A BRIEF PRIMER ON THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

Frank Munley

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The Security Council...reaffirming the established principle that acquisition of
territory by military conquest is inadmissible...censures in the strongest terms all
measures taken to change the status of the City of Jerusalem; confirms that all
legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel which purport to
alter the status of Jerusalem, including expropriation of land and properties thereon,
are invalid and cannot change that status...

Adopted unanimously at the 1485th meeting.

From Palestinians: Life Under Occupation, Nancy Murray, (The Middle East Justice
Network, Cambridge, MA, 1991)
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I. AN OVERVIEW AND MY POSITION ON THE ISSUE

During World War II, Germany, under the dictatorial control of Adolph Hitler, carried out a horrendous attempt at genocide of Europe’s Jews and succeeded in killing about 6 million of them (about two-thirds of European Jews at that time). The war in Europe also killed about 14 million non-Jewish innocents and 10 million soldiers on both sides. The Nazi attempt to wipe out Europe’s Jews is known as the Holocaust, but for reasons explained in Appendix A, it will be referred to here as the Jewish Holocaust.

Jewish refugees from Europe’s Jewish Holocaust established Israel in 1948 as a Jewish state after a war with Arabs living in the historical region of Palestine. Israel was conceived as a state not just for survivors of the Jewish Holocaust, but for Jews worldwide. Israel’s territory following 1948 amounted to about 70% of the 1922 Palestine Mandate, and partially fulfilled the goal of the Zionist movement begun more than 50 years earlier to establish a Jewish state in all of Palestine.


The problem with Israel, in short, is not—as is sometimes suggested—that it is a European “enclave” in the Arab world; but rather that it arrived too late. It has imported a characteristically late-nineteenth-century separatist project into a world that has moved on, a world of individual rights, open frontiers, and international law. The very idea of a “Jewish state”—a state in which Jews and the Jewish religion have exclusive privileges from which non-Jewish citizens are forever excluded—is rooted in another time and place. Israel, in short, is an anachronism.

When Israel’s founders fought their way into Palestine in 1948, most of the native Arab non-Jewish (mostly Muslim) Palestinians, about 700,000, were forced to flee their homes and go to refugee camps in surrounding countries. Israel claimed rights to the land for Jews because of Jewish presence there thousands of years ago, neglecting the fact that these same lands were populated at that time by non-Jews as well. Needless to say, the movement of European Jews onto other people’s land was bound to create problems not just with former inhabitants, but also with surrounding Arab states that had just shucked off decades of European colonial rule.

The 150,000 or so non-Jewish inhabitants who were able to stay in their homes during the 1947-1948 war became citizens of Israel. Today, these citizens number about a million but suffer under rank discrimination because of the openly-Jewish nature of the state.

Despite the questionable legal and moral circumstances surrounding Israel’s establishment in the 1948 war, many Western countries granted Israel recognition, implicitly accepting the cease fire lines as Israel’s borders even though Israel has never formally declared its borders. This “Great Compromise” formed the basis of what many today see as the legitimacy of Israel.

In 1967, Israel fought a victorious war with surrounding Arab countries and occupied most of the remaining Palestinian territory (the West Bank then under Jordan’s control) and other lands belonging to Egypt and Syria. (Most of Egypt’s territory was returned in a 1978 peace deal, and Jordan relinquished its claim to the West Bank and East Jerusalem in 1988.) Shortly after this war, Israel took a fateful step: it went beyond military occupation for security purposes and decided in violation of international law to establish permanent settlements in the occupied territories. Today, there are about a half million
Israeli-sponsored settlers in occupied Palestinian territories. Protection of the settlements requires intense occupation policies which result in severe restrictions on every-day Palestinian life.

Some argue that since the Jewish Holocaust occurred in Europe, and Germany and other Nazi-allied countries were subjugated by the US and other Western victors, the Jewish survivors should have been given territory in Europe and/or the US to establish a safe and secure homeland. In some ways, this would have been a preferable solution for the survivors than barging into a foreign land hostile to their arrival. Ironically, some Jews have recently been emigrating to Germany from Israel because of the political turmoil between Israel, its neighboring countries, and its oppressed Palestinian population. But as the situation stands now, Israel’s existence inside the 1948 cease fire lines appears to be an irreversible fact best recognized by those who disagree with its policies and wish to alleviate the suffering Israel is imposing on Palestinians in the occupied territories.

Since the 1967 war, there have been UN resolutions and negotiations designed to bring an end to Israel’s occupation and settlement policies. Some negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, particularly in Oslo Norway in 1993, initially appeared to be successful only to see occupation and settlement policies continue. This raises a serious question about the usefulness of negotiations and has prompted Palestinians to fight back with rocks and light arms, and in some cases with terrorist acts in Israel itself. Israel, using its modern army and air force, has justified its gravely disproportionate military responses to Palestinian resistance on security grounds.

Like all states, Israel is justly concerned with protecting its population, but often acts as if it requires absolute security. This has led to Israel’s suspension of negotiations with Palestinians when relatively small actions against it occur, thus giving veto power to Israel’s most militant opponents. In the nuclear age, absolute security is impossible to achieve for any country, including the United States, and pursuit of it is foolish and self-defeating. Israel’s disproportionate responses to the comparatively paltry Palestinian attacks have cost it plenty in public opinion around the world. Ironically, the Jewish and semi-democratic nature of the State of Israel is being undermined by Israel’s own oppressive and exploitative policies, as will be discussed towards the end of this primer.

Every year, the US provides the state of Israel with about $3-5 billion in aid. The significance of the aid comes not from its magnitude—$3 or $5 billion amounts to about $30 per US taxpayer per year—but from the fact that Israel is a technologically developed, nuclear-armed, and relatively wealthy country while many other much needier countries receive much less US aid. More seriously, Israel has used military aid from the US to violate international law, human rights, and Section 4 of the US’s own Arms Control Export Act.

Palestinian suffering under Israel’s occupation tends to be largely ignored, minimized, or paid lip service by Arab governments, many of which are corrupt dictatorships supported by the US and quite content to have relations with Israel. But Israel’s abuses are taken very seriously by the Arab public and by Muslims worldwide, who deeply resent the US’s uncritical and unconditional support of Israel. They also resent US support of their own dictatorial governments. So in many ways, the “special relationship” between the US and Israel costs the US dearly in its relationship with the people of Arab and Muslim countries. For example, the Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States (“The 9/11 Commission Report”) disclosed that the US-Israeli relationship was a motivation for the attacks on September 11, 2001. (See p. 147 of
the report, and for a more extended discussion, go here for additional discussion of this point.)

In other ways, the US’s close relationship with Israel is considered to be an asset to the US’s imperialist drive to stabilize a region which harbors a good portion of the world’s oil. See Section XX for discussion of the strategic nature of the US-Israeli relationship.

As the recent history of the Iraq war suggests, the US, despite its long domestic democratic tradition, is not above lying and exploiting public fears to achieve an unspoken end—the control of Middle Eastern oil. But the US has no monopoly on fear-mongering. Israel’s leaders have shamelessly exploited the Jewish Holocaust to stoke fears of Jews around the world. Israel’s leaders argue absurdly that Israel is “existentially” threatened by stateless Palestinians suffering under draconian Israeli occupation and by a few neighboring countries like Iran and Syria that are either threatened daily by Israel and are no match for its military might, or like Saudi Arabia and Egypt are happy to deal with Israel against the wishes of their own people. In the US itself, domestic views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, most importantly views of congressional members, are heavily influenced by the “Israel Lobby,” discussed in more detail in Section XX below.

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Fifty or one hundred years from now, historians will look back with disbelief at the unwavering support the US gave to Israel’s abusive and aggressive occupation and settlement policies in the Palestinian territories taken over in 1967. It is fair to say that there is no other example in history of such prolonged and deep hypocrisy on the part of a powerful country that so loudly trumpeted its principled devotion to human rights and dignity and did so much to violate these same principles.

The US has in large part turned a blind eye to Israel’s abuse of Palestinians, even though the US claims to be an “honest broker” between the two. Most galling to me is that the US government claims to be the guarantor of human rights throughout the globe. That is nonsense, of course, because the US has supported many dictatorships over the years. But no country has enjoyed as much unwavering and uncritical support from the US in the face of grave human rights abuses as Israel. US bias favoring Israel is manifested in many ways. For example, the US is often the only supporter of Israel in the UN. In particular, the US doesn’t hold Israel accountable for its failure to comply with the many UN resolutions designed to remedy Israel’s abusive occupation and settlement policies, particularly Res. 242 which expressly emphasizes “the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every State in the area can live in security.” Israel’s wholesale violations of international law, aided and abetted by the US, threaten to further undermine the already-fragile state of international law and order. I cannot in good conscience sit back and say nothing.

A more even-handed US policy would help to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinians in the occupied territories and lead to the eventual removal of Israeli troops and settlements, which is a necessary prerequisite for a resolution of the conflict which would leave Israel secure and the Palestinians with a state of their own. A more even-handed policy would also encourage peace groups in Israel to more effectively oppose the arrogant actions of Israeli extremists in ruling right wing parties who are intent on settling the occupied territories and further legalizing discrimination against Arab citizens in Israel. As many moderate Israelis and their supporters see it, “With friends like the US, who needs enemies?”
I believe that negotiations involving not just Israeli, American, and Palestinian authorities but other states and organizations, are necessary at this time despite the abysmal failure of past efforts. The most desirable immediate goal is agreement on a two-state solution along the lines called for in UN Resolution 242, in which Israel would return to the pre-1967 cease fire lines. But negotiations alone cannot solve the issue, because the Palestinians are too weak and the US is too tolerant of Israel’s worst impulses. The situation can be ultimately resolved only by an organized movement of conscientious citizens of the US and Israel and other countries, and of Palestinians, that adopts the honorable tactics of the great mass movements of the 20th Century that lifted British colonialism from India, brought freedom to Afro-Americans from blatant discriminatory Jim Crow laws, and broke the back of Apartheid in South Africa. After Palestinians in the occupied territories are liberated, then perhaps Israel can bring itself into full compliance with respectable 21st century democracy by eliminating state favoritism of Judaism and treating equally all religions within its borders. And if this happens, the stage will be set for a unified secular state that honors world-wide standards of human rights for all its inhabitants.

If, on the other hand, Israel remains captured by its right-wing fanatics and continues to violate international law and inflict grievous punishment on innocents, the international “delegitimization” Israel fears so much will become a self-inflicted and possibly fatal wound.

In what follows I will expand the foregoing snapshot of the conflict. My position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is in no way anti-Semitic. In fact, it mirrors the conviction of many Jews in Israel and throughout the world that the US’s uncritical support of Israel’s extremist expansionists has weakened the security of not just Israel, but of the entire Middle East and beyond. A change in public attitude towards the conflict can perhaps help to change US policy that now favors Israel to a fault.
II. PUBLIC IGNORANCE AND APATHY IN THE US

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is quite possibly the most misunderstood issue in the American public mind. The misunderstanding is caused in part by callousness (“Why should I care?”), cynicism (“They’ve always fought and always will”), laziness (“Israel? Palestinians? Huh?”), and also ignorance of the history that gave rise to the conflict. For example, it is not unusual for Americans to think that the territories occupied by Israel since the 1967 war are part of Israel, and that Israel is being “generous” by giving some of “their” land to the Palestinians. This is nonsense, because Israel’s claims to Palestinian land (the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem) is not recognized under international law. Israel’s occupation occurred in the course of war, and as mentioned, it is against international law for land to be taken through war.

Another careless misunderstanding is that Israelis and Palestinians are more or less equal powers that have been fighting with each other for many years. This is ludicrous. Israel is a very powerful nuclear-armed wealthy state but the Palestinians do not even have a sovereign state and are suffering under Israeli occupation. In the many conflicts between Israelis and Palestinians, the casualty rates tell the sad story of the imbalance. For example, in the 2008-2009 war on Gaza, 1400 Palestinians died, about 100 times the number of Israelis.

Even Americans who see injustice in the conflict usually judge their elected representatives on other domestic and international issues—the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is unfortunately low on the list of priorities. This relegation of the issue to low domestic status is exploited by the lobby group “America-Israel Political Action Committee” (AIPAC), which blossomed in the mid-1970s to advocate unquestioning US support of Israel. AIPAC is registered as an “American” lobbying group, though there were various attempts in the past to force it to register as an agent of Israel under the “Foreign Agents Registration Act.” AIPAC is widely recognized to be one of the most powerful lobbying groups in Washington with great influence in congressional elections. It is powerful because many elections are often decided by a narrow margin, and despite the low priority the general public ascribes to the conflict, AIPAC’s propaganda and bad-mouthing of any politician the least bit critical of Israel can make a crucial difference, especially in regions of the country where there are sizable Jewish populations. Any number of former and current members of congress and other government officials have attested to the political influence of AIPAC and other American pro-Israeli groups through campaign funding and smearing of anyone with the courage to criticize Israel.

AIPAC’s success could be reversed if the international ramifications of the US’s uncritical support of Israel were understood by the American public. As will be seen, the US pays a price for its Israel policy and in fact, by being so uncritical, the US is actually weakening Israel, making its policy all-around ruinous.

