

The Arab–Israeli Conflict

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OVERVIEW

The term 'Arab–Israeli conflict' refers to a condition of belligerency between the Arab states and Israel. The first Arab–Israeli War began immediately after the proclamation of the State of Israel on 14 May 1948 with assaults by Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and elements from the Iraqi and Lebanese armies. Subsequent wars in this conflict were the 1956 Suez crisis, where Israel, Britain, and France attacked Egypt, the 1967 and 1973 wars, and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. In addition, border tensions and armed clashes between Israel and Arab neighbours were frequent in the early 1950s and in the mid-1960s, the latter contributing to the 1967 war. Two Arab states, Egypt (1979) and Jordan (1994), have signed peace treaties with Israel, but tensions remain high because of the Palestinian question, Israeli settlement expansion in the occupied territories, and the American assault on Iraq in March 2003. For some in the George W. Bush administration, removing Saddam Hussein was seen as a move that would enable Israel to evade any peace agreement with the Palestinians and to consolidate its regional hegemony over its Arab neighbours.

Introduction

The Arab–Israeli conflict is a direct outgrowth of the Palestinian question that resulted from the inclusion of the Balfour Declaration (1917) in the mandate for Palestine. This obliged Britain to support Zionist aspirations to create a Jewish state against the wishes of

the Palestinian Arab inhabitants. These two conflicts, the Arab–Israeli and the Palestinian–Israeli, have frequently intersected, with the Palestinian question often serving as a major factor in Arab state rivalries as well as Arab–Israeli tensions.

Arab–Israeli hostility did not create alignments that paralleled the cold-war rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. The major dividing lines were among Arab states, which either sided with the United States or Great Britain during the 1950s and 1960s, or pursued a policy of non-alignment. Non-alignment permitted its adherents to deal with the West and the Soviet bloc, but often resulted in major arms deals with the Soviets and their East European satellites. This split frequently coincided with one between states such as Egypt and Syria that were governed by young, more radical military officers or politicians set against more conservative monarchies with close Western ties, such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Iraq until the 1958 Revolution.

Cold-war allegiances saw Jordan and Israel identified with Western powers, whereas Egypt and Syria were often linked to the Soviet Union. With respect to the Arab–Israeli conflict, Jordan, Egypt, and Syria, whatever their mutual animosities, were considered to be aligned against Israel.

A key element in examining the Arab–Israeli conflict is asking what conditions are required to resolve it. Realist theory has assumed a certain uniformity in states' calculations of their own interests based on their judgements of power relative to their rivals. For realists, 'Internal, domestic factors, including identity, are relatively marginal in determining state interests' (Telhami and Barnett 2002: 2; Peleg 2004: 101).

This chapter considers the question of identity politics as key to the definition of nationality, and whether such a definition corresponds to the basis of the state. Can conflicting visions of what constitutes the identity of the state and its security, based on religion, ethnicity, or language, block efforts for peaceful resolution of differences? To what extent can state actions and evaluations of what constitutes state security or insecurity represent the input of ideological actors whose views may endanger the state, not protect it? Here constructivism serves as a useful tool of analysis for explaining state actions within a realist framework; state interests are defined according to the ideology of the group/party that rules. Examples of developments addressing the approaches of realism, identity politics, and constructivism include the following, placed under different headings.

Realism

Many proponents of realism assume a common view of state interests by policy-makers within that state, including what constitutes the security of the state. Judgements of security reflect evaluation of power relationships between neighbouring or rival states. The following examples challenge that assumption.

Israel

Major differences emerged in the early 1950s as to what was required for the security of the state. There were two options: first, an 'activist', aggressive policy that assumed that Arabs would seek peace only once they had been crushed militarily. This was the doctrine known as the 'Iron Wall', espoused by Revisionists but held also by the Labor Zionist leadership centred in the first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion; and, secondly, a 'Weizmannist' policy that did not eschew force but sought to resolve disputes initially by

diplomacy and the mediation of outside agencies if necessary, such as the United Nations. This approach was linked to Moshe Sharett, first foreign minister of Israel, who succeeded Ben-Gurion briefly as prime minister in 1954–5.

Officials loyal to Ben-Gurion undertook military reprisals and activated a spy ring in Egypt in 1954 without informing the then prime minister, Moshe Sharett. Egyptian discovery of the spy ring played a role in Israeli reprisal actions in early 1955 against Egypt and contributed to the 1956 Suez crisis; the Israeli public was never informed at the time that the Egyptian charges were true.

In 1982 Ariel Sharon lied to the Israeli cabinet, and possibly to his prime minister, Menachem Begin. He assured them that the planned invasion of Lebanon was a limited one, when he intended to proceed to Beirut, destroy the PLO infrastructure there, and instigate a war with Syrian forces to oust them from Lebanon.

One of the major arguments for retaining the West Bank is security based; the territory would form a buffer against any assault from the east. But ideology plays a role here.

The West Bank forms part of ancient Israel, being known as Judaea and Samaria. Abandoning this region would violate the Likud party's platform, which insists on its retention. Ideology linked to national identity thus requires keeping the West Bank, even if this means that peace agreements with Arab states or with the Palestinians are unlikely. Conversely, the Israeli Labour Party has at times appeared willing to relinquish the West Bank in return for peace.

Egypt

Accounts suggest that Gamal Abd al-Nasser did not control his leading military advisers in the weeks leading up to the 1967 war, especially the Chief of Staff, Abd al-Flakim Amr, and Minister of Defense, Shams al-Din Badran. They pursued a more aggressive military posture than Nasser may have intended, creating the opportunity and justification for an Israeli attack. There was no agreement on policy at the outset of the crisis, thereby threatening state security.

United States

During the Nixon administration, major differences emerged over the conduct of Middle Eastern policy between the Secretary of State, William Rogers, and National Defense Secretary Henry Kissinger and President Richard Nixon. Rogers backed United Nations efforts to induce a ceasefire between Egypt and Israel in 1969–70 as a prelude to peace talks. Israel, encouraged by Kissinger and Nixon, opposed Rogers's efforts. They objected to UN involvement in a peace process that they believed the USA should control to the exclusion of its cold-war rival, the Soviet Union. Cold-war rivalry on a global scale, 'beating' the Soviets by controlling peace efforts, counted more than seeking resolution of regional disputes through international cooperation.

In the build-up to the American attack on Iraq in March 2003, the Pentagon and Vice-President Richard Cheney's office bypassed the State Department and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice in order to present false intelligence to President Bush. This intelligence served as a basis for war despite being repeatedly challenged by CIA analysts. This intelligence was produced in the Office of Special Plans in the Pentagon headed by Under-Secretary for Defense Douglas Feith, himself of a revisionist Zionist background (see below).

Identity Politics: Nationalism, Religion, and the State

Arab Nationalism

The Arab national idea in the twentieth century defined itself on the basis of language and culture, seeking to establish a unity of Arab peoples from Morocco to the Arabian Peninsula. Though it failed and has been replaced by identification with individual states and their boundaries, its symbolic power and rhetoric caused Western powers to seek to undermine it. But rivalry for leadership of the movement, especially between Egypt and Syria, proved destructive and ultimately became a major factor inciting the 1967 war.

