognizing the right for Israel to exist (essentially the policy adopted by the Palestinian Authority for 30 years) nor the use of limited, but intimidatory military violence against Israelis (the Hamas position) has not changed the material situation for Palestinians, nor persuaded Israel to accept the creation of a neighbouring Palestinian state. The only realistic hope for a solution and full, independent self-governing status for Palestinians is to ask the international community to act to propose a viable alternative to the current untenable situation.

Essentially, this will mean the United States removing its effective sponsorship of an Israel imposing the dystopian existence on Palestinian society. In the next sections we will examine the only viable solution to the perennial conflict available to the two protagonists and the US and the international community. Whether Israel (or the US) accepts it or not the Israeli/Palestinian conflict is an international problem.

Potential Solutions

Two State Solution – Constraints

Despite the continuing advocacy by many Western states of the “two-state” solution, no-one who has any close knowledge of the physical and political geography of Palestine, including Israel, believes that this solution is remotely feasible. As important is the fact that for almost 20 years successive Israeli governments have refused to contemplate the two-state solution, with a neighbouring Palestinian state.

The reason for the idea being still in international circulation, despite its infeasibility, is simply that its formal abandonment would lead to the conclusion that there is no solution. This would be wrong. This article suggests that there is a viable alternative, and one that will have some strong academic and political support among both Israeli and Palestinian communities. However, the difficulty is not simply that the current Israeli/Palestinian situation appears not to offers up a

path to its resolution. It is rather that the almost 200-year international investment in transitioning to - and now maintaining - a global polity of independent, territorially-bounded, sovereign nation-states may have to be suspended to find a solution?

Irrespective of the unconventional view of the author of this paper that by the end of this century the existing model of global polity may have changed out of all recognition, we are clearly *not* at such a point of inflection. A singular solution, to be regarded as viable, and not necessarily setting a precedent for other territorial disputes, is available to dissolve the current impasse, as suggested below. Nonetheless, a practical solution is radical and requires substantial political investment by the major nations of the world, especially those in the Middle-East, and support and confirmation by the UN, both by the Security Council and the General Assembly.

If the resistance of the Israeli governing political elites were to abandon their effective veto on a two-state solution, involving a neighbouring Palestinian state, there will still be a major barrier to such a solution, namely the geographical size of the area of Palestine and its resource endowment (especially a water) are too small to accommodate two states. Any such solution would require a significant expansion of territory from the Arab states contiguous with Israel: that is Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon. However, these Middle-Eastern states already have significant numbers of Palestinians residing within their borders, either as refugees or as citizens, some of whom may wish to relocate.

Such an expansion of land territory and access to resources would also enable the open immigration policy of Israel to Jews world-wide to continue without the land pressures currently experienced. The exact new boundaries will be a matter of negotiation between the neighbouring states involved, Israel, and the Palestinians, under the auspices of an internationally chaired conference. Preferably the international grouping should represent the UN Security Council, but another unique internationally supported grouping may be required, if the former suggestion proves infeasible or unreasonably delays the negotiations. Any such enlarged territory to facilitate a two-state solution would have to be an issue for the UN to ratify at both the General Assembly and the Security Council.

There is also a more radical initiative, still involving an expansion of territory, though with perhaps a smaller territorial expansion involved. This is the idea of a confederal state solution.

A Confederal Solution²

Noting the comments in the above section, it will be imperative to appreciate the need for an expanded territory for the confederation, beyond the current Israeli and Palestinian controlled areas, and into the surrounding neighbouring state territories, though perhaps not as substantial as for the two-state proposal.

The concept of a solution to the Israeli Palestinian impasse being a *confederal* solution is not a new idea. In recent years Middle-Eastern, Israeli, and Western academics and commentators have brought forward detailed proposals along these lines. Some of these are listed in the bibliography to this article. One useful comprehensive paper was published by Columbia University in 2017 (Cohen et al 2017). Here we will sketch out the main guidelines and also indicate how to move from the current conflict to a position where the proposition can sensibly be discussed by Israelis and Palestinians

as a credible political solution. Assuming there will not be an instant acceptance of the confederal state solution by the two principals, the idea should be taken up by the international community via the UN.

A confederal structure will permit each of the two participating self-governing states to control and enforce its own borders within the confederation (similar to the EU), a likely *sine qua non* for Israel. The two main issues to be resolved will be a) the extended geographical basis of the new confederation and also b) what powers will be discharged at the confederal level, including the accompanying democratic structures. These are clearly difficult issues, the resolution of which will be a priority for negotiators. However, these issues have been discussed in academic papers, some of which are cited in the references to this article *and there are real world examples of analogous confederal states, such as Belgium* Further academic work needs to be initiated urgently, to inform the main potential discussants/negotiators; the wider global political community, and the general public, about the potential for resolution of this seemingly intransigent national, regional, and global problem.

How to Get There?

Clearly, however viable may be considered a confederal solution, the key political question is how to move from the damaging (for both sides) current impasse - *which is dangerous (for the whole Middle-East) and indeed the world-* to an acceptance, by both Israel and the Palestinians, that such a solution is required and would benefit each of them by ensuring security and prosperity for both peoples. It seems unlikely, however, that either party will move *voluntarily* to discussing the viability of a confederal solution. Hence, the initial impetus is likely to have to come from the international community. The eventual involvement of the US in negotiations will be necessary, and the UN, in due course. However, the initiation of informal talks - between the two principals, with an independent interlocutor - should perhaps take place secretly in a small country, as it did in Norway with the Oslo Accords in 1992/1993, via FAFO, a trade union think tank: only later was the US involved. A further reason for not involving the US at the outset is to allow for whichever US Administration is in power to manage the almost inevitable initial hostility to any such solution likely to be evinced by the Jewish/Israeli lobby in the US. This situation has prevented the US from being an “honest broker” and at time of stress, as in 2023, from being able to avoid being complicit in Israel’s military and civil aggression.