The first step in correcting the public ignorance exploited by AIPAC is to look at the ideology of Zionism, which is one of several pillars the state of Israel is founded upon.
III. THE QUESTIONABLE BIBLICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF MODERN ZIONISM

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has a very long genesis, going back as much as 3000 years to the friction between ancient Israelites and their neighbors. To understand the current status of the conflict, a good place to start is the late 19th century when Theodore Herzl, a Hungarian Jew, called for emigration of Europe’s Jews to “Palestine” in his 1896 booklet The Jewish State (Der Judenstaat). (An e-copy of Herzl’s booklet can be found on the MidEast Web site.) Herzl’s rationale for choosing Palestine was that it is “our ever-memorable historic home.” (Argentina was Palestine’s main competitor for Herzl’s attention.)

Herzl’s call for Jewish migration to Palestine is known as Zionism, coming from the biblical term “Zion,” the hill where God supposedly dwells. His call was prompted in part by discrimination against European Jews that often resulted in pogroms, i.e., hateful attacks by Christians against Jews that resulted in many Jewish deaths. Pogroms occurred throughout history, from ancient times into the 20th century. The immediate cause for Herzl’s activism appears to have been the infamous Dreyfus case in France, in which Dreyfus, a French military officer, was accused of subverting French security but was in reality a victim of anti-Semitism in the French military and intelligence agencies. Ironically, Dreyfus was acquitted, so the affair is not the best explanation for the abuses that have accompanied the fulfillment of Herzl’s project.

The title of Herzl’s booklet leaves no doubt that the intention of Zionism always was to found a Jewish state. Herzl also wrote a utopian work of fiction, Altneuland (Old New Land). According to MidEast Web’s Ami Isseroff in his introduction to the e-copy of Der Judenstaadt, Altneuland “envisioned a multipluralistic Democracy in which Arabs and Jews had equal rights”. But nowhere in Herzl’s The Jewish State is a reference made to Arabs, which of course suits today’s Zionists just fine.

Zionists justify the existence of Israel and settlement of Palestinian land by claiming that the Old Testament of the Bible is historically accurate and proves that God gave a large patch of land to the ancient Israelites, the patch consisting roughly of modern Israel, the West Bank (the biblical “Judea and Samaria”), and Gaza. Of course, the Bible is more than a historical account. It also includes fantastic stories about seven days of creation, waters parting, angels slaughtering people, and many other supernatural events. To put it mildly, such flights of fancy cast doubt on the Bible as history. Indeed, the historical accuracy of the Bible is hotly disputed by some contemporary archeologists such as Israel Finkelstein, Yuval Goren, and their colleagues (all Israelis). (For more information, see Wikipedia’s biography of Israel Finkelstein, BBC’s Horizon program featuring Goren and others in a discussion of various controversies, and other related websites here, here, and here.) A Science Daily report says that Finkelstein “theorizes that the ancient rulers such as David and Solomon, who lived centuries earlier, were ‘tribal chieftains ruling from a small hill town, with a modest palace and royal shrine.’ ” (And of course, modern science conflicts with the biblical “Garden of Eden” story. See, e.g., National Geographic’s 2003 article, “Documentary Redraws Humans’ Family Tree.”) A more recent National Geographic article, “Kings of Controversy,” is an interesting update of the controversy.

Salon’s Laura Miller discusses the impact of recent archeological investigations in her review of Finkelstein and Neil Silberman’s 2001 book The Bible Unearthed: Archeology’s New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Text. Her review is worth quoting at length:
"The Bible Unearthed" is the latest salvo fired in a pitched battle between those who consider the Old Testament to contain plenty of reliable historical facts, and those who, at the opposite extreme, say it's pure mythology. The debate reached the general population of Israel, sending what one journalist called a "shiver" down the nation's "collective spine," in late 1999, when another archaeologist [in addition to Finkelstein] from Tel Aviv University, Ze'ev Herzog, wrote a cover story for the weekend magazine of the national daily newspaper, Ha'aretz. In the essay, Herzog laid out many of the theories Finkelstein and Silberman present in their book: "the Israelites were never in Egypt, did not wander in the desert, did not conquer the land [of Canaan] in a military campaign and did not pass it on to the twelve tribes of Israel. Perhaps even harder to swallow is the fact that the united kingdom of David and Solomon, described in the Bible as a regional power, was at most a small tribal kingdom." The new theories envision this modest chieftdom as based in a Jerusalem that was essentially a cow town, not the glorious capital of an empire.

“Although, as Herzog notes, some of these findings have been accepted by the majority of biblical scholars and archaeologists for years and even decades, they are just now making a dent in the awareness of the Israeli public -- a very painful dent. They challenge many of the Old Testament stories central to Israeli beliefs about their own national character and destiny, stories that have influenced much of Western culture as well. The tales of the patriarchs -- Abraham, Isaac and Joseph among others -- were the first to go when biblical scholars found those passages rife with anachronisms and other inconsistencies. The story of Exodus, one of the most powerful epics of enslavement, courage and liberation in human history, also slipped from history to legend when archaeologists could no longer ignore the lack of corroborating contemporary Egyptian accounts and the absence of evidence of large encampments in the Sinai Peninsula ("the wilderness" where Moses brought the Israelites after leading them through the parted Red Sea).”

A particularly important result of the Bible-as-history belief is the Zionist claim that Romans expelled Jews from Palestine in 70 CE, causing the dispersal of Jews throughout the world. This dispersal is dubbed The Diaspora (although like the term “holocaust,” “diaspora” has a more general meaning). Since ancestors of today’s Jews supposedly lived in Palestine 2000 years ago, Zionists claim that Jews throughout the world have a right to return to Palestine.

Currently, about 40% of Israel’s population is of European origin, but in the Zionist view, they have just come home. A little reflection shows that this kind of reasoning, applied to other ethnic groups, is a recipe for world-wide conflict. For example, there is strong genetic evidence that homo sapiens came “out of Africa” about 100,000 years ago. Should white descendants of the original Africans suffering from social or political oppression claim a right to, say, Tanzania, organize a fighting force, drive Tanzanians out of their country, and move in? Writ large, the kind of reasoning used by Zionists would destroy the world’s fragile political and social stability, engender hatred, and result in barbarity beyond the shocking amount we suffer from today.

In an essay titled “Israelis and Palestinians: Conflict and Resolution,” left wing Israeli Moshé Machover, drops an amusing footnote: “As someone – I can’t remember who – observed: a Zionist doesn’t have to believe that God exists; but does have to believe that He promised Palestine to the Jews.”

Recent research casts serious doubt on the Diaspora claim, and many Jewish scholars admit as much. But extremist religious Jews in Israel and elsewhere continue to utilize the claim to justify the existence of both Israel proper and its settlements in occupied territories. One of the most compelling counterarguments against the Diaspora claim has been made by Schlomo Sand, an Israeli, in his book The Invention of the Jewish People.
Future archeological evidence might help clarify the ideological dispute described above. But when all is said and done, it is important to keep in mind Israel Finkelstein’s **bottom line** as he contrasts the literary and cultural significance of David with the historical:

Look, when I'm doing research, *I have* to distinguish between the culture of David and the historical David. David is extremely important for my cultural identity. In the same way, I can celebrate the Exodus without seeing it as a purely historic event. David for me is the David reflected in the later king Hezekiah, the David reflected in the later king Josiah, the David of Zacharias in the eschatological prophesies in which Jerusalem is burned but David is alive, the David who is the connection with the beginning of Christianity. In this sense, David is *everything*. If you want me to say it simplistically, I'm proud that this nobody from nowhere became the center of Western tradition.

"So for me," says Finkelstein, David's dethroner, "David is not a plaque on the wall, not even merely a leader of a tenth-century band. No. Much more than that.

Put simply, literary rather than literal interpretation of Biblical texts is called for, which many if not most *enlightened* people would agree with.
IV. COLONIALIST ROOTS OF ZIONISM

Zionist claims to the whole of what we call Palestine frequently revolve around certain promises made by Britain, the former colonialist ruler of the region. A close look at these promises is important for evaluating the claims.

Prior to World War I, Palestine and surrounding regions were part of the Ottoman (or Turkish) Empire. When the war started in 1914, Turkey sided with Germany against Britain and its allies. In 1915, Britain initiated the McMahon-Hussein correspondence, trying to work out a deal with the Arab leader Sherif Hussein in return for Arab help in the fight against the Germans and their Ottoman allies. The McMahon-Hussein correspondence essentially accepted the establishment of an Arab “Caliphate” (i.e., a Muslim nation) to be rules by Faisel Hussein. But the areas to be covered by the correspondence is in dispute, based on the provision in the correspondence excluding “areas that cannot be said to be purely Arab.” In one sense, this is a diplomatic “weasel phrase” since no area of significance in the region can be said to “purely” Arab. But if interpreted reasonably, e.g., if it was meant to exclude areas that were perhaps 55% or 60% Arab, then the exclusion makes some sense. But the correspondence actually listed areas to be excluded, and Arabs claim that the list did not mention the Jerusalem Sanjak (“Sanjak” being an Ottoman administrative region), which includes much of what we mean today by Palestine.

In 1916, when the war’s outcome seemed to favor Britain and its allies, Britain and France hammered out the Sykes-Picot Agreement that, from an Arab standpoint, reneged on the McMahon-Hussein agreements. An important part of Sykes-Picot was its proposal that Palestine, the land west of the Jordan River, would be internationally controlled. Then in 1917, Britain adopted the “Balfour Declaration,” a short letter which promised Jews a “national home” in Palestine. All these British zigs and zags between Zionist and Arab interests were typical of a great power intent getting the best deal for itself in the aftermath of its war with Germany.

The Balfour Declaration was a boon to Zionists, even though it explicitly stated that it is “clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.” This very important qualification is tantamount to prohibiting the establishment of a Jewish state, and more narrowly interpreted, does not imply the establishment of any state whatsoever.

During and after the war, the issue of territories subject to Arab control was paramount. One particular issue was the status of what came to be called Transjordan, i.e., the territory to the east of the Jordan River corresponding roughly to today’s country of Jordan. Throughout Britain’s deliberations on Arab lands, it was always understood that this region would be autonomous and separately administered from what is today understood as Palestine. In 1922, the League of Nations assigned to Britain the Palestine “Mandate,” i.e., Britain was given governance of the region with the goal of leading it into eventual self-governance. Article 25 of the mandate specifically granted Transjordan a special degree of autonomy under Arab rule, and in all succeeding matters, Transjordan was essentially treated as a separate mandate, and many books and articles refer to it as such.

In 1922, shortly before the League of Nations assigned the Palestine Mandate to Britain, Winston Churchill in his famous “White Paper” stated “it is contemplated that the status of all citizens of Palestine in the eyes of the law shall be Palestinian, and it has never been intended that they, or any section of them, should possess any other juridical status.”
This amounts to another affirmation by the British that a Jewish or a Muslim or any other kind of state apart from a Jewish-Arab-Christian Palestinian state was implied. The white paper went on to emphasize that anything proposed by the mandate was consistent with the Balfour Declaration, and added: “When it is asked what is meant by the development of the Jewish National Home in Palestine, it may be answered that it is not the imposition of a Jewish nationality upon the inhabitants of Palestine as a whole, but the further development of the existing Jewish community, with the assistance of Jews in other parts of the world, in order that it may become a centre in which the Jewish people as a whole may take, on grounds of religion and race, an interest and a pride.” But many Zionists today cite the Balfour Declaration to justify the existence of the Jewish state of Israel.

The Balfour Declaration’s concern for the rights of existing non-Jewish communities can be appreciated by looking at the following map of Palestine in 1946, shortly before the state of Israel was forcibly established. As the map shows, Jewish areas were few and far between. Furthermore, Arabs were 65% of the population at this time, which made Balfour’s “rights of existing non-Jewish communities” compelling and supportive of the claim that the McMahon-Hussein exclusion of “areas that cannot be said to be purely Arab” did not include Palestine, which was about 85% Arab in 1914. (See Bibliography, Bickerton and Klausner (1991), p. 22, which puts the Jewish population at about 13%.)

The League of Nations’ post-World War I mandates gave colonialist powers an opportunity to create boundaries to their own advantage. For example, Kuwait was created by Britain to effectively block one of the world’s largest oil producers, Iraq, from having secure access to the world’s oceans. Many other examples of narrow colonialist self-interest can be cited. Zionist interpretation of the Balfour Declaration and other documents related to the issue is based on the arrogant assumption that a colonialist power like Britain could freely assist Europe’s Zionists in their own colonialist adventure, but with one important difference: whereas people originally living in a traditionally colonized area stayed in place and served as a workforce for the colonial power, this was never the intention of many Zionists who wanted to remove native Arab populations from their future nation.

As might be expected, Britain did have its own agenda in pushing the Balfour Declaration: it was vitally interested in having both Arab and Jewish support for their war effort, and also schemed for as much influence in the Suez Canal as possible after the war.

Source: Juan Cole, “The Map: The Story of Palestinian Nationhood Thwarted After the League of Nations Recognized It”:

Cole’s article contains a detailed discussion of the “mandates” given to colonial powers and provides additional documentation of the mandates here.
V. ESTABLISHMENT OF ISRAEL AS A JEWISH STATE AND THE RISE OF PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE ORGANIZATIONS

As a result of the Jewish Holocaust of World War II, many European Jews immigrated to Palestine after the World War II in violation of a 1939 British white paper that put a limitation on immigration. Britain’s stance on immigration was deeply resented by European Jews, so ironically, in the process of establishing Israel after World War II, Zionists had to fight their British colonialist friends.