Israel: Ideology and Identity

Factions have always differed on what lands were essential to constitute the state of Israel. Menachem Begin's Herut Party consistently advocated during the 1950s an immediate Israeli takeover not only of the West Bank but of Jordan as well to fulfil Revisionist Zionist expansionist principles. For Revisionists, Israel as a nation was and still is incomplete until its state boundaries embraced those attributed to ancient Israel. The Likud party platform calls for inclusion of the West Bank as essential to the fulfilment of Israel's destiny, whereas a majority of Israelis accept, with some territorial adjustments, a return to the pre-1967 war state, granting the Palestinians a state of their own. These conflicting approaches to the identity of Israel directly affect the peace process and call attention to the question of state security also.

Would Israel be more secure with the absorption of the West Bank and its Palestinian Arab population, thus weakening the nature and identity of a Jewish state? By the year 2020, it is predicted that the Palestinian Arab populations of the West Bank and Gaza, with the Israeli Arabs, will equal if not surpass the Jewish population of Israel. Or would Israel be more secure by withdrawing to boundaries resembling those of 1967, thus preserving its character as a Jewish state and entering into peace treaties with its Arab neighbours? In both cases, competing considerations of security are bound up with conflicting visions of what borders are required to constitute Israeli identity.

Further complicating the question is the likelihood that any Israeli effort to remove settlers from the West Bank would incite a civil war, threatening internal security. But avoidance of that possibility requires retaining the West Bank, undermining the likelihood of peace agreements with other Arab states.

Finally revisionist Zionist ideology assumes that Israel, as a Jewish state, can never achieve security because of anti-Semitism and Arab hostility unrelated to any actions Israel might undertake. Identity and insecurity become a 'mutually constitutive process' requiring constant reassurance through affirmation of military might (Weldes et al. 1999: 11; Peleg 2004: 111). By this logic, Arab hostility will be ongoing with or without a peace agreement, meaning that no peace is possible: 'a culture of insecurity feeds on itself as a self-fulfilling prophecy' (Peleg 2004: 106).

A complicating factor is that right-wing Israeli ambitions, whether religious or secular in origin, acquire great support from the worldwide Christian evangelical movement, and especially Christian fundamentalists in the United States. These Christian Zionists openly back Israeli retention of the West Bank, fund settlements, and view the ouster of the Palestinians as fulfilling Old Testament prophecy. They are a major factor in current

US Middle Eastern policy, with strong representation in Congress and close ties to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) lobby. In short, definitions of what constitutes the legitimate identity of Israel go beyond the views of its citizens to include those of ardent believers of a different religion in another country. Christian fundamentalist identity, to these believers, requires fulfilment of scripture through Israeli expansion, with major policy implications for resolution of Palestinian-Israeli problems.

Hamas/Islamic Jihad

Whereas official Palestinian policy recognizes Israel and supports a two-state solution, the major Islamic groups call for the eradication of Israel and the return of all former Palestine to Palestinian rule, preferably under an Islamic government. This definition of a Palestinian state, based on an Islamic identity, clearly conflicts with that offered by the Palestinian Authority and, as with Likud in Israel, establishes competing visions of the ideal state based on differing calculations of identity, full control of the homeland as opposed to compromise.

Clashes of Identity at Camp David, 2000

Two key issues obstructing agreement at Camp David were (1) sovereignty/control over the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif and (2) the Palestinian right of return. The first considers an area deemed sacred to both Jews and Muslims, with each side arguing for inclusion in its territory as basic to its identity. The second highlights events crucial to the national narratives of both Israelis and Palestinians. For many Israelis, their achievement of independence in 1948 was a triumph to be considered in itself, apart from its impact on others. For Palestinians, Israel's independence was their catastrophe (*nakba*).

Palestinians argue, and many Israeli analysts agree, that the Palestinians do not demand a literal right of return for all refugees who so wish, but Israeli acknowledgement of the principle of such a Palestinian right. This would entail Israeli recognition that Israel's actions in gaining their state created the Palestinian refugee problem. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has declared that he would never recognize any Israeli responsibility for the Palestinian refugee question, even if it thwarted a peace agreement.

The United States

Key members of the George W. Bush administration had links with the Israeli Likud party and advised Israel's newly elected Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, in 1996 to abandon the Oslo peace process in order to secure Israel's control of the West Bank.

They also argued for the overthrow of Iraq's Saddam Hussein as the first step in ensuring Israel's regional hegemony. Douglas Feith co-authored one paper, 'Clean Break', in June 1996 with Richard Perle (Perle 1996), and David Wurmser a second, 'Coping with Crumbling States: A Western and Israeli Balance of Power Strategy for the Levant' (Wurmser 1996). Feith, as noted, was later given the number three post in the Defense Department and Wurmser became Middle Eastern adviser to Vice President Richard Cheney, stepping down in December 2007. In short, Likud sympathizers held sway over much of Bush's Middle Eastern and especially Israeli-Palestinian initiatives, to the extent that, for one analyst, Bush 'subcontracted' Palestinian policy to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon during Bush's first term in office (Quandt 2005: 408).

From the Creation of Israel to the 1967 War

Great Britain handed over responsibility for Palestine to the United Nations in February 1947, setting the stage for the General Assembly's partition decision of November. Fighting quickly erupted between Zionist forces and Palestinians. Zionist military superiority enabled Jewish forces to gain control of the territory awarded them in the 1947 partition plan, resulting in the declaration of Israeli independence on 14 May 1948.

The Arab state assaults on Israel immediately following this declaration of independence failed, owing to Israeli military superiority and Arab disunity. Most backed the creation of a Palestinian state to be led by the former mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husayni, who then lived in Egypt. Transjordan, to become the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in 1948, opposed Palestinian self-determination, as did the Zionists, and accepted the idea of partition, hoping to divide Palestine with the new state of Israel. Jordan's Arab Legion fought mainly to preserve control of already occupied territory, to be known as the West Bank, and clashed with Israeli forces only when challenged for control of the city of Jerusalem, which was divided. Jordan's King Abdullah was assassinated in 1951 because of his negotiations with Zionists over the partition of Palestine.

Israel and the combatant Arab states signed armistice agreements between January and June 1949, but a state of war still existed and the Arab-Israeli conflict took shape. Arab states boycotted companies trading with Israel, and Egypt forbade Israeli ships from transiting the Suez Canal, although it permitted passage of foreign ships destined for Israel. Between 1948 and 1956 border tensions were strong, with frequent clashes between Israel and its neighbours, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt, especially Jordan.

The Suez Crisis of 1956: Background

During 1955 the focus of Arab-Israeli animosity shifted from the Jordanian front to the Egyptian, influenced by cold-war rivalries between the Soviet Union and the West for paramouncy in the region. Washington wanted Egypt to be the linchpin of a Middle Eastern alliance to form part of the West's containment policy towards the Soviet Union and world communism. However, Egypt's Gamal Abd al-Nasser, the young colonel who had taken over in a coup in July 1952, espoused the doctrine of neutrality or non-alignment between the cold-war rivals. When Britain arranged a security pact with Nuri al-Said of Iraq in February 1955 (the Baghdad Pact), this ignited severe inter-Arab rivalries and regional tensions.