Even attempting to replicate the Oslo Accords approach will be difficult as the positions of both Israel and Hamas are less receptive to any dialogue than were Israel and the PLO in 1993. Moreover, the negotiators on the Palestinian side would have to be both Hamas and the Fatah as the Palestinian Authority. On the other hand, the Israeli/Palestinian situation in 2023 has become too globally significant to be ignored, and Israel is in danger of being isolated in the international organizational context, to allow the conflict to be unresolved. The current dangerous situation represents a climactic moment in history. The issue at stake is the essential rights of the 7 million Palestinians, living in the Israeli-constructed enclaves to autonomous self-government, without the constraints imposed by Israel, *while* the guaranteeing the complete security of Israel and its people. The hardened, irrational attitudes of the moment, accompanied by bitterness and vengeance, must be capable of being moderated sufficiently to allow an objective peaceful path to be started.

Conclusion

It is clear from the historical evidence outlined in this article that the world's 20th century positive response - whatever the historical pressures may have been - to the Zionist call for a sovereign independent site to be located in an arbitrarily tightly drawn enclave in Palestine *was a tragic global political and economic mistake*. This mistake has been compounded by an aggressive Zionist approach to expanding Israel's initial territory by force from Day One (the *Nakba*). In 1967 and 1973 there were internationally illegal attacks on Israel from surrounding Arab nations to which Israel had to respond, supported by continual substantial military and other aid from the USA. Nonetheless, and especially in the 50 years since 1973, there have not been any military attacks on Israel by its neighbouring nation-states. The state of Israel must unequivocally continue to exist, and to be able to live in peace, with its security guaranteed.

Unfortunately, from 1976, with the dominance of Likud in successive Israeli governments (informed by a right-wing nationalist, Revisionist Zionism, antipathetic to idea of a Palestinian state), an effective apartheid approach towards Palestinians has been pursued. This misbegotten policy, enforced by substantial superior armed force and policing of the civilian Palestinian population in three tightly-controlled enclaves Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem has failed to achieve the security fervently desired by all Israelis. Moreover, it has enforced the failure of attempts to establish a separate, sovereign Palestinian state. despite international endorsement.

The violent historical evolution of the state of Israel, has been charted in this article. The recent, 2023 actions represent the most vicious military bombardment and displacement of Palestinian civilians since 1948. *The Israeli claim that the horror and savagery of the violence inflicted on the Israeli women and children by Palestinians on October 7th morally justifies the collective punishment and indiscriminate slaughter thousands of women and children in Gaza is based on a moral calculus that no ethical theory can justify.* Notwithstanding the historical analysis of the state of Israel, culminating in the current appalling situation at the end of 2023, it must be possible for a just peace between Israelis and Palestinians to be achieved.

To achieve either a revised two-state solution or the recommended confederal solution it will be necessary - with the cooperation, willing or not of Israel and Hamas, and of its bordering states - for the international community (including the US) to endorse and pursue the implementation of a solution. The outcome will allow the Israelis and the Palestinians each to live in a self-governing entity that respects the societal rights of each community, in a geographical area which is large enough to provide adequate natural resources to develop a prosperous country. Such an outcome may seem idealistic at the moment, but is essential for not just Israelis and Palestinians, but for the world community to ensure that a resolution comes about. It is for the political elites involved, especially in the US, to recognise their responsibilities to secure the resolution.

There will be considerable opposition, not only from Israel, Hamas, and possibly the US, but also from a plethora of independent nation-states concerned at the precedent that such a move to a confederal solution might set. However, the Israeli/Palestinian situation **is unique**, as the historical record indicates, and would not set a precedent. Other conflicts, for instance in Sudan, in Czechoslovakia, and in the Balkans, have resulted in boundary changes, though, perhaps

regrettably, the changes have created new individual independent states, though within relatively unconstrained geographical areas. There may be objections from the Arab states contiguous with Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon, and perhaps from others. However, some of these Middle-Eastern states already have significant numbers of Palestinians residing within their borders, either as refugees or as citizens, some of whom may wish to relocate. It should be possible to gain wider agreement to the proposed two-state or confederal state solution, if only to end the interminable cycle of violence, and the wider threat to peace in the region, and globally. For Israel, its open immigration system would allow an increase of Jewish people settling in Israel, able to live in a peaceful self-governing jurisdiction with safe, controlled borders.

The world must protect *itself* from the damage inflicted on the global polity by Israel's failed, damaging policies and act to rectify the initial errors of 1948 and the following years. Israelis must have security and control of its borders for as long as they are needed, plus political and economic control within its jurisdiction, as must the Palestinians in their separate jurisdiction. These requirements can be accomplished within either a two-state solution or a confederal system. Full detailed specification of the chosen system will, of course, be required during the long international and national negotiations on the operational structures involved. The international discussion should begin as soon as the current conflict is ended via a complete ceasefire.

Dr. Michael Lloyd

Footnotes

¹ This section draws on Beauchamp (2018) and Jewish Voice(n.d.)

² This section draws on Elazar (n.d.)

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