Needless to say, the flow of educated European Jews to Israel alarmed surrounding Arab states, which saw it as a new form of European colonialism that was on its last legs in other parts of the world. Tensions between European Jewish immigrants and native Arabs was not new, since Jewish immigration was a fact of life since the mid-1800s. But immigration following the terrible World War II genocide dwarfed all previous Jewish immigrations. The basis in international law for some immigration to Palestine was the Balfour Declaration, but it was the extent of it that raised questions in both Western and Middle East countries.

To implement the Balfour Declaration, the UN proposed a two-state partition plan in 1947 to establish separate Jewish and Palestinian states. But the plan was a patch-work of barely contiguous Jewish and Palestinian sectors. Here is a map of the proposed UN partition. Note that Jerusalem is designated as an international city and that Jaffa, although it is designated as an Arab sector, is completely surrounded by a Jewish sector. (You have to zoom in the document to see the Jaffa region.)

The UN Partition Plan Proposed A Federation (Common Customs, Currency, Railways, Post, Ports, Airports) OF TWO INDEPENDENT STATES, BUT WAS UNWORKABLE:

1. Arabs were 65% of the population but were given only 43% of the land area.
2. The Arab sectors are not as fertile as the Israeli sectors.
3. The plan allowed unlimited Jewish immigration.
4. The Israeli sectors would (prior to immigration) contain about equal numbers of Arabs and Jews; the Arab sectors would be mostly Arabs.
5. Jews were not given Jerusalem (to be an international city) or Hebron.
6. The Arabs were not given Jerusalem.
7. The Arab sectors were barely contiguous and Jaffa was separate from other Arab areas.
8. The Jewish sectors were barely contiguous.
9. The British refused any responsibility to implement the plan, leaving Jews and Arabs with a free hand to get the most they could.
10. Surrounding Arab states opposed the plan.

There were a number of reasons the UN plan was unworkable, as explained in the sidebar of the partition map. Nevertheless, Zionist leaders accepted the plan but Arab leaders did not, which resulted in war between Zionists and surrounding Arab nations, including Arabs living in Palestine. After a short time, Zionist forces were victorious and Israel was founded as a Jewish state in 1948. The exclusively Jewish nature of the state did not sit well with all Jews or even all Zionists. For example, the great physicist Albert Einstein considered himself a Zionist but opposed setting up a Jewish state. This is reportedly one reason why he refused the offer to serve as Israel’s first president.

The following map shows the cease-fire lines after the 1948 war. Note that the land of the new nation of Israel did not include the disputed territories of the West Bank, labeled “Judea” and “Samaria” on the map, and Gaza, a narrow strip of land controlled by Egypt. (The map is insufficiently detailed to show that Jerusalem was left divided in 1948, with Israel in possession of the Western half of the city.)

Cease fire lines after the 1948 war. Jerusalem was split between Israeli-controlled West Jerusalem and Arab-controlled East Jerusalem.


A most pernicious myth, propounded ad nauseum by Zionist mythology, says that Israel was founded “in a land without people for a people without land.” This self-serving myth goes back at least to the Zionist Israel Zangwill in 1901. That is nonsense, as even Israeli Zionist historians like Benny Morris acknowledge. Just look at the “Palestinian and Jewish land 1946” map above. Equally obnoxious was the comment of Golda Meir (Israeli Prime Minister, 1969-1974) who consigned Arab Palestinians in occupied territories to oblivion by claiming “We [Israelis] are the Palestinians.” About 750,000 native Palestinian inhabitants were driven from homes in what is now called Israel, and many of them have been in refugee camps in surrounding Arab countries since 1948. The experience of
expulsion from their land is referred to by Palestinians as “The Nakba,” i.e., “The Catastrophe.” One well-known example (among many) of Palestinian suffering occurred in the Palestinian village of Deir Yassin, attacked by Irgun, an Israeli terrorist organization, one of whose leaders was Menachem Begin, later prime minister of Israel. (In 1948, Albert Einstein and other famous Jews wrote to the New York Times protesting Begin’s visit to the US because of the massacre at Deir Yassin.)

In retrospect, Arab rejection of the UN partition plan might appear to be a mistake, because it resulted in a situation for native Palestinians that is decidedly worse than it would have been if partition were accepted. But it is unlikely that right-wing Israeli Zionists who dominated Israeli politics would have been content with the UN Partition Plan, but would have continued to wage war to make their boundaries more to their religiously/political liking. For example, Israeli historian Avi Schaim has carefully documented Israel’s founding and, according to a review of his book The Iron Wall by Jerome Slater (see entry on web site The Academy of Political Science), “Although Ben-Gurion accepted the 1947 UN partition plan for Palestine, he did so only as a temporary tactical expedient and continued to covet the Negev desert, the Sinai peninsula and the Gaza strip, Jerusalem, the West Bank, southern Lebanon, and the Golan Heights.” With the exception of southern Lebanon, these goals were achieved through armed struggle in 1948 and, later on, in the 1967 Six-Day war.

Palestinian suffering following the formation of Israel gave rise in 1954 to Fatah, a Palestinian nationalist movement directed to the goal of returning to the land from which they were expelled. Fatah’s founder was Yasir Arafat, who was the major figure in the Palestinian liberation effort until his death in 2004. Fatah was committed to armed struggle, and its first serious military action against Israel took place in 1965.

The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was an alternative military/political organization founded in 1964 to organize opposition to Israel’s planned diversion of waters from the Sea of Galilee, but went on to adopt Fatah’s goal to liberate Palestine from Zionists. The PLO gained UN recognition as the “sole representative of the Palestinian people” and in 1974 achieved observer status at the UN. Fatah joined the PLO in 1967, and became the dominant force in the organization.

The Palestinian Liberation Organization, like the Palestinian liberation movement overall, is quite disparate, consisting of member groups that have used a number of different tactics to achieve their goals. Some of the most militant groups, like the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, have carried out aircraft hijackings and terrorist actions against civilians, the most notorious being the “Black September” attack on Israeli Olympic athletes in Munich in 1972. Until recently, Fatah was by far the most prominent and politically successful organization, being the party in control of the nascent Palestinian government in recent years until Hamas won election to power in 2006.
VI. PALESTINIAN ISRAELIS: REAL CITIZENSHIP?

Israel, the proclaimed Jewish state, prides itself to be a democracy, and cites the citizenship it grants to the million or so Palestinians whose recent ancestors, about 150,000 of them, succeeded in staying in Israeli territory immediately after the 1948 war.

Citizenship was granted only in 1966, before which Palestinian Israelis, usually referred to Arab Israelis, were subject to military rule. These Arab Israelis (Muslim and Christian) account for 18% of the population excluding East Jerusalem and 25% if it is included. They are entitled to vote and can run for office, which are important rights of citizenship. But at the same time, no Israeli coalition government has ever included an Arab party, and only two Arabs have ever had membership in a government cabinet. A closer look at the situation of Arab Israelis shows that their citizenship is more reminiscent of the citizenship that Afro Americans in the US suffered under prior to the great civil rights movement following World War II.

For starters, Israel makes the distinction between citizenship and nationality, with the latter being regulated by Israel’s Nationality Law which allows Jews world-wide to emigrate to Israel and become citizens but excludes this same right to Arabs and their descendants driven out of Israel’s territory in the 1948 war. Explicitly, Israel is the state of the Jewish people world wide, not of its citizens, as reflected in the fact that the Israeli flag includes a Jewish symbol, the Star of David.

According to the document “Israeli-Palestinian Conflict 101” published by Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP, a US-based human rights group), Human Rights Watch has compiled an extensive study of Israel's policy of “separate, not equal” schools for Palestinian children, finding that “Government-run Arab schools are a world apart from government-run Jewish schools. In virtually every respect, Palestinian Arab children get an education inferior to that of Jewish children, and their relatively poor performance in school reflects this.”

Haneen Zoubi, a Palestinian member of the Knesset (Israel’s parliament), points out that investment in Arab schools is about 1/8th of what it is in Israeli schools. This is nowhere near proportional, because Arabs account for 1/4 of Israel’s population, and given the higher population growth of Arabs in Israel, the percentage of the Arab population of school age is probably even more than 1/4 of Israel’s school age population.

JVP also points out that “As many as 100 Palestinian villages in Israel, many of which pre-date the founding of the state, are not recognized by the Israeli government, and are not listed on maps and receive no services (water, electricity, sanitation, roads, etc.) from the government. More than 70,000 Palestinians live in these unrecognized villages. Meanwhile, hundreds of new Jewish towns have been established on lands confiscated from Palestinians.”

Most disturbing is the destruction of Arab villages under the claim that they are illegal. Recently, in 2010, the village of al-Arakib in the Negev desert was destroyed, leaving 300 Bedouins homeless. A particularly ugly incident involved the destruction of a mosque (shown in the following picture) in the Bedouin city of Rahat (pop. 52,000), also in the Negev, situated between Gaza and the West Bank. (It is the largest Bedouin town in the world and has the status of the city.) The destruction was carried out under the watch of about 5,000 Israeli police. Richard Silverstein, a US blogger on Israeli affairs, referred to the destruction as “Israel’s Kristallnacht.”
Across the board, public policy and expenditures favor Israeli Jews. Consider, for example, road repair, garbage collection, and public transportation, which are inadequate in Arab areas. Jonathan Cook, a journalist based in Nazareth in an article titled “The Rich Tapestry of Israeli Apartheid,” points out that for the first time since Israel’s founding, Palestinians (i.e., Arab Israelis) are being provided with bus service, but only to a small number of communities. Also, the bus lines serving Arabs will not be integrated with lines serving Israeli Jewish communities. Since most of the jobs in Israel are in Jewish areas, Arabs will still need cars to get to work.

Cook points out that ownership of a car, more a necessity for Arabs, causes an additional problem, because unemployment compensation is denied to anyone who owns a car. The unemployment compensation problem is exacerbated by Israel’s land policy, under which 93% of the land has been nationalized “for the benefit of the Jewish people.” Cook points out that “Almost all Palestinian citizens own the land on which they have built their homes, often with their own labor. They are therefore denied unemployment benefit.” This is serious because poverty and unemployment are higher among Arab Israelis.

The favored status of Judaism in Israel received notoriety recently when an Arab man was arrested and charged in April, 2010, with “Rape by Deception,” meaning that he had sex with a Jewish woman but claimed he was Jewish too. Such a law is unheard of in any Western democracy.

In an interview with the Los Angeles Times (23 May 2010), an Arab member of Israel’s Knesset, Ahmad Tibi, described in detail the difficulties Arabs face in Israel. Here is an interesting excerpt from the interview:

**In what way don’t Jewish and Arab citizens have equal rights?**

There is discrimination in every field of life except one. There is one man, one vote. In elections, all are equal. But in budget allocation, industry, education, land, religious places, employment there are huge gaps between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority. Just visit a couple of towns. You'll see Jewish cities are very civilized. Arab towns are being strangulated. There has not been one new Arab town in Israel since 1948, but there have been hundreds of [Jewish] settlements.

The state land authority [in many cases has been] allowed to hire or purchase land only for Jews. Non-Jews are not allowed. And we are talking about land that was ours in the past and confiscated. In the early 1950s, we owned 80% of the private land. Now we own 3% of the private land.

We are 20% of the population, but only 6% of the employees in the public sector. This is a built-in discriminatory policy. There is not one Arab official employed in a high-ranking [departmental] post, no legal advisor, no director-general.

Tibi puts his finger on the problem in reforming Israel’s discriminatory land law:

[I]f I brought a law on the issue of land allocation or cessation of discrimination, it would immediately be brought down.
I tried it three months ago with a motion that said simply the allocation of land by the state should be equal for all citizens. I didn't mention "Jewish" or "Arab" citizens. Automatically the vast majority of the Knesset voted against me. Any motion with the principle or word "equality" will fail. There is not one basic law in the Knesset talking about the value of equal rights. Every Knesset I try to pass it.

Israel’s right wing party, Likud, assumed power in March, 2009 with Benyamin Netanyahu as Prime Minister. The government is a coalition of Likud and several extremist right wing parties that have utilized their position to sponsor a number of regressive and even racist laws. For example, a proposal to demand a loyalty oath to the Jewish character of the state as a requirement for citizenship was being debated in the Knesset as of December 2010. This is like someone in the US congress proposing a loyalty oath to “white America.” Just as Afro-, Asian-,….etc Americans would be humiliated to take such an oath, so any respecting Israeli Muslim or Christian would find it impossible to take an oath to the Jewishness of the state. There is a chance that Israel’s supreme court will judge the law illegal, but just the proposal of such legislation casts a dark shadow on even Israel’s limited version of democracy.

Recently, Israel’s supreme court proved it can’t always be relied on to correct egregious abuses of non-Jews in Israel. Ha’aretz, a highly-respect Israeli daily on the liberal side of the spectrum, reported on 9 November 2010 that the Supreme Court “rejected an appeal on Sunday opposing the leasing of land in Jaffa's Ajami neighborhood for the exclusive use of members of the religious Zionist community.” This blatantly discriminatory policy should remind the reader of the great struggle in the 1960s for open housing laws in the US. Israel can only move in this direction if it becomes a true democracy by declaring a state and proclaiming national rights for all its citizens.

Religious fanatics have increased their activity since Netanyahu’s assumption of power, issuing edicts advocating discrimination in housing. According to Al Jazeera, Hundreds of Israeli rabbis have signed a religious edict forbidding Jews from renting or selling homes or land to Arabs and other non-Jews. The public letter instructs Jews to "ostracise" those who disobey the order, which is widely viewed as an attack on the country's Palestinian citizens. When the decree was announced on Tuesday, it had been signed by 50 rabbis, many of who are employed by the state of Israel as municipal religious leaders. Despite sharp public criticism, another 250 rabbis have added their names to the proclamation.