At the same time, February 1955, Nasser suddenly found himself confronted by a military crisis with Israel. This stemmed from an agreement he had reached with Great Britain during the summer of 1954 for British withdrawal of forces from their two hundred-square-mile military base in the Suez Canal Zone, to be completed by June 1956. News of this pact led Israeli officials to activate a spy ring in Egypt without the knowledge of the prime minister, Moshe Sharett. The reason given was to buttress Israel's future security by forcing Britain to remain in the Suez Canal Zone, thus blocking the possibility of Egyptian troop movements into the Sinai. This would be done by having the spies blow up

installations frequented by Westerners, forcing Britain to conclude that it should remain to protect its citizens.

The logic of this plan was doubtful from its inception, and the spies were soon captured and placed on trial. The hanging of two spies and imprisonment of others gave the Israeli public the impression of Egyptian racism towards Israel, since Sharett, once aware of Israeli responsibility for the ring, could not openly admit it. Popular alarm at Israel's inability or unwillingness to counter Egypt's actions led to calls for Ben-Gurion's return to government, rewarded when he took over as Minister of Defense in January 1955, officially under Sharett's control but in reality independent.

In February 1955 Israel undertook a massive raid into Gaza that resulted in major Egyptian casualties. Justified as a reaction to Egyptian border attacks, the raid was primarily intended to reassure Israeli citizens of their government's military superiority in the face of Egyptian provocations in the aftermath of the spy trials. It proved to be a landmark in the Arab-Israeli conflict within the cold-war context. Concerned at Egyptian military weakness, Nasser signed an arms pact with the Soviet Union in September 1955, causing Israel to seek more arms from its supplier, France. Tensions mounted in July 1956 when the United States and Britain refused to finance the building of the Aswan Dam. Nasser retaliated by nationalizing the Suez Canal the same month.

As a result, Britain, France, and Israel, for different reasons, collaborated to attack Egypt. Israel sought to destroy the Egyptian blockade of shipping through the Tiran Straits into the Gulf of Aqaba, and to force Nasser's overthrow, the latter goal shared by France. Humiliated by France's forced withdrawal from Vietnam in 1954, French officials were determined to retain control of Algeria, which they had invaded in 1830 and colonized, making it a *département* of France. Convinced that Nasser was sustaining the Algerian Revolt that had erupted in 1955, France saw Nasser's ouster as ensuring its position in Algeria. The British government viewed the canal's nationalization as an intolerable affront by a former imperial possession and a threat to international order.

The Suez War and its Legacy

The Suez War of late October/November 1956 ended in political failure for France and Great Britain, despite the military defeat suffered by the Egyptians. Nasser's defiance in the face of aggression by the Western imperial powers, Britain and France, allied with Israel, which Arabs considered to be the product of British imperialism, reinforced his reputation as a defender of Arab nationalism. The war brought Israel ten years of peace on its Egyptian frontier, with open passage for Israeli shipping into the Gulf of Aqaba. United Nations Emergency Forces (UNEF) were stationed in the Sinai to serve as buffers between Israel and Egypt; Israel warned that Egyptian reimposition of the blockade of the Tiran Straits from the Sinai promontory of Sharm el-Sheikh would be a *casus belli*, a legitimate cause for war.

The Suez crisis was the last Middle Eastern war in which European powers strove to retain or reassert an imperial presence. Henceforth the Arab-Israeli conflict involved only regional forces, although the USA and the Soviets, along with European countries, were heavily involved in supplying arms to Arab states and Israel.

The 1967 War, Arab Nationalist Rivalries, and the Re-emergence of the Palestinian Factor

In contrast to the Suez crisis, the preliminaries to the 1967 Arab–Israeli War directly involved Palestinian factions; Palestinians served competing Arab state interests while seeking to define their own objectives. The war's aftermath introduced a new stage in the Arab–Israeli conflict, whose territorial ramifications remain unresolved into the twenty-first century.

Arab Rivalries

The 1967 war stemmed as much from Arab nationalist debates and rivalries as from direct Arab–Israeli hostilities.

Following its secession from the United Arab Republic (1958–61), Syria impugned Nasser's Arab nationalist credentials and tried to strengthen its own by accusing him of evading further confrontations with Israel. These charges and counter-charges became a staple of Egyptian–Syrian–Iraqi invective, as did similar accusations hurled by Jordan's King Husayn; both leftist and conservative governments used the same propaganda, inspired by Egyptian claims of being in the vanguard of the Arab liberation movement. The symbols of Nasser's supposed fear of challenging Israel were the UNEF forces stationed in the Sinai since the Suez War of 1956. Syria especially accused Egypt of hiding behind the UNEF because of Syrian–Israeli confrontations in 1963 over Syrian development of a water diversion system that Israel attacked and destroyed.

Palestinians and a concern for the Palestinian question became embroiled in these inter-Arab disputes. At an Arab League meeting in Cairo in January 1964 called to discuss Syrian–Israeli clashes, Egypt's Nasser agreed to back the formation of an official organization that represented the Palestinians, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Nasser intended to use the PLO to focus Palestinian attention on political concerns under Egyptian control. Egyptian sponsorship of PLO activities would counter Syrian charges of ignoring the Palestinians while defusing Syrian calls for war with Israel.

Syria continued to incite tensions with Israel, if only to bolster its own Ba'athist image as the leader of Arab nationalism. With Egypt controlling the PLO, Syria turned to a small, revolutionary group, Fatah. Founded in 1959 in Kuwait by young Palestinians who included Yasser Arafat, Fatah rejected the PLO as a tool of Egypt. Dedicated to Israel's destruction, Fatah, in 1965, began undertaking raids into Israel, sponsored by Syria.

Frequently launched from Jordan, not Syria, these incursions and Israeli reprisals against Jordan and later Syria inflamed Arab–Israeli and inter-Arab tensions throughout 1966 and into 1967, especially once Syria had become directly involved in skirmishes with Israel in early 1967.

The 1967 War

In May Israel threatened Syria with possible retaliatory strikes, leading the Soviets to warn Nasser, falsely, that Israel had massed forces on the Syrian border. Eager to boost his anti-Israeli image, Nasser sent Egyptian troops into the Sinai Peninsula on 14 May 1967. They

oust UNEF forces from the Sinai, including Sharm el-Sheikh overlooking the Straits of Tiran, and, in response to taunts from Jordan and Syria, with whom it had established military alliances, reimposed a blockade of those straits to Israeli shipping. Nasser thus recreated the circumstances that had been in place previous to the Suez War of 1956. Egypt's actions, motivated primarily to prove its nationalist credentials against Syrian claims, established the *casus belli* for Israel that it had proclaimed in 1957.

Israel attacked Egypt on 5 June 1967 after being informed by the United States that an Egyptian envoy would arrive in the USA on 7 June to seek terms for resolving the crisis peacefully (Schwar 2004). With the entrance of Jordan and Syria into the war, Israel conquered and occupied the West Bank and the Golan Heights in addition to the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula. Israel immediately annexed East Jerusalem, with its religious sites holy to Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, and declared that unified Jerusalem would remain for ever the capital of the Israeli state. Hundreds of thousands of West Bank and Gaza Palestinians now fell under Israeli rule.

The 1967 War and its Legacy: Security Council Resolution 242

The consequences of the 1967 war have defined the parameters of negotiations to resolve the Arab–Israeli conflict ever since. Israel declared that it would return territories in exchange for full peace agreements, the extent of the lands involved left undefined. Arab countries, meeting at Khartoum, Sudan, in August 1967, issued a document that called for full Israeli withdrawal but without entering negotiations with that country. Still, the Khartoum Declaration was seen as presenting diplomatic opportunities, especially since Egypt's Nasser sided with Jordan's King Husayn in seeking international intervention via the United Nations. Syrian refusal to consider negotiations was consistent with Syrian hostility towards Israel prior to the war, as was Palestinian rejection of talks. For the Palestinians, however, the situation was more complicated. To have had Arab states recognize Israel would have meant acceptance of refugee status for Palestinians as a result of the 1948 wars, a condition in which there was no Palestinian political entity.