An article in 14 October 2010 issue of The Economist magazine tells of other disturbing moves by Israel’s right wing. The article concerns Lod, a town of 65,000, about one-third Arab, located near Tel Aviv:

    Cabinet members have proposed ‘strengthening’ the city’s population by bringing in more Jews and have approved a wider bill requiring new citizens to swear a loyalty oath accepting Israel as Jewish and democratic—in that order. Other measures are aimed at Israel’s Arabs, including a ban on teaching the Palestinian narrative that Israel expelled most of its Arabs in the war of independence.

The article goes on to say,

    Adding to the psychological barriers, the Lod authorities have erected physical ones. This year they have finished building a wall three metres high to separate Lod’s Jewish districts from its Arab ones. And where the Arab suburbs are cordoned off to prevent their spread, Israel’s prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, encourages building for Jews to proceed with abandon.

This is painfully reminiscent of Baghdad, where walls have been constructed to keep Sunni and Shiite Muslims apart, and of the extensive “Separation Barrier” Israel has constructed
that snakes into the West Bank to enclose a number of large illegal Israeli settlements—see the map of the “Wall” in Section XI below.

For insight into the legal foundations underpinning discrimination in Israel and the consequences of the Jewishness of the state, go to the web site of Adalah, “The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel.” Adalah has produced many publications providing in-depth analysis of discrimination in Israel. A short but excellent summary can be found in their June, 2010 report, “10 Discriminatory Laws.”
VII. WHERE IS ZIONIST “PALESTINE”? THE IMPORTANCE OF DE FACTO BOUNDARIES AND THE “GREAT COMPROMISE”

As discussed in Section VII, “Palestine,” though not a well-defined geographical/ethnic/national region throughout history, received its currently-accepted boundaries in 1922 when the League of Nations granted the “Palestine Mandate” to Britain. These boundaries encompassed roughly the east-west region between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River, and Israel’s current north-south limits. However, Israel has never declared its borders (one of the few, perhaps the only, modern state not to have done so) and often bases its claim for land on the Balfour Declaration which, in its reference to a homeland in Palestine, is interpreted by Israel’s extremists to mean that land beyond the 1948 cease-fire lines is fair game for Israeli expansion. Indeed, Israel has made continual efforts to expand its control over additional land (e.g., annexation of East Jerusalem and Syria’s Golan Heights), and is continuing with its biblically-fueled colonization of “Judea and Samaria” (i.e., the West Bank). Gaza was also part of the effort, but settlements were dismantled in 2005, only to be replaced by a brutal Israeli suppression of Gaza’s economic life as explained below in Sections XIV, XVII, XVIII, and XIX. And there are indications that Israel wants to expand their northern border about 12 miles up to the Litani River in Lebanon, which was conceivably the goal in Israel’s several wars with Lebanon in recent years.

Extremist Zionists argue that they have a right to all of Palestine as defined above, i.e., including the West Bank and Gaza. There have also been opportunistic claims that the Palestine Mandate includes what is now Jordan, which stretches all the way to Iraq. In fact, there is nothing in Jewish history that would even hint at such a great expanse for the lands of ancient Israel, and as mentioned in Section VII, the mandate granted to Britain in 1922 specifically treated Transjordan separately from the rest of the Mandate. Although technically there was only one Palestine Mandate that included Transjordan, according to Wikipedia’s entry on the mandate, “most official documents referred to them as if they were two separate mandates. Transfer of authority to an Arab government in Transjordan took place gradually, starting with the recognition of a local administration in 1923 and transfer of most administrative functions in 1928.” But it makes good Zionist propaganda to claim that when Israel accepted the UN partition plan in 1947, they gave up as much of what was in fact never theirs as the Palestinians claim they lost after the war ended in 1948.

Even if there were some kind of biblical historical basis for Israel’s claim to Jordan, it would be totally unrealistic for Zionists to claim it today, since Jordan is a well-established state. Another point against a claim beyond the 1922 Palestine Mandate is Israel’s acceptance of the 1920 San Remo Conference as the basis in international law for their claims. The San Remo Conference did not specify borders but left them to be decided at a later date by the countries involved (i.e., Britain). The decision was made with British consent by the League of Nations in 1922, and Jordan was treated quite separately from the rest of the mandate.

Israel’s conception of “Palestine” and its boundaries, and Zionist claims to it, form the heart of the conflict. Simply put, Israel’s extremists believe they have a complete right to at least all of what most parties recognize as Palestine (the 1922 British Mandate), including East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and probably Gaza (the only occupied territory with a seacost) which Israel undoubtedly sees as an unacceptable salient into Israel.
The division lines in the previous map were really cease-fire lines rather than recognized borders of any of the states involved, including Israel. But for 19 years after the 1948 cease fire, Israel created a state with well-functioning governmental and civil institutions inside those cease-fire lines. During this same time, Israel enjoyed the recognition of advanced industrial democracies like the US, Great Britain, and France and of many other countries including the Soviet Union. It can be fairly said that Israel had established *de facto* boundaries along the 1948 cease-fire lines that were widely accepted in the non-Arab world. Within these lines, Israel prospered and achieved a large degree of stability and security. The degree of success of Israel in its pre-1967 boundaries is the main reason why most proposals for peace are based on a pull-back of Israeli forces to those boundaries (with minor adjustments agreeable to both sides), and establishment of those boundaries as an internationally recognized *border* between Israel and a new Palestinian state that does not threaten Israel’s security.

**THE GREAT COMPROMISE**

Acceptance of Israel’s pre-1967 boundaries, despite the great suffering and pain the 1948 war caused Palestinians, can be fairly called “The Great Compromise” granted to Israel by the UN, the US, and supporters of international law in a large part of the world.

Like all compromises, this one is not irreversible but depends on Israel’s demonstration of peaceful intent to live with its Arab neighbors. If Israel’s peaceful intent then leads to resolution of conflicts with its neighbors, the next natural step would be to declare these boundaries as Israel’s permanent borders. That possibility became a *potential* reality in 1967.
VIII. THE 1967 SIX-DAY WAR, “LAND FOR PEACE”, AND ISRAEL’S FATAL DECISION TO BUILD SETTLEMENTS

The second Arab-Israeli war in June 1967 lasted only six days, and ended with Israel occupying Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip, Jordan’s West Bank, and Syria’s Golan Heights. Israel also occupied East Jerusalem, which was controlled by Jordan prior to the war.

Following the 1967 war many, including myself, believed that Israel’s occupation of Arab territories provided an opportunity to resolve its conflicts with surrounding Arab countries by trading the occupied lands back to the Arabs in return for peaceful acceptance of Israel in its pre-1967 boundaries. But right after the war, hopes for a “land for peace” swap vanished as Israel’s leaders promoted radical Zionist biblical claims to “Judea and Samaria” (i.e., today’s West Bank). Right after the war, the “Allon Plan” proposed returning some West Bank land to Jordan while sending settlers into the remainder. Soon, settlers were sent into other occupied areas as well. The Allon Plan prohibited settlements in large Palestinian population centers, but it suffered from the same problems as the original 1948 UN partition plan as this map shows. It is not apparent from the map that the plan also envisioned Israeli annexation of all of Jerusalem, carried out by Israel on 28 June 1967. The annexation is illegal under international law and is fiercely rejected by all Arab parties. According to Israeli historian Avi Schlaim, the Allon Plan was neither accepted nor rejected by the Israeli cabinet, and Israel later adopted what would become an expansive settlement policy for the occupied territories. But today, it appears that one aspect of Allon’s plan—an Israeli presence in the Jordan Valley, just west of the Jordan River and Dead Sea, would be occupied for the foreseeable future by Israel.

Some Israelis will argue that “land for peace” was forfeited by Arabs when they met in Khartoum a few months after the 1967 war and declared their three NOs: “No peace with Israel, No recognition of Israel, and No negotiations with it.” At best, this is an excuse for continuing military occupation of the occupied territories, not for settlements which are clearly against international law. Interestingly, Pierre Tristam, a journalist for an American newspaper, gives a positive interpretation of Khartoum’s declarations:

They represented, if anything, a softening of Arab attitudes, which was the other, more significant achievement of the Khartoum Declaration: For the first time since 1948, Arab
states abandoned the notion of wiping Israel off the map and retaking all of Israel/Palestine, and instead agreed that a political, rather than military, solution, would henceforth be sought (in itself a contradiction of the Three No's).

Tristam cites Milton Viorst in his book, *Sands of Sorrow: Israel’s Journey From Independence* regarding the significance of the Khartoum Conference:

“It was not that Arabs became more tolerant of Zionism. Rather, they learned they had no choice but to tolerate Israel's existence. The recovery of the lost land became the new objective, transforming the rhetoric and, with it, the real goals of Arab leadership.”

In addition, the “No negotiations” provision can be understood as Arab reliance on and affirmation of UN Resolution 242 (see Section X below), which proposed a resolution of the issue on the basis of international law. And “No recognition” was simply a refusal to recognize the Jewish nature of the state with so many non-Jews inside the pre-1967 cease fire lines.

The ten years following the Allon plan saw modest settlement activity in the West Bank, with about 5,000 settlers in 24 settlements and additional settlement activity in other occupied territories. But in the late 1970s, a staunch settler movement became active, particularly Gush Emunim (“Block of the Faithful”).

Over the years, settler movements have become dominant in Israeli politics, so that today, there are almost half a million settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. One driving force behind settler efforts is the control and protection of Jewish holy places. This obsession has moved settlement activity far beyond the Allon Plan. For example, Hebron, an almost exclusively Palestinian city but with an important Jewish history, now has an enclave of Israeli settlers in it.

Settlements forfeit Israel’s claim that it fought the war for security. With incessant settlement activity and repression of native Palestinians, it has become obvious that Israel is not content with its post-1948-war borders recognized by most governments in the world and within which Israel has prospered. Continued settlement activity shows that Israel wants to forcibly confiscate land inhabited by Palestinians for thousands of years in rejection of a “land for peace” deal that it claims it wants.

Israel’s Zionists argue that “land for peace” was achieved with Egypt when U.S. President Jimmy Carter got the two countries to agree to a peace deal (the 1978 Camp David Accords followed by a treaty in 1979) that culminated in Israel’s return of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt. True enough, but Israeli Zionists then claim that a similar land-for-peace deal could be done with the Palestinians if they would just give up terrorism. But keep in mind that Egypt is a large and relatively powerful country that gave Israel a surprisingly strong fight in the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. In addition, Israel had no outstanding interest in the Sinai beyond secure access to the Suez Canal, which was assured by the 1979 treaty. The West Bank, Gaza, and Syria’s Golan Heights are much different. There are scarce water resources for a thirsty Israel in the West Bank and Golan, and compared to the Sinai, the West Bank has great biblical-historical significance for Zionists. Gaza’s role in Israeli designs is more complicated and will be considered later on. Compared to Egypt, Palestinians are much smaller in number and very weak because of Israeli occupation policies, and they inhabit land that Israel shamelessly covets.

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2 Ibid.
IX. THE 1967 WAR: CHOICE OR NECESSITY?

The 1967 war provides another example of the American public’s willful misunderstanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The conventional wisdom is that Israel was existentially threatened by surrounding Arab countries, especially Egypt which closed off the Straits of Tiran and amassed troops against Israel. But it is clear from any number of military analysts that Egypt’s deployment of troops and the public posturing of Egypt’s then-president Nasser were really no threat to Israel. The deployments were too minor to serve as much of a threat and were designed more to burnish his militant credentials with his Arab neighbors. More importantly, there are numerous statements by Israel’s military and political leaders after the war saying the same thing. For example:

1. Menachem Begin, 1982: The 1967 war was one of “choice” and “we decided to attack [Egypt’s Nasser].”

2. Ezer Weizman (“father of Israel’s Air Force & defense minister, 1977) said in 1972: There was “no threat of destruction” from the Arabs.

3. General Mattrityahu Peled, 1972: “To claim that the Egyptian forces concentrated on our borders were capable of threatening Israel’s existence not only insults the intelligence of anyone capable of analyzing this kind of situation, but is an insult to Zahal [the Israeli army].”

4. Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin (later, PM), 1968: “I do not believe that Nasser wanted war. The two divisions he sent into the Sinai on May 14 would not have been enough to unleash an offensive against Israel. He knew it and we knew it.”

5. David Ben-Gurion said he “doubted very much whether Nasser wanted to go to war.”

(All quotes from Paul Findley, Deliberate Deceptions: Facing the FACTS about the U.S.-ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP, 1993).

Nonetheless, the official line swallowed whole by the American public and many Jews worldwide is that Israel had to carry out a preemptive strike to head off an Arab attack that would have overrun and destroyed Israel.
X. ILLEGALITY OF ISRAEL’S SETTLEMENTS AND OCCUPATION POLICIES

Shortly after the June, 1967 war, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 242 which in its prologue states the premises upon which the resolution rests, which read in part: "...Emphasizing the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every State in the area can live in security..." So Israel’s annexation of East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights are clearly a violation of UN Res. 242.

Israel’s settlements in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, or any other territories taken over in the 1967 war are also illegal, because they violate Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention which dictates that “The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.”