Palestinians sought to regain all of pre-1967 Israel or former Palestine, a position proclaimed in the modified 1968 PLO charter, which referred to the attainment of this goal by 'armed struggle'. Palestinian groups and the PLO, with Arafat as its head from 1969 onward, constantly opposed international efforts to resolve the results of the 1967 war unless the Palestinian political objective—self-determination—was considered. This explains their attempts to undermine or later modify the document considered the basis of negotiations to resolve the changes brought about by that war, Security Council Resolution 242 (SCR 242).

Passed by the United Nations in November 1967, SCR 242 called for Arab–Israeli settlement of the consequences of the war based on exchanges of occupied land in return for peace. Its deliberate ambiguity led to conflicting interpretations at the Arab–Israeli state level, but none at all for the Palestinians.

Declaring its intent to achieve 'a just and lasting peace' for the region, the resolution condemned 'the acquisition of territory by war' and called for all states 'to live in peace in secure and recognized boundaries'. SCR 242's key statement was its clause stating that Israel should withdraw 'from territories occupied in the recent conflict'. This expression deliberately omitted the article 'the' before the word 'territories', owing to Israel's

insistence that it should not be required to withdraw from *all* the territories it had occupied. Israel argued that the resolution's statement that all states should live 'within secure and recognized boundaries' required that it retain some territories acquired in the war in order to establish those secure boundaries it had lacked prior to the war.

SCR 242 referred to the Palestinians solely as refugees whose condition would be resolved through Arab-Israeli state negotiations. As they had feared, the Palestinians were not considered to be a people with legitimate political aspirations. The PLO from this time onwards strove to block any settlement that enshrined their refugee status while working to modify SCR 242 to permit Palestinian access to negotiations as a people with acknowledged political rights.

From the 1967 War to the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty

In the aftermath of the 1967 war, Arab states worked to recover lands taken by Israel in that conflict by both military and diplomatic means. Their strategies differed according to their perceptions of their interests.

The War of Attrition

Egypt undertook a war of attrition from 1968 to 1970, combating Israel across the Suez Canal. Although Israel was the victor militarily, its triumph was marred by significant casualties and ultimate setback. Its military advantage, especially air superiority, led Israel to bomb targets inside Egypt and not just on the canal—raids designed to humiliate Nasser and cause his downfall. Instead, these attacks brought the Soviet Union more directly into the Arab-Israeli conflict. Nearly 15,000 Soviet troops and pilots were shifted to Egypt to bolster its defences.

This massive Soviet presence altered the cold-war equation in the Arab-Israeli conflict and led the United States, under the Nixon administration, to pursue a contradictory policy. Its Secretary of State, William Rogers, backed UN efforts to institute a ceasefire between Israel and Egypt, achieved in August 1970—a regionalist approach. At the same time National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger, with Nixon's approval, undermined Rogers's efforts. He insisted on American domination of the peace process, excluding the Soviets and the UN and viewing the problem in the context of a global rivalry between the two great powers.

The Jordanian Civil War, September 1970

For their part, the Palestinians were alarmed by the August 1970 ceasefire, fearing it might lead to negotiations where they would be excluded. Arafat, now head of the PLO, could not dominate that organization, challenged by groups such as the Popular Front for the

Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) headed by George Habash and the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP) led by Nayif Hawatmah. Both called for the overthrow of conservative Arab regimes as a precondition for an assault on Israel, whereas Arafat and Fatah focused on Israel and endeavoured to distance the PLO from Arab state politics. Following the August 1970 ceasefire, the PFLP and PDFLP attempted to overthrow Jordan's King Hussein as the first step in creating a more radical Arab front that would challenge Israel. This led to the Jordanian civil war of September 1970, where King Hussein's Jordanian army crushed Palestinian forces, with a major Arab-Israeli crisis barely averted.

The Palestinian-Jordanian clashes of August-September 1970 altered Arab state involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Palestinian defeat, and subsequent losses in later engagements with Jordanian forces, forced the PLO to move its command structure in 1971 from Jordan to Lebanon. From that time onward, PLO actions against Israel engaged Lebanon more directly in the Arab-Israeli conflict and became a major factor in instigating a Lebanese civil war in the mid-1970s.

The Jordanian civil war had another casualty: Egypt's Nasser died shortly after negotiating a ceasefire. He was succeeded by Anwar Sadat, who, from 1971 to 1973, sought unsuccessfully to negotiate an Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai via UN mediators, but failed to gain American backing for his efforts.

Henry Kissinger, by now secretary of state as well as national security adviser, controlled all aspects of American foreign policy. He rejected Egyptian overtures, refusing to act while Soviet forces remained in Egypt. Then, when Sadat expelled them, a cold-war victory for Washington, the USA did not act, because Kissinger was diverted by scandals pertaining to Nixon's re-election campaign in 1972. American inaction contributed to the 1973 war.

The 1973 War and its Consequences

In 1973 Egypt and Syria decided to attack Israeli forces in the Golan Heights and Sinai Peninsula if no new diplomatic initiatives were forthcoming. Expectations of continued diplomatic stalemate were furthered when Israel decided to annex a large area of the Sinai in defiance of SCR 242. Minister of Defence Moshe Dayan proposed this plan as a condition of his remaining part of the Labour Party (formed in 1968) in forthcoming elections scheduled for November.

Egypt and Syria attacked Israel on 6 October 1973. Israeli forces fell back in the Golan Heights but ultimately stopped the Syrians. Egyptian troops crossed the Suez Canal and overwhelmed the Israeli defences, advancing into the Sinai before being checked. Initial Egyptian successes were thwarted by Israeli counter-attacks that led to Israeli forces crossing the Canal and occupying its West Bank. Technically Israel had won the war against Egypt but Egyptian troops held out in pockets in the Sinai against fierce Israeli efforts to oust them and to restore the *status quo ante*.

Whereas the 1967 war had completely overturned the political-military parameters of the Arab-Israeli conflict existing since 1948, the 1973 war created a modified territorial framework within which the changes wrought by 1967 might be resolved. Henry Kissinger intervened to gain an Egyptian-Israeli ceasefire that left Egyptian forces in the

Sinai, creating a situation that required negotiations. Kissinger now believed that limited agreements between Israel, Syria, and Egypt, with minor Israeli withdrawals from lands it occupied, could create a climate of confidence and trust whereby full peace treaties might ensue. He negotiated Israeli pullback accords in the Sinai and the Golan Heights with Egypt and Syria during 1974, pursuant to Security Council Resolution 338, passed on 22 October 1973, the last day of the war; it called for full implementation of SCR 242.

Eager to pursue talks and to recover the Sinai, Sadat agreed to a second limited agreement with Israel in September 1975. For Arab leaders the accord signalled Egypt's willingness to seek a separate agreement with Israel, anathema to them but attractive to Israeli politicians, including Yitzhak Rabin, who had succeeded Golda Meir as prime minister in the summer of 1974.

Rabin, like most Israeli leaders, was primarily concerned with retaining the Golan Heights and the West Bank for Israel regardless of SCR 242. From this perspective, a separate peace with Egypt would not signify the first step towards a total resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict by diplomacy. Rather, it would remove Egypt from the military equation of the Arab-Israeli conflict, enabling Israel to concentrate its forces against Syria and Jordan in order to impose its terms on them. Here Rabin was reassured by Kissinger that the USA would not push for any limited withdrawal agreements between Israel and Jordan over the West Bank.

The American-sponsored peace efforts of 1974-5 and Israeli disinterest in any agreement with Jordan over the West Bank had important repercussions for Palestinians and the PLO within the framework of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Jordan and the Rabat Declaration

Jordan's King Hussein had been humiliated by his exclusion from the pullback agreements of 1974, the product of Israel's refusal to negotiate over the West Bank. His inclusion would have reaffirmed Jordanian claims to the area and undercut PLO calls for Palestinian self-determination and claims to represent all Palestinians.

Further humiliation awaited Hussein. In October 1974 Arab heads of state met in Rabat, Morocco. There they recognized 'the right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent national authority under the command of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, in any Palestinian territory that is liberated' (Cobban 1984: 60). The Rabat Declaration remains a landmark in the history of Palestinian efforts for self-determination within the framework of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It declared that Husayn and Jordan had no right to represent Palestinian interests in any international forum. Husayn appeared to accept this decision, which acquired international recognition when Arafat spoke at the United Nations General Assembly in November 1974, and the PLO was awarded observer status over the strong objections of Israel and the United States.

Henceforth, advocates of a diplomatic resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict were divided. Most countries, including America's European allies, called for inclusion of the PLO and discussion of Palestinian political rights in any negotiations based on SCR 242. In contrast, the United States and Israel rejected PLO inclusion in talks, calling it a terrorist organization.

The Camp David Talks and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Accord

The election of Jimmy Carter as US president in November 1976 initiated a new approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Carter abandoned Kissinger's scheme of limited agreements and decided to seek a comprehensive Arab-Israeli accord, to be negotiated at an international conference that would include not only the Soviet Union but also the Palestinians if the PLO could accept SCR 242. In the end Carter failed to gain his objectives. The Camp David agreement of September 1978 between Egypt and Israel was a last gasp effort to salvage something out of his search for a comprehensive peace.

Carter had overreached in seeking an international conference. Arab states had no common policy agenda and most suspected Sadat of seeking a separate arrangement with Israel. The PLO would not openly accept SCR 242 unless the Palestinians' right to a state was acknowledged beforehand, a condition Carter could not meet. Israel objected to an international conference, preferring American oversight of limited talks. Finally Israeli opposition to negotiations involving territory or the Palestinians was now intransigent. Menachem Begin had succeeded Rabin as prime minister of Israel in June 1977. Leader of the right-wing Likud party and a pillar of Revisionist Zionism, he had continually advocated since 1948 the need for Israel to invade and capture the West Bank (Judaea and Samaria) to fulfil the Zionist goal of governing ancient Israel; the Likud Coalition official platform (1977) proclaimed its rejection of the idea of a Palestinian state and stated that Israel would rule eternally over the land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River.

Carter's difficulties convinced Sadat to approach Israel on its terms, those of a separate peace, an arrangement that would hopefully bring Western, especially American, economic aid to Egypt. On 9 November 1977 Sadat announced to the Egyptian National Assembly that he would go to Jerusalem in search of peace if invited, leading to his visit to that city in the same month. The search for an Egyptian-Israeli peace had been set in motion.

The most tangible result of the Camp David accord was the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty of March 1979, the first between an Arab state and Israel and a milestone in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict. But the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty did not suggest any progress towards resolution of the broader conflict by further negotiation. The Arab League expelled Egypt from membership and moved its headquarters from Cairo to Tunis.

Arab censure of Sadat seemed justified by the official Israeli interpretation of the agreements: consolidation of Israel's hold over the other occupied territories and greater Israeli military freedom to confront other Arab states and impose its will. Anger focused on the conflicting interpretations of what Camp David had promised with respect to the Palestinians. The agreement referred to the 'legitimate rights of the Palestinian people' and Palestinian 'autonomy'. Begin interpreted these references to mean their non-political rights under Israeli sovereignty, whereas Carter and Sadat believed it meant political rights under Arab rule, probably Jordanian. Disputes also arose over the supposed moratorium on Israeli settlement building after Camp David; Israel undertook such activity after three months; Sadat and Carter thought they had an oral agreement for five years. From Begin's perspective, 'the Sinai had been sacrificed but Eretz Israel had been won', meaning that removing Egypt as a hostile neighbour would enable Israel to impose its will elsewhere and retain the West Bank. The task now was to establish firmer control over the

area and to prove to the one million Palestinians living there that they had no hope of true self-determination. Israel had already begun a massive settlement programme in the West Bank under Ariel Sharon's direction (Quandt 2005: 228–40).

The legacy of Camp David went beyond the achievement of an Egyptian–Israeli peace. The document's clauses for the West Bank envisaged a transition period of five years during which gradually implemented electoral and administrative procedures, including Israel's withdrawal from many areas, would lead to final status negotiations. Never attempted as part of the Camp David accord, this scheme nonetheless would become the basis for the Oslo process following the first Oslo accord in 1993.

From Camp David to Oslo

With Egypt removed from Arab–Israeli hostilities, the conflict assumed new dimensions, which included state sponsorship of proxies, notably in Lebanon, ultimately leading to the Israeli invasion of that country in 1982.

Lebanon: Civil War and Foreign Intervention

Lebanon had long been an unwilling base for PLO attacks into Israel, dating back to the later 1960s; hijackings of El Al planes by Palestinian factions based in Lebanon resulted in an Israeli assault on the Beirut airport in 1968. The shift of the PLO command from Jordan to camps outside Beirut in 1971 further destabilized an already fragile Lebanese political structure and inspired the formation of Maronite Catholic militias independent of government control, as was the PLO. The Maronites in particular resented Lebanon being drawn into the Arab–Israeli conflict, but this confrontation became embroiled in local political tensions. Lebanese Muslim and leftist anger at Maronite political dominance, already expressed in the 1957–8 civil war, erupted again in the mid-1970s.

The clashes this time were far more destructive and involved state sponsors, Israel and Syria. In addition to arming and training the Maronites, Israel facilitated Maronite infiltration into southern Lebanon via Israel to seek to block Palestinian attacks. The Syrians briefly supported the Palestinians before allowing them to be crushed by the Israeli-backed Maronites, fearing that Palestinian dominance in Lebanon might lead to a Syrian confrontation with Israel. A truce in the civil war in 1976 permitted PLO groups to attack Israel again from the south, leading to a major Israeli invasion into southern Lebanon in March 1978 in response to a terrorist attack into Tel Aviv.

In the wake of Camp David and the Egyptian–Israeli peace treaty, Prime Minister Menachem Begin and his chief adviser, Ariel Sharon, reconsidered their strategy regarding the PLO. The treaty with Egypt seemed to ensure Israeli domination of the West Bank. What then to do with the allegiance of most West Bank Palestinians to the PLO? Destruction of the PLO command in Lebanon would both relieve Israel of border strife and, in Likud's view, remove any hope among West Bank Palestinians that they could escape Israeli rule.