Many of Israel’s occupation policies are also illegal. For example, collective punishment against occupied people is forbidden by international law (4th Geneva Convention, Art. 33), but Israel has on numerous occasions blown up houses of families of Palestinians who have taken arms against Israel. In some cases, Palestinians have perpetrated terrorist acts against innocent Israelis, but that does not release Israel as the official occupying force from the prohibition against collective punishment of these terrorists’ families. Numerous other Israeli occupation policies are illegal under international law, such as extralegal assassinations, restriction of movement, and severe restriction of imports of goods, even food.

The late George Ball, in his book The Passionate Attachment, lists the following Israeli violations of the various international conventions governing occupations:

- “Implanting of settlements in the occupied areas…;
- “Destruction of private property and humiliation of residents…;
- “Interference with religious rights…;
- “Attacks on hospitals and hospital personnel…;
- “Physical violence against protected persons…;
- “Collective and guilt-by-association punishments…;
- “Unjustifiable destruction of private property…;
- “Seizure and plunder of private property…;
- “Unlawful tax collections…;
- “Unlawful deportations…;
- “Closing of schools in the occupied areas…;
- “Deprivation of procedural and substantive due process of law…;
- “Commission of aggressive annexations…;
- “Specification of grave breaches….”

See Ball’s book for details of each violation.
XI. SETTLEMENTS: A PICTURE OF SLOW-MOTION ETHNIC CLEANSING

Zionist strategy over the years has been to create large city-like settlement blocs, such as Ariel, Ma’ale Adumim, and Gush Etzion, and then claim that these settlements are so large that they are irreversible “facts on the ground” that no negotiations can reasonably abolish. Unfortunately, George Bush met with Israeli PM Ariel Sharon in April 2004 and agreed with the “facts on the ground” argument while paying lip service to UN Resolution 242, thus reversing long-standing US policy that all settlements, no matter how big, are illegal and must be vacated.

The following graph shows settlement population as a function of time. Most of the growth over the years has been in the West Bank (“Judea and Samaria” and East Jerusalem. The growth of settlement populations prior to the earlier 1970s doesn’t show because of the large vertical scale needed to accommodate the tremendous growth in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

![Graph showing settlement population growth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:IsraeliSettlementGrowthLineGraph.png)

Data for graph from B’Tselem and Peace Now.

As mentioned, Zionist extremists claim that Judea and Samaria “were given to us by God.” But incorporation of these areas confronts Israel with several very uncomfortable choices regarding the Palestinian population living there now, because the Palestinian birth rate is higher than Israel’s which threatens to put Jews in the minority if occupation continues. This problem will be discussed in more detail in Section XXII.

The following maps show the tremendous toll that Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and its settlement-building has taken. Today, there are about 480,000 Israeli settlers in the occupied territories—about 180,000 in East Jerusalem. They show how settlements have carved up the West Bank into “Bantustans” separated by numerous checkpoints that make Palestinian life miserable. The graph following the maps shows that Palestinian casualties are much greater than Israel’s. On a per-capita basis, the difference would be even greater, since there are fewer Palestinians than Israelis.
Explanation of Legend: The Western Hills strip extends from north to south, and is ten to twenty kilometers wide. The proximity of this area to the Green Line and to the main urban centers of Israel has created great demand among Israelis for the settlements in this area. The total population of the settlements in this area was approximately 85,000 as of 2002. The seizure of land limits the potential for urban and economic development in the Palestinian communities. The transfer of powers to the Palestinian Authority under the Oslo Accords has led to the creation of over fifty enclaves of area B in this area, as well as a small number of enclaves defined as area A. These areas are completely surrounded by area C, which remains under full Israeli control. As a result, these settlements interrupt the territorial contiguity of the Palestinian villages and towns located out along this strip.
The wall, or separation barrier, is intended to keep Palestinian terrorists out of Israel proper, but it snakes into West Bank territory and in some cases cuts through Palestinian villages. It is another attempt to establish a “fact on the ground” designed to preempt negotiations based on UN Resolution 242.
Road restrictions break up the West Bank into “Bantustans”

Effect of settlements, roads, and restrictions:
“While the physical space taken up by the inhabited areas of the Jewish settlements is not more than 3 % of the West Bank, the Municipal borders of these settlements and the infrastructure that supports them take up about 50% of the West Bank.” (Henry Siegman, former executive director of the American Jewish Congress, New York Review of Books, 2/26/04)

The Western Hills strip extends from north to south, and is ten to twenty kilometers wide. The proximity of this area to the Green Line and to the main urban centers of Israel has created great demand among Israelis for the settlements in this area. The total population of the settlements in this area was approximately 85,000 as of 2002. The seizure of land limits the potential for urban and economic development in the Palestinian communities. The transfer of powers to the Palestinian Authority under the Oslo Accords has led to the creation of over fifty enclaves of area B in this area, as well as a small number of enclaves defined as area A. These areas are completely surrounded by area C, which remains under full Israeli control. As a result, these settlements interrupt the territorial contiguity of the Palestinian villages and towns located along this strip.
Closure obstacles in the West Bank

Closure misery: There are more than 500 closure obstacles throughout the West Bank. The above UN map shows the distribution of the various kinds of impediments to travel that make Palestinian life in the West Bank miserable. (For a more readable version you can magnify, go to the source here.)
The occupation continues to exact a heavy (but unequal) toll:
XII. EXPLOITATION OF THE JEWISH HOLOCAUST IN ISRAEL’S CLAIM TO LEGITIMACY

Section III critically analyzed the biblical basis of Zionist claims to Palestine, but the opening words of Section V suggest instead that the Jewish Holocaust was the greatest impulse to Israel’s founding in Palestine. Despite the denial of some Zionists of the relevance of the Jewish Holocaust, it was given even more emphasis with the 1967 war, when many Jews bought the bogus claim that Israel was really threatened with another holocaust by Arab armies. (See Section IX for a critique of this claim.) Barack Obama’s July 2008 visit to Yad Vashem (Israel’s Holocaust memorial and museum), prompted South African journalist Tony Karon to ask why so many persist in seeing the Jewish Holocaust as the seminal event in Israel’s founding:

Maybe it’s the fact that the first place Israel takes every visiting dignitary is to Yad Vashem, which as Avrum Burg has so eloquently argued, is a visit designed to effect what he calls the “emotional blackmail” that sears into the minds of the guest that Israel is the answer to the Holocaust, and that any criticism of the Jewish State must be muted for that reason.

The Zionist drive for immigrants to Israel has been assisted by a well-financed campaign by conservative Jewish-American organizations such as Israel’s US lobbying arm AIPAC and the Anti-Defamation League to publicize the Jewish Holocaust as a constant reminder of how much the world owes Jews in general and Israel in particular. Following the 1967 war, the Jewish Holocaust has been treated extensively in movies and TV shows to the point that some younger Americans probably equate World War II with Jewish suffering, which was a significant part of that sorry history but as explained in Section I, was certainly nowhere near the whole tragedy.

The exploitation of the Jewish Holocaust on Israel’s behalf has caused many Jews to fear that their great cultural/religious traditions (who can forget the involvement of religious and secular Jews in the American civil rights and peace movements?) are being replaced by a political agenda that exploits the sense of Jewish victimization in a morally ambiguous way. In his book The Holocaust Industry, Norman Finkelstein writes:

Returning from a trip to the United States, the respected Israeli journalist Danny Rubinstein reported: “According to most of the people in the [American] Jewish establishment the important thing is to stress again and again the external dangers that face Israel.... The Jewish establishment in America needs Israel only as a victim of cruel Arab attack. For such an Israel one can get support, donors, money.... Everybody knows the official tally of the contributions collected in the United Jewish Appeal in America, where the name of Israel is used and about half of the sum goes not to Israel but to the Jewish institutions in America. Is there a greater cynicism?” As we will see, the Holocaust industry’s exploitation of “needy Holocaust victims” is the latest and, arguably, ugliest manifestation of this cynicism. (Cited in Noam Chomsky, Pirates and Emperors (New York 1986), 29 – 30.)

The most extreme Zionists want to convince Jews in many countries, including the US, that they need Israel as a final refuge from another possible holocaust. (See, for example, the video by Max Blumenthal, where he interviews Zionists at a rally in New York City.)

Israel’s Zionist arch-supporters often smear anyone the least bit critical of Israel by calling them “anti-Semitic.” This odious label has been applied to people like former US President Jimmy Carter. There has also been a concerted effort to blackball faculty members in colleges and universities who are critical of Israel’s policies. The blackballing occurs from a wide variety of militantly pro-Israel sources, such as the American Jewish
Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, and most importantly, members of such organizations on the local level.

Michael Neumann, in *The Politics of Antisemitism*, shows the absurdity of carelessly smearing people with the anti-Semitism charge:

Let’s try defining ‘anti-Semitism’ as broadly as any supporter of Israel would every want: anti-Semitism can be hatred of the Jewish race, or culture, or religion, or hatred of Zionism. Hatred, or dislike, or opposition, or slight unfriendliness.

But supporters of Israel won’t find this game as much fun as they expect. Inflating the meaning of ‘anti-Semitism’ to include anything politically damaging to Israel is a double-edged sword. It may be handy for smiting your enemies, but the problem is that definitional inflation, like any inflation, cheapens the currency. The more things get to count as anti-Semitic, the less awful anti-Semitism is going to sound.

For example, consider settlements, which many Israelis oppose. In Newmann’s view, “…since we are obliged to oppose the settlements, we are obliged to be anti-Semitic. Through definitional inflation, some form of anti-Semitism becomes morally obligatory.” An even better example would be our obligation to oppose collective punishment, which Israel is infamous for. We are obliged to object, and are therefore obliged to be anti-Semitic in the inflated sense of the term that Israel’s arch-supporters use as a weapon.

See Appendix B for an account of my own experiences being charged with anti-Semitism by an arch-Zionist.
XIII. MAJOR EVENTS FROM 1967 TO 2005

The 1967 Six-Day War was a seminal event that over the years changed Israel from a state widely accepted by the international community to one widely criticized. Throughout most of this period, Palestinian politics was dominated by Fatah, with a watershed event occurring in November 2004 when Fatah leader Yasir Arafat died. A comprehensive review of events from 1967 to 2005 would fill a book, so a brief review will have to suffice here, followed by several sections that focus on very significant recent events.

1. February 1969: Yasir Arafat takes over the PLO (est. in 1964).
2. March, 1972: Jordan’s King Hussein proposes federation with the West Bank (which was part of Jordan prior to 1967). The plan is denounced by both Israel and Arab states.
4. September 5, 1972: the infamous Munich Massacre, carried out by Palestinian terrorists, killed eleven Israeli athletes and coaches at the Munich Olympics.
5. October, 1973: Egypt and Syria attack Israel in the “Yom Kippur” war. OPEC imposes oil embargo. Israel falters but with massive US support ends up the victor. Israel became more dependent on the US. The war involved a serious conflict between the US and Soviet Union, and US president Nixon calls a nuclear alert, a reminder that war anywhere, especially in the Middle East, exacerbated US-Soviet cold war tensions. After the war, UN resolution 338 calls for direct negotiations based on Res. 242 to bring a resolution to the conflict.
8. September, 1978: Israel and Egypt sign a peace treaty (Camp David) that returns the Sinai to Egypt; Israel continues to occupy the formerly Egyptian territory of Gaza.
11. June, 1982: In the “First Lebanon War,” Israel massively invades Lebanon where the Palestinian leadership relocated from Jordan, and withdraws two years later.
12. September 16-17, 1982: Lebanese Christian militiamen, under the control and monitoring of Israel’s Ariel Sharon, carry out the massacre of Sabra and Shatila and kill more than a thousand Palestinian men, women, and children. Israeli military leader and later prime minister Ariel Sharon is found responsible.
15. December 1987: the Palestinian “Intifada” or uprising breaks out.


18. December 1988: The PLO’s leader Arafat explicitly recognizes Israel’s right to exist and the US opens dialogue with the PLO.

19. April, 1989: Israeli PM Yitzak Shamir discusses with US president GHW Bush a plan to have Palestinian elections and then to negotiate autonomy (not sovereignty).

20. May 1989: Yasir Arafat insists that the Palestinian charter calling for Israel’s destruction is “null and void” and that the PLO reaffirms its December 1988 recognition of Israel’s right to exist.

21. May 1989: US Sec’y of State James Baker said that Israeli’s wish for a greater Israel is unrealistic; Shamir rejects Baker’s statement as “useless.”

22. July 1989: Shamir takes tough line, continues Israeli settlements, and the PLO says it is no longer interested in Shamir’s plan.

23. October 12, 1990, US casts first vote against Israel in the UNSC to pass UN Res 672 criticizing both Palestinians and Israelis.

24. October 24, 1990: US casts second vote against Israel after Israel refuses to cooperate with investigative UN mission.

25. December 20, 1990: US casts their vote against Israel, condemning Israeli treatment of Palestinians. The resolution refers first time to the “Palestinian territories.”


27. October, 1991: Madrid conference opens with Israeli and Palestinian delegations. This was the beginning of the negotiating track that led almost two years later to the Oslo Accords.


29. February, 1992: Baker says Israel must stop settlement activity before loan guarantee can be granted.

30. August, 1992: Bush and Israel’s new PM Yitzak Rabin talk and the US agrees to give loan guarantees.

31. January 1993: Israeli parliament allows Rabin government to contact PLO.

32. August 30, 1993: Israel and the PLO announce agreements under the “Oslo Accords” to form a Palestinian state. On September 9, 1993, Yasir Arafat and the PLO recognize Israel’s right to exist and Israel recognizes the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. Main terms of Oslo:

   (a) The Palestinian Liberation Organization recognized Israel.