Israeli ambitions meshed with those of Bashir Gemayel, leader of the Phalange, the premier Maronite militia; Gemayel had wiped out his leading Maronite rivals. He, like Begin

and Sharon, hoped to oust if not destroy the PLO in Lebanon, with the goal of installing himself in power with Israeli assistance; this would ensure Maronite dominance of Lebanon despite their minority status, and for Israel give it an ally on its northern border.

These calculations resulted in the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982, when Ariel Sharon misled the Israeli cabinet, which had been briefed for a limited incursion similar to that of 1978. The Israeli army encircled Beirut, where repeated assaults caused many civilian casualties but did not destroy the Palestinian community or command. International intervention resulted in the PLO agreeing to leave Lebanon for Tunisia in August with guarantees that the Palestinians who remained would be protected. Once the PLO had left Lebanon, American military contingents were withdrawn. Almost simultaneously, Bashir Gemayel was assassinated. As a result, the Israeli army permitted Maronite Phalangists to enter the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, where nearly a thousand Palestinians were slaughtered.

The massacres in the camps brought the return of American forces, which remained until early 1984, though increasingly caught up in Lebanese factional disputes, as US policy seemed to favour the Maronites. In 1983 the Reagan administration called for naval bombardments of Druze positions, over the strong objections of the marine commander in Beirut. Opposition forces retaliated with the suicide bombing of the marine barracks in October, causing 241 deaths. After a further show of force, Reagan ordered the withdrawal of American troops, leaving Lebanon to its regional competitors.

The 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon proved in retrospect to be an undertaking whose short-term triumphs masked long-term liabilities, in particular the incitement of Lebanese Shi'i hostility towards Israel. The Lebanese–Israeli frontier remained a zone of conflict, notably the enclave in the south where Israel retained control. There Lebanese Shi'is, often members of the Iranian-backed Hizballah (Party of God), undertook assaults against Israeli troops and client forces in a war of attrition that ultimately ended with Israel voluntarily withdrawing from most of the enclave in May 2000.

Israel and the *Intifada*

These difficulties did not deter Israeli Likud prime ministers of the 1980s, Menachem Begin and later Yitzhak Shamir, from pursuing the real goal of the Lebanese venture, consolidation of the Israeli position in the West Bank. The decade saw the vast expansion of Israeli settlements in the area, sponsored by Likud in the hope of creating facts that would bar any future Israeli withdrawal. Arab–Israeli state tensions were muted, with Egypt sidelined, Iraq involved in a protracted and costly war with Iran (1980–8), and Syria monitoring its position in Lebanon. Jordan sought entry into negotiations with American support and that of Labour politicians in Israeli coalitions, continually stymied by Likud objections. No major change in the diplomacy of the Arab–Israeli conflict occurred until December 1988, when the USA agreed to talk to the PLO, declaring that it had satisfactorily renounced terrorism and accepted Security Council Resolution 242.

Taken with more reluctance than enthusiasm, the American decision appeared to be a major stepping stone towards resolution of issues within the framework of the broader Arab–Israeli conflict. But the impetus for recognition had nothing to do with diplomacy. Rather, it was the actions of Palestinians in the West Bank and especially in the Gaza Strip

who had rebelled against Israeli occupation. The rebellion, known as the *intifada*, began in December 1987 and lasted into 1991. The intensity of Palestinian protests and the brutality of the Israeli response focused international attention on the nature of Israel's role as occupiers of these lands and called into question the future of the territories. In addition, the *intifada* gave legitimacy, if only indirectly, to PLO claims to represent the Palestinians in the territories. But American agreement to discuss matters with Arafat did not mean a willingness to negotiate with him; the Jordanian solution remained the favoured option. Matters remained stalemated, with Likud, guided by Yitzhak Shamir, ever more determined to resist pressures to compromise, despite American pressures to do so.

The Gulf War, 1990-1

The catalyst for an apparent breakthrough toward resolution of Arab-Israeli matters was a factor indirectly related to the Arab-Israeli conflict: the decision of Saddam Hussein to invade Kuwait in August 1990 and the counter-decision of President George H. W. Bush to forge a military coalition that included Arab armies to drive Iraqi forces out of that country. These developments, coupled with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, removed the cold-war justification of American-Soviet rivalry for control of Arab-Israeli negotiations. Arab states such as Syria, long a recipient of Soviet aid but a foe of Iraq, now had incentives to join an American-led force. These incentives were not limited to defeat of an Arab rival; they included American promises to seek to broaden Arab-Israeli negotiations at the conclusion of the war and to confront more directly the militancy of Yitzhak Shamir.

The Madrid Conference

Herein lay the basic irony of the Gulf War. The ultimate though not immediate beneficiary of the Gulf War was to be Arafat and with him the PLO, despite the fact that he had sided with Saddam against the American-led coalition and had as a result lost his funding from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, his principal sources of revenue.

With the USA now in full command of the Arab-Israeli talks, it behoved Washington to pressure Israel in order to fulfil promises made to Arab leaders to gain their inclusion in the coalition against Saddam Hussein. Secretary of State James Baker's efforts resulted in an international conference in Madrid, convened in October 1991. The Arab states represented were Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. In addition, the Palestinians were for the first time permitted to attend such a conference, although the PLO was excluded and the Palestinian contingent was, officially, part of the Jordanian delegation.

The Madrid talks included several rounds of negotiations from October 1991 to the summer of 1993. Arab states and Israel negotiated directly for the first time, as did Israelis and Palestinians. No formal agreements resulted, although Israel and Jordan drafted a peace accord that would not be signed until October 1994, following the 1993 Oslo accord. Exchanges between other delegations led nowhere, especially those between Palestinian delegates and their Israeli counterparts during a period of increasing violence in the territories and in Israel, undertaken by the Islamic groups, Hamas and Islamic Jihad. These attacks reflected anger at Israel's settlement expansion and at Arafat's failure to

represent Palestinian interests. Although Arafat had benefited from the Gulf War to the extent that Palestinians were invited to the Madrid talks, albeit unconnected to the PLO, his reputation among rank and file Palestinians had been severely tarnished because of his apparent acquiescence in the continuing settlement process in the occupied territories, especially when contrasted with the resistance of Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

Yitzhak Rabin's election as Israeli prime minister in 1992 gave momentum to peace efforts, if only because he and foreign minister Shimon Peres saw the Islamic-inspired violence as a greater threat to Israeli security than Arafat and the PLO. They decided to resurrect Arafat and instill a sense of hope among Palestinians to undermine the appeal of the Islamists, a decision that led to the historic Oslo accord of August-September 1993.

Dashed Hopes: The Oslo Peace Process in Retrospect

The two Oslo accords, of September 1993 and October 1995, which are treated more fully in the following chapter, were hailed by many as signalling ultimate resolution of a problem that had festered for nearly half a century. But the apparent successes in implementing the process concealed inherent problems concerned primarily with acceptance by key parties in the Palestinian and Israeli political spectrum.