   (b) Israel yielded to the Palestinians civilian control over nearly a third of the West Bank.
(c) Four percent of the West Bank was turned over to exclusive Palestinian control (including Jericho) and another 25 percent to administrative-civilian control.

(d) Israel retained control over 35 percent of Gaza’s land, containing the Jewish settlements and the roads leading to them, and the rest was turned over to the Palestinian Authority."

(Source: ProCon.org, explanation of their Oslo map.)

33. Settlement activity continued unabated—a 50% increase since the Oslo Accords were signed in 1993 until 2004.


35. September, 2000: Ariel Sharon, in the company of a thousand Israeli police, makes a provocative visit to the Muslim Dome of the Rock (al-Aqsa) in East Jerusalem, which sparked the second intifada when, the following day, Israeli police fired on young Palestinians protesting Sharon’s visit, killing four and wounding many others. This sparked the Second “al-Aqsa” Intifada, a massive revolt of Palestinians against Israeli oppression and the failure of negotiations to bring an end to the occupation.

36. January 2001: Palestinian-Israeli talks in Taba, Egypt come close to a final agreement, but are suspended before completion because of upcoming Israeli elections.

37. February 2001: Ariel Sharon is elected, becomes PM of Israel, and ends Taba negotiations.

38. February 2002: The Arab Peace Plan (initially formulated by Saudi Arabia) proposes a withdrawal of Israel to its pre-1967 boundaries (consistent with UN Resolution 242) and a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem in return for peace with Arab countries.

39. June 2002: Sharon begins building a separation barrier (“The Wall”—see map below) which, in violation of international law and UN resolutions, snakes beyond the 1948 cease-fire line into the West Bank.

40. In November 2003 the Bush administration’s Road Map was passed with UN approval, obligating Israel to freeze construction entirely and raze outposts.


41. April, 2004: G.W. Bush reverses 37 years of US policy and prejudges negotiations by saying Israel can keep large settlements in the West Bank. This is a violation of international law.

42. November, 2004: Yasir Arafat dies in Paris after having been trapped in his West Bank headquarters for over two years.

43. January 9, 2005: Mahmoud Abbas (aka Abu Mazen) is elected president in the first presidential election in nine years.

44. January 26, 2005: Israel agrees to halt targeted assassinations of Palestinians.

45. February 8, 2005: At Sharm el Sheik, an agreement is reached that ends the 4-year al-Aqsa intifada.

46. August, 2005: Israel pulls about 8000 settlers out of Gaza and begins a siege of Gaza by severely restricting vital supplies and rigidly controlling Palestinian access to the sea.
Needless to say, the timeline reflects my own interests, concerns, and judgment of the conflict. MidEast Web, an Israeli-Palestinian group committed to coexistence, provides a number of very complete time lines with many embedded links for documents here, here, and here. The reader should note that MidEast Web is very critical of the Islamic Palestinian group Hamas, and blames the so-called Gaza coup solely on Hamas with no mention of provocations from Fatah and the US. (See next section (XIV).)
XIV. THE RISE OF HAMAS AND THE AGONY OF GAZA

The 1993 Oslo Accords between Israelis and Palestinians resulted in the creation of the Palestinian Authority (PA), which ideally would negotiate with Israel to form an independent state side by side with Israel. The PA is essentially the Palestinian’s government, in as much as an occupied people can have a government. Until relatively recently, the main Palestinian political party in control of the PA was Fatah, led by Yasser Arafat until his death in November, 2004. Fatah’s main contender for political power is Hamas, an Islamic organization distinguished by its lack of corruption (at least relative to Fatah) and its provision of social services to Palestinians.

Hamas won power in a fair election in January 2006. Right after the election, the US, which encouraged the election, and the European Union, declared they would have nothing to do with Hamas, which put the lie to the supposed commitment of the US and EU to democracy and fair elections. US demonization of Hamas was seen by the Arab world as proof that the US accepts democracy only when it produces what the US wants. This type of demonization is standard practice of imperialist nations engaged in realpolitik: undermine moderates (in this case, the faction of Hamas that decided to enter the political arena) and leave the field to the extremists, thereby making the “extremist” charge against Hamas a self-fulfilling prophecy. This kind of self-serving manipulative power politics doesn’t have a shred of subtlety.

Today, Hamas is in sharp conflict with Fatah, which is favored by the US, EU, and Israel. Ironically, Israel was initially favorable to the formation of Hamas years earlier, thinking that an Islamic group would cause disunity in Palestinian ranks. Of course, today it is just the reverse: Fatah is the favored party while Hamas is anathema. According to Brendan O’Neill writing in the 12 February 2007 issue of The American Conservative,

[T]here is something bitterly ironic in Israel’s support for Fatah against Hamas—and it should be a lesson to governments everywhere that meddle in other states’ affairs. In the past, Israel supported Hamas against Fatah. Indeed, in the 1970s and 80s, Israel played a not insignificant role in encouraging Hamas’s emergence in the belief that such an Islamist group might help rupture support for the mass nationalist movement of Fatah. Twenty years later, Israel has switched sides, hoping that it can encourage Fatah to see off Hamas. It wants “moderate” Palestinians to take on the “extremist” Palestinians it helped create. Like America and Britain before it—both of whom have supported and armed Islamist movements in the Middle East in attempts to undermine secular nationalist parties—Israel is learning the hard way that it is one thing to let radical Islamists off the leash but quite another thing to rein them back in again. If you make monsters, you shouldn’t be surprised if they come back to bite you.

Like any political group, Hamas has its militant and moderate factions. After Hamas decided to participate in Palestinian legislative elections in January 2006 and won control of the Palestinian parliament, it moderated its stance under the leadership of the new prime minister, Ismail Hanniyeh, who is considered to be a leader of the moderate wing of Hamas. On the other end of the spectrum, we supposedly have Khaled Meshal, a Hamas leader located in Syria, but he insists he harbors no harm to civilians. To complicate matters, there are factions of Hamas that are allied with the militant group Islamic Jihad that is supported by Iran. The true task of diplomacy is to strengthen and encourage factions that are interested in a settlement, a test that Israel and the US, Israel’s enabler in addiction to bad habits, fail miserably in demonizing Hamas en toto.

Hamas’s conflicts with Israel, the US, and Fatah cannot be understood without some review of what has happened in Gaza. In 2005, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon forcibly
removed the 8000 or so Israeli settlers in Gaza, primarily because the military and financial expense in protecting them was not worth the trouble. Israel’s Zionist apologists claim that evacuation of the Gaza settlements is another example (in addition to the Sinai returned to Egypt) that Israel is willing to give land to the Palestinians (as if it were Israel’s to “give”). In fact, Israel to this day exerts iron-clad control over all imports across Gaza’s borders, and by controlling the seacoast, prevents Palestinian fishermen in Gaza from earning a decent living. Needless to say, Gaza’s air space is also forcibly dominated by Israel.

Hamas’s election to power left Fatah’s Mahmoud Abbas as president of the Palestinians. (Abbas was elected a year earlier in January 2005, and has been serving since January 2009 without electoral legitimacy.) Enmity between Hamas and Fatah led eventually to dominance of Hamas in Gaza, although its strength in the West Bank is probably still substantial since it could not have won the 2006 election without many votes from the West Bank. Today, Gaza, a thin strip of land next to the southwest corner of Israel, is home to about 1.5 million Palestinians.

US and Israeli demonization of Hamas often focuses on the coup that Hamas supposedly carried out in June 2007 in Gaza against its rival Palestinian faction, Fatah. The truth of the matter is that Fatah had agreed with the US to carry out an assault on Hamas in Gaza. For a detailed account of the real facts surrounding Hamas’s “Gaza coup,” see David Rose, *The Gaza Bombshell*, in the April 2008 issue of *Vanity Fair*. The US-Israeli subterfuge backfired and left Hamas as the exclusive political authority in Gaza and necessitated the establishment by Fatah of an illegitimate parliament in the West Bank. That a coup against Hamas could be so successfully translated in US media reports into a coup by Hamas is a testament to the great influence the national security forces in US and Israel have over media.

Hamas control of Gaza has succeeded in reducing and eliminating the many criminal elements operating there, but there is a danger now that extremist Islamists within Hamas will prevail, again which serves the US and Israel just fine because it makes it easy to demonize Hamas.

The depth of US hatred of Hamas is expressed by the oft-repeated lie that Hamas was elected “in Gaza,” the implication being that Hamas lost the West Bank to Fatah in the 2006 election. The following map shows a different story. Green is for “Change and Reform,” primarily Hamas, yellow is for Fatah, and pink is for independents.
XV. THE ISRAELI-US ANTI-HAMAS “EXISTENCE” CANARD

The US and Israel claim that Hamas is dedicated to the elimination of Israel. Proof, they say, is Hamas’s refusal to recognize the existence of Israel. This is a phony issue for the following reasons:

(1) Israel has never declared its borders. Exactly what would Hamas or the Palestinians in general be recognizing the existence of?

(2) Israel’s existence was recognized in the 1993 Oslo Accord and before, but Israel’s settlement and brutal occupation policies continued. In view of this wholesale undermining of the Oslo Accords, it is totally unrealistic to expect Palestinians to wrap up a formal diplomatic “recognition of existence” in a box with a pretty bow on it as a present to Israel for which they will get nothing. Given Israel’s past insincerity for a resolution of the conflict, recognition of existence must be a negotiable item.

(3) The Palestinian government is reasonably reluctant to recognize Israel as a Jewish state as Israel demands, since there are non-Jewish Palestinians living in Israel.

(4) Israel won’t reciprocate and unconditionally recognize Palestine, because negotiations for a Palestinian state have (in an Israeli self-fulfilling prophecy) never succeeded.

(5) In view of Israel’s wholesale undermining of the Oslo Accords by their continuing settlement activity, it is totally unrealistic to expect Palestinians to wrap up a formal diplomatic “recognition of existence” in a box with a pretty bow on it as a present to Israel for which they will get nothing. Recognition of existence must be a negotiable item, if for no other reason than the importance and relevance of points (1)-(4) above.

Hamas has made it clear on any number of occasions that it is willing to live with Israel within its pre-1967 boundaries—a simple recognition on Hamas’s part that the only reasonable solution is not the elimination of Israel, or Israeli takeover of the West Bank and Gaza, but a solution along the lines of UN Resolution 242—i.e., the pre-1967 boundaries with modifications acceptable to both.
XVI. FATAH’S RISKY COOPERATION WITH ISRAELI SECURITY

The failed June, 2007 US-Israeli-Fatah coup attempt in Gaza was encouraged in large part by Fatah taking the fatal step to cooperate with Israel’s security forces not necessarily to further peace, but to defeat Hamas. The cooperation has continued since, which puts the development of a democratic Palestinian state at grave risk.

An opinion piece in the Israeli daily Ha’aretz, titled “The Palestinian Authority is imprisoning Gazans,” tells the sad tale of how the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority is refusing to give ordinary Gazans Palestinian passports, thus preventing them from leaving Gaza. Other actions of Fatah are inimical to the need to struggle against Israel and occupation. For example, Fatah raised no objections when Israel expelled Hamas parliamentarians living in E. Jerusalem. Fatah security forces themselves have jailed Hamas members for extended periods without charges or trials. Even worse, according to the Ha’aretz piece, Fatah’s security forces “have won praise from the occupier for the quiet they’ve achieved while the occupier acts: confiscating land, demolishing homes, expelling people, arresting children, preventing free movement and killing.” The author of this opinion piece, Amira Hass, is the Haaretz correspondent in the occupied territories. She is not a Hamas sympathizer and indeed has harshly criticized their repressive policies in Gaza, so her views on Fatah carry all the more weight.

The esteemed British weekly The Economist, in its 12 August edition, notes that the Palestinian Authority has cancelled three elections in less than a year, a sad irony since the 2006 election, which brought Hamas to power, were considered by international observers “as being among the fairest in the Middle East. Instead of building a democratic state, the PA is fast on its way to creating just another Arab autocracy.” The cancellation of elections leaves the PA illegitimate and ruling by fiat until proper elections are carried out.

The Economist article goes on to describe the reaction of Western governments to this decline of democracy:

Western governments which bankroll [the PA] do not seem unduly worried. Most of them view the PA as a necessary bulwark against an Islamist electoral tide, which in 2006 swept Hamas, an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, into power in the Palestinian territories. Instead of accepting the Islamist victory, Western governments diverted funds from the PA’s democratic institutions into the PA security forces under the control of Mahmoud Abbas, the PA’s previously (and fairly) elected president, whose secular Fatah party Hamas had beaten in the 2006 general election. When, the year after, Hamas chased Fatah out of Gaza, Western governments invested in an unelected emergency government established in the West Bank under Mr [Salam] Fayyad, a technocrat appointed by Mr Abbas though not in hock to Fatah.

Salam Fayyad referred to in the foregoing passage is the PA’s Prime Minister. Fayyad has stated that he wants to construct a functioning Palestinian state, and is reported to have approached the Obama administration about unilaterally declaring statehood with pre-1967 borders. But his precise position is cloudy, with reports that he has proposed that Palestinian refugees return not to their original homes in Israel proper but to the new Palestinian state.

A lengthy article by Nathan Thrall in the New York Review of books, “Our Man in Palestine,” describes how Israeli-PA cooperation “has reached unprecedented levels under the quiet direction of a three-star US Army general, Keith Dayton, who has been commanding a little-publicized American mission to build up Palestinian security forces in the West Bank.” The article refers to a confidential report by Peruvian diplomat Alvaro de
Soto, following an effort by Saudi Arabia to reconcile Hamas and Fatah, saying that “the violence between Hamas and Fatah could have been avoided had the US not strongly opposed Palestinian reconciliation. ‘The US,’ de Soto wrote, ‘clearly pushed for a confrontation between Fateh and Hamas.’” In a footnote, Thrall cites how the US undermined the unity government between Hamas and Fatah:

At the end of April 2007, a Jordanian newspaper published leaked US documents—see footnote 25—outlining a strategy to collapse the national unity government, bolster Fatah, and eliminate Hamas’s new security force. Hamas officials would later say that these plans, together with the arrival from Egypt of troops trained under Dayton, prompted them to go on the offensive in Gaza in late spring. Originally published online in Arabic by al-Majd, April 2007 and published soon after in English by a blog called Missing Links.

Thrall’s research confirms David Rose’s disclosure (see Section XIV) that the so-called Hamas coup in Gaza was in fact a countercoup against an attempt by Fatah to eliminate Hamas power in Gaza.

Fatah’s cooperation with Israeli security may be based on the expectation that it will lead eventually to some kind of acceptance by Israel of a viable Palestinian state. Should such expectations be dashed, it will be interesting to see how the cooperation evolves.
On June 7, 2006, a skirmish on the Israeli side of the border with Gaza resulted in the fatalities of two Israeli soldiers and the capture of another soldier, the now-famous (and still captured) Gilad Shalit. In response, Israel launched Operation Summer Rains, an air and ground assault against Gaza designed to stop rocket attacks against Israel and to rescue Shalit. Neither of these goals were achieved. Then less than a month later, the militant group Hezbollah in Lebanon launched a cross-border attack against Israel which prompted an all-out assault on Lebanese territory in the “Second Lebanon War.” The war lasted more than a month, and caused tremendous damage to Lebanon’s infrastructure and more than 1000 Lebanese civilians died.

Some Israeli military analysts believe that Israel achieved a strategic victory in terms of the number of Hezbollah soldiers killed and the absence of rocket attacks from Hezbollah in the year or so following the war. Nonetheless, the opposite case has been strongly made by none other than Ehud Barak, former Prime Minister of Israel. From Wikipedia,

In 2008, Ehud Barak, the replacement defense minister for Peretz, stated that the conflict failed to disarm Hezbollah, and that the group is increasingly entrenched in South Lebanon, further stating that "Hezbollah is stronger than ever and has more rockets than at the outbreak of the Lebanon war in the summer of 2006"[283] but he later noted that "[Israeli] deterrence still exists."[284] The IDF’s Northern Command cited this deterrence as one reason Hezbollah did not fire any rockets into Israel during Operation Cast Lead.[285]


284 Barak warns Lebanese government

285 ^ Analysis: Teheran is restraining an already wary Hizbullah

Events appear to support Barak’s evaluation. Hezbollah has even become a major player in Lebanese politics following the war, as explained by the Council on Foreign Relations in a July 2010 question-answer backgrounder on Hezbollah:

Does Hezbollah play an active role in the Lebanese politics?

Yes. The group's political strength has grown since its May 2008 takeover of West Beirut, which followed a government-ordered shutdown of Hezbollah's communications network. In an Arab-brokered deal to end the fighting, Hezbollah was granted veto power in Lebanon's parliament, and controlled eleven of thirty seats in the cabinet. Despite the apparent political strengthening, however, some experts say Hezbollah's use of force in the West Beirut showdown-Hezbollah had said it would never turn its weapons on Lebanese civilians--eroded the group's credibility. In a May 2008 report, the International Crisis Group warned that a line had been crossed that would likely deepen the sectarian tensions among Lebanon's ruling and opposition parties. The June 2009 elections saw a drop in Hezbollah's political representation--it kept thirteen seats (WSJ) in the 128-member Lebanese Parliament and only two in the cabinet--but the loss has not diminished the group's influence. In a December 2009 vote, the Lebanese Parliament allowed Hezbollah to retain its arsenal of weapons (NYT), despite pro-Western lawmakers' objections.

In a 2009 Washington Institute for Near East Policy report (PDF), adjunct scholar Magnus Norell writes that Hezbollah was "strong enough to drag the country [Lebanon] into war against the will of the sovereign government." The UN has issued two Security Council resolutions, 1559 and 1701, calling for the disarmament of all Lebanese militias, including Hezbollah, but it has so far refused to relinquish its weapons.

The Second Lebanon War was arguably the first large-scale encounter in which Israel’s invincibleness, shown so definitively in 1948, 1967, and 1973, suffered a blow. As we’ll see, it wasn’t the last.
XVIII. ISRAEL’S ATTACK ON GAZA, 2008-2009

Israel’s drift to the extreme right over the years has brought great misery and injustice to Palestinians in the occupied territories and threatens to undermine the “Great Compromise” mentioned above in Section VII. As the saying goes, in a democracy, people get the government they deserve. Israel’s citizens, like in other countries including the US, allow themselves to be fear-mongered into supporting hardliners and their disproportionately violent policies that backfire. In Israel, this threatens to undermine the very existence of the state as more and more countries back off from supporting its extremist policies, which have resulted in attacks by Israel that have inflicted grievous harm on innocent Palestinians. Israel’s 2008-2009 attack on Gaza broke the ceiling of world tolerance or its actions.

Over the years, areas of Israel close to Gaza have been subject to rocket attacks in response to Israel’s periodic air attacks, its strangulation policies, and its settlement policies in the West Bank. The rocket attacks have been notoriously inaccurate (unlike those from Hezbollah in Lebanon) and have caused only a handful of Israeli civilian fatalities over many years, but they have evoked Israel’s wrath. Israel and Hamas had been willing to talk about military matters, and in June 2008, a deal was struck in which Hamas would stifle rocket attacks from northern Gaza in return for a cessation of Israeli targeted-assassination air attacks on Gaza. The deal was to extend from June to the end of 2008. But Israel broke the agreement in October, after which there was a moderate increase in rocket attacks on Israel. The following graph shows the timeline of rocket attacks before and after the agreement, and the date when Israel attacked.

Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire during the Lull Arrangement Compared with the Preceding Months (As of December 16)

SOURCE: “The Six Months of the Lull Arrangement,” Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Israel Intelligence Heritage & Commemoration Center, December 2008. The Lull Arrangement took place on June 19, 2008. The original was supplemented by the date of the November 4 Israeli strike on Gaza.

One must be careful interpreting the results of the graph. It shows a sharp decline in the number of rocket and mortar attacks after the agreement took effect, but the attacks did not vanish. So did Hamas violate the agreement right after it was signed? Keep in mind that Israel, with its modern army, cannot perfectly control the territories it occupies, so it is
unreal to expect more of Hamas or the Palestinian Authority on the West Bank. There are any number of people in Gaza who hold a strong grudge against Israel and have the ability to make rudimentary mortars and rockets. There are also organized groups like Islamic Jihad and more recently extremist Salafists, neither directly under Hamas’s control. Finally, there are Fatah sympathizers who are all too willing to shoot at Israel, knowing Hamas can be conveniently blamed and attacked by Israel. But the record shows that the agreement between Hamas and Israel had substantive results—until November 4, when Israel decided to strike Gaza.

When the cease fire agreement lapsed on December 19, Israel launched a powerful attack on Gaza, dubbed “Cast Lead” by the Israeli military. Before it was all over in January 2009, 1400 Gazans, most of them innocent women and children, died. This figure should be compared to Israel’s losses: in all, thirteen people died, three of whom where civilians in southern Israel due to the many, many ineffectual rocket attacks from Gaza. And about seven of the ten Israeli soldier deaths were a result of friendly fire.

Israel’s siege of Gaza continues to this day. Noam Chomsky cites Harvard’s Gaza specialist, Sara Roy, on the siege:

“Gaza is an example of a society that has been deliberately reduced to a state of abject destitution, its once productive population transformed into one of aid-dependent paupers…. Gaza’s subjection began long before Israel’s recent war against it [December 2008]. The Israeli occupation — now largely forgotten or denied by the international community — has devastated Gaza’s economy and people, especially since 2006…. After Israel’s December [2008] assault, Gaza’s already compromised conditions have become virtually unlivable. Livelihoods, homes, and public infrastructure have been damaged or destroyed on a scale that even the Israel Defense Forces admitted was indefensible.

“In Gaza today, there is no private sector to speak of and no industry. 80 percent of Gaza’s agricultural crops were destroyed and Israel continues to snipe at farmers attempting to plant and tend fields near the well-fenced and patrolled border. Most productive activity has been extinguished…. Today, 96 percent of Gaza’s population of 1.4 million is dependent on humanitarian aid for basic needs. According to the World Food Programme, the Gaza Strip requires a minimum of 400 trucks of food every day just to meet the basic nutritional needs of the population. Yet, despite a March [22, 2009] decision by the Israeli cabinet to lift all restrictions on foodstuffs entering Gaza, only 653 trucks of food and other supplies were allowed entry during the week of May 10, at best meeting 23 percent of required need. Israel now allows only 30 to 40 commercial items to enter Gaza compared to 4,000 approved products prior to June 2006.”

Why is Israel brutalizing Gaza? And why is the US so silent about this tragedy? One reason is that Israel and the US claim that Hamas is a terrorist organization. As the saying goes, “one person’s terrorist is another’s freedom fighter.” True, Hamas did carry out attacks against innocent Israeli citizens prior to being elected, but has since declared it will focus any action against Israeli military forces and settlers.

Israel’s attack on Gaza violated “just war” theory’s requirement of proportionality: actions taken in defense must be proportional to the threat it counters. Clearly, Israel over-reacted to the tiny number of civilian casualties caused by rocket and mortar fire from Gaza. World opinion was extremely critical of Israel, and a UN commission found both Israel and Hamas to be guilty of war crimes. The UN commission was headed up by Richard Goldstone, a South African Zionist Jew who expressly loves Israel. But so egregious were Israel’s crimes that Goldstone, in an honest appraisal, put most of the blame on Israel. In response, US authorities refused to recognize the Goldstone commission’s report, and Israel’s ardent Zionists blasted Goldstone as a “self-hating Jew.”
XIX. THE GAZA FLOTILLA ATTACK: ISRAEL SHOOTS ITSELF IN THE FOOT AND CITIZEN ACTION TAKES THE LEAD

The latest example of Israel’s promiscuous love affair with violence over sensibility comes from Israel’s attack on the “Peace Flotilla” on 31 May, 2010 when 9 innocent people were killed about 100 km off the Gaza shore. The Peace Flotilla, an effort organized by a number of humanitarian groups around the world, was attempting to bring supplies into Gaza to break Israel’s siege. One of the boats, the Mavi Marmara, a Turkish boat and the largest of the 8 boats attempting to break the siege, was attacked while still in international waters by Israeli commandos in the dark of night. Scores of other occupants of the boat were injured, and several hundred were taken into Israeli custody.

Attempts to break the Gaza siege are part of a more general effort by Palestinian civil society and humanitarian groups around the world to bypass endless and fruitless negotiations and instead adopt the tactics of the US civil rights and South African anti-Apartheid movements to eliminate Israel’s brutal occupation. For more on how you can fit into this valiant and honorable effort, go to Section XXIII.

The attack on the Mavi Marmara seriously damaged Israeli relations with Turkey, a Muslim state aligned with Israel and with both Western and Middle Eastern Arab countries. Turkey is also a member of the NATO alliance, and had substantial trade and diplomatic relations with Israel. It appears that this relationship has been irreversibly damaged, to Israel’s great disadvantage. For example, following the flotilla tragedy, the “Israel Lobby” in the US decided to act against Turkey by recognizing as a genocide the decimation of Armenians in Turkey in 1915, something no ally of Turkey, including the US, would do. Then the US threatened to pull out of military exercises with Turkey because Turkey did not invite Israel to be part of it—testament to the formerly close relationship between Israel and Turkey even in military matters. In November 2010, Turkey promised to “react” if Israel threatened Lebanon. To top it all off, Turkey joined Brazil in May 2010 to resolve the longstanding problem of Iran’s nuclear program. According to Noam Chomsky,

The Obama administration was once again incensed when Turkey joined with Brazil in arranging a deal with Iran to restrict its enrichment of uranium. Obama had praised the initiative in a letter to Brazil’s president Lula da Silva, apparently on the assumption that it would fail and provide a propaganda weapon against Iran. When it succeeded, the US was furious, and quickly undermined it by ramming through a Security Council resolution with new sanctions against Iran that were so meaningless that China cheerfully joined at once – recognizing that at most the sanctions would impede Western interests in competing with China for Iran’s resources.

Following the flotilla incident, a leaked Israeli document showed that the purpose of the blockade is not, as Israel claims, to prevent weapons shipments to Gaza's Palestinian rulers, the legitimately elected Islamist political group Hamas, but to discredit Hamas by collectively punishing the Gazan population—women, children, and other innocents—in violation of Geneva Conventions for occupying powers.
XX. THE ISRAEL LOBBY AND STRATEGIC UNDERPINNINGS OF THE US-ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP

The 23 March 2006 issue of the *London Review of Books* carried an essay titled “The Israel Lobby.” The authors are highly respected academics: John Mearsheimer, political science professor at the University of Chicago, and Stephen Walt, academic dean of Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government. The lobby they referred to consists of a number of prominent establishment Jewish organizations such as the American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League, and B’nai B’rith; and a number of Christian Zionist organizations, the largest being Christians United for Israel. The spearhead of the Lobby is AIPAC, discussed briefly in Section II, which raises money for congressional candidates, sponsors resolutions and legislation, and brings pressure on congress to adhere to Israel’s agenda.