Not only Hamas but many Palestinians identified with a peaceful resolution of the conflict condemned Oslo I because Arafat recognized Israel's right to exist without acquiring Israeli recognition of Palestinian statehood in return. Delays in implementing specific clauses of Oslo I pertaining to Israeli handover of responsibilities increased tensions, as did terrorist acts from both sides. Ironically, these tensions led Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, initially reluctant to enter the Oslo process, to resolve to establish firmer procedures that would lead to final resolution of outstanding issues. Oslo II, with its promise of greater Israeli handovers of land and increased Palestinian political and security responsibilities, seemed to presage a final accord where Rabin envisaged a Palestinian state on most of the West Bank; Israel would retain only heavily populated settlements close to the Green Line. Rightist Israeli condemnation was harsh and swift. Likud rivals Ariel Sharon and Benjamin Netanyahu competed to condemn Oslo II and Rabin, both participating in major rallies where posters portraying Rabin as a Nazi were prevalent. This vilification, accompanied by calls for Rabin's assassination from rabbis in Brooklyn as well as the West Bank, resulted in just that occurrence on 4 November 1995.

Rabin's death and the subsequent election of Netanyahu to succeed him in June 1996 promised Likud determination to block adherence to Oslo II's goals, frustrating Palestinian hopes. By the time Laborite general Ehud Barak replaced Netanyahu in July 1999, Yasser Arafat's reputation among Palestinians had plummeted. He had acquiesced to American encouragement to proceed with the appearance of a process even as Israel took more Palestinian lands for settlements and bypass roads to be used exclusively by Israelis. And despite Barak's declared commitment to resurrect negotiations, the fragmentation of Israeli politics required him to include in his coalition parties opposed to peace; thus settlement growth initially proceeded at a faster pace under Barak than it had under Netanyahu.

In such circumstances of mistrust and political instability, all sides approached the Camp David 2000 talks unprepared, with rifts within each camp. But it was the American-Israeli version of Palestinian responsibility for the talks' failure that would resonate and influence

opinion as the al-Aqsa *intifada* exploded at the end of September 2000. Triggered by Ariel Sharon's provocation in visiting the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif on 28 September, that uprising could also be seen as a condemnation of the Oslo process, which to Palestinians represented further loss of land and of the possibility of achieving statehood.

Revisionists Triumphant? The Bush II Administration and the Peace Process

The Palestinians and Israel

The dominant narrative explaining the failed Camp David 2000 talks and the eruption of the al-Aqsa *intifada* stresses Palestinian rejection of Ehud Barak's offers at Camp David and Palestinian incitement that required harsh Israeli measures to suppress. This narrative has underwritten both Israel's and the United States' approach to Arab-Israeli as well as Palestinian-Israeli questions and is widely accepted, especially given the apparent unanimity of views held by outgoing president Bill Clinton and newly elected George W. Bush.

Yet testimonies given by participants from all three delegations, Israeli, American, and Palestinian, challenge this narrative (Pressman, 2003; Swisher, 2004; Bregman, 2005). Indeed, in the case of chief US negotiator Dennis Ross, he admitted to a European audience that both Israel and the Palestinians were responsible for the failure of the Oslo peace process, and specifically noted the doubling of Israeli settlements between 1993 and 2000 as causing justified Palestinian mistrust of Israeli motives. But, for an American audience, Ross withheld any mention of Israeli settlement growth from 1993 onwards in his own memoir of the period (Ross 2004; cf. Enderlin 2003: 360-1 with Swisher 2004: 362 and Malley and Agha 2001).

Similarly, whereas most reports cited Palestinian incitement, official records indicated that Palestinians initially demonstrated with rocks and tyre burnings, as in the first *intifada*, while Israeli troops fired live ammunition from the outset and fired rubber bullets to make them more lethal. Palestinians used weapons in 27.6 per cent of their demonstrations to the end of 2000 (Sharm al-Sheik 2001). With the advent of Ariel Sharon's government in March 2001, Palestinian suicide bombings reappeared and penetrated into Israel itself. One at a Passover seder in April 2002 led to Sharon ordering the refaking of all lands granted to the Palestinians during the Oslo process; the headquarters of the Palestinian Authority (PA) were destroyed and Yasser Arafat isolated in its ruins, essentially under Israeli supervision. The Bush administration's refusal to deal with Arafat led to Mahmud Abbas becoming de facto head of the PA; he succeeded Arafat as president on the latter's death in November 2004.

In the meantime, Sharon had ordered the construction of a barrier between Israel and the Palestinians, often amounting to a 20-foot wall separating settled areas. Though announced as temporary and intended to stop suicide bombings, its cost has now exceeded \$1 billion, with one-third left to be completed. The barrier takes away a further 12 per

cent of the West Bank, keeping the most populous Jewish settlements on Israel's side but also severing the links of tens of thousands of Palestinians with their fields or places of work. He then, in April 2004, gained American approval for a unilateral withdrawal from the eight Israeli settlements in Gaza, and in return President Bush promised that any future peace agreement would have to take account of 'new realities'—that is, large Israeli centres of population in the West Bank, apparently ensuring, from an American perspective, Israeli retention of the largest settlements close to the Green Line.

Israel withdrew from Gaza in August 2005 but retained control of the area by means of a 15-foot wall it had built to encircle the Gaza Strip, and through naval restrictions on Gaza fishing. American efforts to relax Israel's restrictions on transfer of Gaza produce and other goods to Israeli markets failed, further undermining the Gaza economy. These blockades contributed to Hamas's stunning electoral victory in the January 2006 PA elections, placing Hamas's Ismail Haniya as prime minister under Fatah's Mahmud Abbas, who remained president of the PA.

Hamas's electoral victory, with 46 per cent of the vote, stemmed from Palestinian anger at Fatah helplessness in relieving Palestinian misery, but also from Fatah infighting; Fatah factions ran two slates of candidates against each other, siphoning votes that would have ensured victory.

Although the USA had insisted on Hamas's participation in the elections to demonstrate its commitment to democracy, the Bush administration immediately condemned the results and joined Israel in furthering the military and economic blockade of Gaza. When news emerged that the two countries were funding new Fatah battalions to enter Gaza and crush Hamas military groups, Hamas pre-empted by taking over all government functions in Gaza and defeating those Fatah military cadres that remained.

At the time of writing (November 2008), the Palestinian-Israeli peace process appears to be stalemated and the two-state solution moribund if not dead. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who succeeded Sharon when the latter suffered an incapacitating stroke in January 2006, has spoken of the need for peace but has also tolerated ongoing settlement growth and expansion beyond the barrier in the West Bank. Checkpoints and unmanned obstacles outside villages have grown to nearly 600, further limiting Palestinian movement. Major roads in the West Bank, some formerly used by Palestinians, have now been reserved solely for Israeli use, linking settlements to pre-1967 Israel.

For any Israeli prime minister to try at this point to encourage talks aiming at a two-state solution would probably ensure his own demise and the onset of a civil war, where right-wing settlers, backed by Israeli military units, would battle Israeli troops loyal to the state; many Israeli officers and soldiers now come from the occupied West Bank settlements and identify with the settlers.

Conclusion

These developments pertaining to the West Bank and Gaza have major implications for Arab-Israeli peace efforts as well. At a summit in Beirut in 2002, Arab states backed an initiative launched by Saudi Arabia that proposed a full peace with Israel provided that the

latter withdrew to the 1967 borders and that the Palestinian issue was resolved. Sharon ignored this and other overtures. As late as March 2008, Israeli analysts believed that Syria sought peace talks but there was little evidence of Israeli reciprocation.

The first two decades of the Arab–Israeli conflict, often marked by armed hostilities, were notable also for Arab refusal to recognize Israel's existence. Following the 1967 war, that political equation changed, particularly once revisionist Zionists had gained power in Israel from 1977 onwards. Most Arab states, notably Syria and Saudi Arabia, have displayed willingness to recognize Israel, and two, Egypt and Jordan, have signed peace treaties; the Palestinians recognized Israel's right to exist in the 1993 Oslo agreement.

This recognition has been premised on a two-state solution to the Palestinian–Israeli question with Israel ceding the Gaza Strip and most of the West Bank. Revisionist Zionism, in the form of the Likud party, rejects that notion, either insisting on full control of the West Bank or granting a Palestinian state with no contiguity or sovereignty on approximately 42 per cent of the West Bank. This stance, linked to continued Israeli settlement growth and retention of the Jordan valley, guarantees an encircled and fragmented Palestinian 'state' that would have neither contiguity nor full state authority. This situation encourages the growth of Islamist movements in Arab states opposed to Israel's right to exist as well as within Palestine; Hamas is gaining further adherents in the West Bank, given Fatah's impotence before the settlement movement and Israeli dominance of the area.

These developments suggest that the resolution of the Arab–Israeli conflict is now affected more by Israeli than by Arab state militancy, as was formerly the case. Likud expansionism to achieve fulfilment of its image of a true Jewish state, with the apparent tolerance of the United States, embraces ideological perspectives requiring the subjugation of neighbours (see also Chapter 15). This replaces the search for peace through diplomacy based on negotiation and compromise, an approach that until now has been the norm, even in the immediate aftermath of war.

In this regard, most Arab states have adopted a realist approach to the Arab–Israeli conflict, seeking coexistence based in part on acceptance of Israel's military supremacy. In contrast, Israel, backed by American pro-Likud ideologues in the George W. Bush administration, appears to insist on security through regional domination, coupled with retention of the West Bank as Greater Israel. Here one finds no homogeneity of state interests, as realist theory sometimes assumes, but, rather, an assertion of identity based both on power and on claims to historic territory, the West Bank, that confront Hamas's apparent search for total victory rather than that of the Palestinian Authority; Hamas's calls for a truce in clashes with Israel have been rebuffed.

The Palestinian question is now central to the possible normalization of relations between Israel and those Arab states with whom it has no relations. With the apparent demise of a two-state solution to the Palestinian–Israeli question, Arab–Israeli state relations will probably worsen, not improve. At the same time, the spectre of Hamas defying Israeli expansion contrasted with Fatah's paralysis further encourages the legitimacy of Islamist groups in those states that have peace treaties with Israel, Egypt, and Jordan. Their leaders appear too closely tied to the United States to object effectively to Israeli actions, especially when compared not just to Hamas but to Hizballah, whose clash with Israel in summer 2006 served notice that factions within states can provide at least as potent a challenge to another state's security, in this case Israel, as could the Lebanese state itself. This trend will probably intensify rather than diminish in the immediate future.

KEY EVENTS

1948 (May)	Declaration of State of Israel.
1948 (May–July)	First Arab–Israeli War: Arab states attack Israel.
1956 (October)	Suez crisis: Israel, France, and Great Britain attack Egypt.
1964	Formation of Palestine Liberation Organization.
1967 (June)	Six Day War: Israel attacks Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, and occupies Sinai Peninsula, Golan Heights, Gaza Strip, and West Bank.
1973 (October)	October War: Egypt and Syria attack Israel in the Golan Heights and Sinai Peninsula.
1978–9	Camp David talks establish basis for an Egyptian–Israeli Peace Treaty.
1987 (December)	Outbreak of First Palestinian <i>intifada</i> .
1991 (February–March)	Gulf War.
1991 (October)	Madrid Conference.
1993 (September)	First Oslo accord.
1994 (October)	Israel–Jordan Peace Treaty.
1995 (September)	Oslo II signed.
1995 (November)	Yitzhak Rabin assassinated.
1995 (December)	Israeli forces withdraw from areas outlined in Oslo II.
1996 (January)	Palestinian Self-Governing Authority (Council) elected.
1996 (March–April)	Operation Grapes of Wrath.
1996 (May)	Binyamin Netanyahu elected Israeli prime minister.
1997 (January)	Hebron Redeployment Agreement.
1998 (October)	Wye Memorandum between Israel and Palestinians.
1998 (December)	Palestinian National Council removes clauses from Palestine National Charter calling for Israel's destruction.
1999 (February)	Jordan's King Hussein dies, succeeded by his son, Abdullah II.
1999 (May)	Ehud Barak elected prime minister.
2000 (January–March)	Syrian–Israeli peace talks end in failure.
2000 (June)	Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad dies; succeeded by son, Bashar.
2000 (July)	Camp David Israeli–Palestinian summit (final status talks).
2000 (September)	Ariel Sharon visits Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif, triggers second <i>intifada</i> .
2000 (November)	George W. Bush elected president of the United States.
2000–1	Israeli–Palestinian talks building on Camp David.
2001 (February)	Likud candidate Ariel Sharon elected prime minister.
2001 (September)	9/11: Al-Qaeda terrorist attacks on the USA.

- 2001 (October) USA initiates attacks on Afghanistan in response to 9/11.
- 2002 (February) Israel rejects Saudi Arabian peace initiative.
- 2002 (June) President Bush delivers Rose Garden address.
- 2002 (July) First Quartet statement.
- 2003 (January) Ariel Sharon re-elected prime minister. Construction of Israeli 'security fence'.
- 2003 (March) USA begins assault on Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein; Yasser Arafat appoints Mahmud Abbas prime minister of new Palestinian Authority.
- 2003 (April) 'Road Map' issued.
- 2004 (April) President Bush supports Ariel Sharon's proposed plan for full disengagement from Gaza.
- 2004 (November) Death of Yasser Arafat.
- 2005 (January) Mahmud Abbas elected Palestinian Authority (PA) president.
- 2005 (March) Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice calls for 'free and fair' Palestinian elections. 'Sasson Report' documents official Israeli backing for settlement expansion. Hamas declares it will enter Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections.
- 2005 (August) Israel withdraws from all Gaza settlements and four settlements in northern West Bank.
- 2006 (January) Sharon incapacitated with stroke; Ehud Olmert succeeds him as acting prime minister. Hamas wins PLC elections. Ismail Haniya becomes PA prime minister in Gaza, while Mahmud Abbas remains PA president in the West Bank. Olmert declares no negotiation with Hamas until it disarms and accepts Israel's existence and existing Israeli-PLO accords.
- 2006 (February) USA declares boycott of Hamas government. Quartet follows suit.
- 2006 (April) Olmert elected Israeli prime minister.
- 2006 (July) Israel-Hizballah clashes in Lebanon; over 1,400 Lebanese and 150 Israelis are killed in two-month conflict.
- 2006 (August) Israel-Hizballah ceasefire.
- 2006 (September-October) Hamas-Fatah clashes in Gaza and West Bank.
- 2007 (June) Hamas forces take over Gaza. Israel imposes blockade.
- 2007 (September) Israeli jets strike northern Syria.
- 2007 (November) Annapolis (Maryland) Conference: Bush, Olmert, and Abbas issue 'Joint Understanding'.
- 2008 (June) Israel and Hamas agree to a tentative, renewable 60-day truce, arranged via Egyptian mediation.
- 2008 (June-July) Israel acknowledges entering peace talks with Syria sponsored by Turkey.

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