Both Jewish and Christian wings of the lobby are deeply committed to Israel’s welfare and its settlement of occupied territories. The Jewish organizations emphasize the history of Jewish suffering and the need to counter threats to Israel, which many of them take to be the ultimate refuge of Jews worldwide. This claim of refuge, if taken to its extreme, suggests implausibly that American Jews, e.g., might in the future be safer in Israel with all its immediate dangers than in the US. Incredibly, this claim is occasionally made by US supporters of Israel.

Most Christian Zionists believe that the case for Israeli settlement of the occupied territories is ordained by the Bible and is also based on justice to the Jewish people. But some appear to have no respect or regard for Judaism *per se*. According to the *National Council of Churches*,

More narrowly defined, Christian Zionism is an ideology grounded in beliefs which consider the State of Israel to be divinely ordained and scripturally determined with a central role in ushering in the end of history, where unconverted Jews and unbelievers (including Christians who are considered to be of questionable status) are judged by God’s wrath.

The implication is clear: when the end days come, Jews in Israel and elsewhere must convert to Christianity or be “judged by God’s wrath.” And yet, the Israel Lobby is happy to accept the support of these extremist Christians.

The great power of the Israel Lobby comes from its command of public opinion on the Israel-Palestine conflict. As soon as any opposition to or criticism of Israel surfaces, the Lobby goes into high gear, smearing the opponents, trotting out their guilt-tripping Holocaust line, and getting pro-Israel resolutions proposed and passed in Congress.

Two examples will suffice to illustrate how influential the Lobby is. The first concerns the summer, 2000 and December 2000-January 2001 negotiations for a final settlement held under the auspices of US president Bill Clinton at the US Camp David presidential retreat. Here is AIPAC’s bumper sticker summary:

Following talks at Camp David, Yasir Arafat rejected Israel’s far-reaching peace offer and the Palestinians launched sustained terrorist attacks. Nevertheless, by the end of 2000, Israel agreed to President Clinton’s proposals for a final peace between Israel and the Palestinians: Israel would cede all of Gaza, 96% of the West Bank and additional territory from within pre-1967 Israel, recognize an independent Palestinian state, cede parts of eastern Jerusalem to serve as the Palestinian capital, and recognize the right of Palestinian refugees to return to a new Palestinian state. Arafat rejected these proposals as well.
So in AIPAC’s world, “Yasir Arafat rejected Israel’s far-reaching peace offer and the Palestinians launched sustained terrorist attacks.” This is at best an oversimplification, and in fact is a downright distortion of what happened. The “far-reaching peace offer” didn’t even include a map, and negotiations were never directly between Arafat and Ehud Barak (Israeli PM), but were always carried on with the Clinton peace team as an intermediary. The negotiations were just never detailed enough to go anywhere.

Details of the summer negotiations were described in August 2001 by Robert Malley, a member of Clinton’s peace team, and his co-author Hussein Agha. Writing in the New York Review of Books, Malley and Agha said all sides shared in the failure, but they put the bulk of the blame on Israeli PM Ehud Barak who disdained intermediate steps and wanted a grand settlement. A series of exchanges later in 2001 and into 2002 ensued between Barak and others with Malley and Agha, but the best reading is that inadequate preparations caused the summer negotiations fail.

In the above blurb, AIPAC implies without qualification that the failure of talks prompted “sustained terrorist attacks” by Palestinians. There is some evidence that this is true, but the summer talks ended in late July 2000 and the “sustained terrorist attacks” didn’t begin until late September. At that time, Ariel Sharon, against the advice of many Israeli advisers and also Palestinian leaders, went with about 1,000 police to the area of the Islamic high holy site the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Jewish Temple Mount to prove that Israel controlled East Jerusalem. This was the last straw after years of occupation, bullying, and continuing settlement activity following 1993, the Oslo Accords, and the so-called “al-Aqsa Intifada” or “Second Intifada” by the Palestinian people began.

The second part of AIPAC’s oversimplification concerns the charge that another attempt at negotiations “by the end of 2000” resulted in a great offer from Israel that was rejected by Arafat. This is a distortion, more serious than the others. The December 2000 effort took place at Taba, Egypt, and indeed, the two sides came very close to a final agreement before the sessions ended in January 2001. (Many negotiators today say that’s where Barack Obama should have picked up; see next Section (XXI).) Why did they end? There is no serious disagreement on this point: Israeli elections were scheduled for later in the month, and the negotiations were suspended while Barak ran against Ariel Sharon. Sharon, a right-wing Likud candidate, won. It was Sharon who suspended the negotiations and not, as AIPAC claims, Arafat.

Despite the distortions in AIPAC’s version of events on Camp David and Taba, most main-stream media accounts follow the AIPAC line, testament to AIPAC’s stranglehold on the media. However, on the start of the Second Intifada, most media agree that Sharon’s visit to the al-Aqsa kicked it off, demonstrating that there are limits to AIPAC’s ability to spin the facts.

Another example of the Lobby’s sway over the US Congress occurred in January 2009 during Israel’s “Cast Lead” devastation of Gaza. In early January 2009, while the assault raged, the US Senate passed a totally lopsided resolution excusing Cast Lead as a response to Hamas’s rocket attacks into southern Israel. The Senate resolution said not a word about continuing Israeli abuses of Palestinians in Gaza and elsewhere. Your author has published a point-by-point refutation of the one-sided nature of the Senate’s highly-prejudiced resolution.

Throughout the agony of Cast Lead, the Israel Lobby was in high gear pushing the following sort of crude propaganda: “What would you do if Mexico were shooting rockets at the US?” I responded as follows in my local newspaper (The Roanoke Times):
This is the kind of bumper-sticker rhetoric that passes for serious argument to justify Israel's attack on Gaza. Sad, when the counter-argument is so obvious and relevant: What would you do if all your borders and air space were totally controlled by a foreign power, preventing commercial activity and causing anemia and malnutrition?

Israel claims that Hamas' rocket fire is unprovoked. Get serious. Israel's 41-year occupation and settlement activity and its dictatorial control of Gaza's borders are extreme provocations against which Palestinians can attempt only a weak and ineffective defense.

Israel's apologists studiously avoid any mention of Israel's ever-expanding settlements, even though they undermine the Palestinian right to statehood. Then to its shame, mighty Israel wails about Hamas's refusal to recognize Israel's existence, but refuses to grant the same right of viable nationhood to Palestinians -- and the U.S. government's suckers fall for it.

The cynical Israeli-U.S. game is simple: Demonize Hamas to strengthen its extreme elements, making demonization a self-fulfilling prophecy.

At this point in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the most effective citizen approach to countering the highly-organized Israel Lobby appears to be the grassroots international Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS). BDS, described in more detail below in Section XXIII, is essentially political and non-violent because it aims to inform, publicize, and organize against US-Israeli punishment of Palestinians and thereby compete with the Lobby for public opinion while at the same time putting real material pressure on Israel for its abusive policies.

Some have argued that the US's steadfast support of Israel is fully explained by the power of the Israel Lobby, while others argue that the US-Israel relationship is founded on the overlap of substantive strategic interests in the Middle East. But the two explanations are not mutually exclusive—a genuine strategic interest requires a strong lobby, and acknowledgment of both is necessary to formulate an effective strategy to pressure the US to oppose Israel's occupation and settlement policies and support justice and freedom for Palestinians. Likewise, a focus on public opinion and consumer boycott is necessary for those opposed to the Lobby, because the US's strategic considerations, although deserving criticism for their shortsightedness and addiction to oil, are more difficult to change since there is a strong tendency for imperialistic nations to follow their own narrow short-term material interests. Nonetheless, it is important in formulating a campaign against Israeli-American collusion to understand the strategic side of the US's ruinous short-sighted "strategic" policies that ill serve people world wide, including Americans, even Israelis, and especially Palestinians.

The extent of real US-Israeli strategic interests can be appreciated by looking at how durable US support has been over the years, even when US and Israeli cooperation suffered friction and temporary setbacks. Throughout the Cold War with the Soviet Union, the US played a careful game of balancing its unconditional support of Israel's sovereignty with its alliances with anti-communist-anti-Israel Arab countries (e.g., in the 1955 Baghdad Pact) to keep Soviet influence in the oil-rich Middle East to a minimum. Israel resented US alliances with its enemies, but it knew it was not threatened by them because the US relied on Israel's support against Soviet influence in the region.

It is well known that the US thwarted the effort of France, Britain, and Israel to take over the Suez Canal in 1956, but despite this, the US-Israeli relationship stayed strong. This is partly because Israel, unlike Britain and France, benefited from the war by assurances from the US that the Gulf of Aqaba would remain open to it. (But the US did object to and
oppose Israel’s grandiose hints that it wanted to annex Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula which it occupied in the war.)

Another test of US-Israeli relations occurred in the 1967 Six-Day War. On June 8, the fourth day of the war, Israel attacked the USS Liberty, a ship tasked with monitoring of electronic communications, killing 34 US sailors and wounding about 170. The Israelis claimed it was a case of mistaken identity (even though it was mid-day and the Liberty was flying the American flag). While Secretary of State Dean Rusk was critical of Israel and didn’t buy their claim that they confused the Liberty with an Egyptian ship, US President Lyndon Johnson bought the Israeli story wholesale. Israel’s attack may very well have been intentional because of fear that the Liberty’s information on Israeli troop movements, which it was broadcasting to Washington, could be intercepted by the Soviets and given to Egypt. But this possibility played no part in any of the US Defense Department investigations of the incident. (The attack on the Liberty is the only one in US history not to be investigated by the US congress.) Again, despite serious friction between the two states, the relationship endured, a testament to the strategic importance both ascribe to it.

Another serious conflict between the US and Israel occurred in 1985 when the US discovered that a Navy intelligence officer, Jonathan Pollard, was passing highly sensitive intelligence to Israel. Pollard received a life sentence, a measure of how serious the US took his spying to be. Israel over the years has requested the US to release Pollard, and reports suggest that the recent direct negotiations sponsored by the Obama administration (see next section (XXI)) involved such a request. Despite the seriousness of Pollard’s transgression and the US’s refusal to release Pollard, the US-Israel relationship was never affected.

Overall, the US benefited greatly from the 1967 war, because it succeeded in discrediting Egypt’s leader Abdul Nasser and his pan-Arab intentions, and frustrated the Soviet Union’s work with Egypt to extend its influence in the Middle East. But since the end of the Cold War in 1991, many would agree with Mearsheimer and Walt that the special relationship with Israel is more of a liability than an asset. For example, the US had to keep Israel in check during the 1991 Gulf war for fear that its involvement would further inflame Arab disapproval of the war. Nevertheless, there are a host of other factors that make Israel a valued, indeed a strategic, US ally:

- The Israelis supply the US with valuable intelligence on doings in the Middle East;
- Israel played a crucial role in the “Iran-Contra Affair” during the mid-1980s: Israel sold arms given it by the US to moderate forces in the Iranian military and gave it back to the US which then illegally passed the money to the Contra terrorists in Nicaragua, i.e., Israel operated as a money launderer.
- In 1981, Israel destroyed Iraq’s nuclear reactor, thus thwarting Iraq’s nuclear ambitions, a concern of the US as evidenced in the Gulf War of 1991 and the Iraq War of 2003.
- US military aid to Israel is used by Israel to purchase arms from US manufacturers, more a political role for Israel than a strategic one, but important nonetheless because military readiness is of overall strategic importance.
Israel, along with some corrupt and dictatorial regimes like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, form a front against militant fundamentalist Islamists.

Israeli industries have developed important military technologies of use to the US, like the “Litening Pod” system for laser-targeting of targets from high altitudes. According to AIPAC, “In 2006, this Israeli system helped American fighter jets target Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, al-Qaeda's former leader in Iraq.” This is just one part of the flow of military technology between the two strategic partners.

Israel is the US’s “attack dog” against Iran. (But a serious problem could develop between the US and Israel if Israel’s paranoids-in-power decide to attack Iran without US approval.)

Israel’s dominance in the 1948, 1967, and (to a lesser extent) in the 1973 Arab-Israeli wars, its continuing threat to surrounding countries with the unfailing support of the US, its deals with their corrupt dictatorial Arab leaders, its arrogance and contempt in US-sponsored negotiations, and its brutal occupation policies largely unchallenged by the US and other influential Western countries, have tended (without total success) to psychologically demoralize and humiliate the Arab people, thus making it easier for the US to make economic (oil, finance) and political deals with their corrupt leaders.

If the situation in the oil-rich Middle East really deteriorates, e.g., if Saudi Arabia is seriously threatened by al-Qaeda types and Iraq takes a sharp turn towards Iran, Israel is the US’s main ground-based “aircraft carrier” in the region from which to stage military operations.

Some of the most compelling justifications of the strategic nature of the US-Israeli relationship come from pro-Israel groups. For example, the Middle East Forum conducted a 1998 panel, “Still Special? The U.S.-Israel Relationship,” that is still current. Dore Gold, former Israeli ambassador to the US, offered a defense of the strategic nature of the relationship in a counter to Walt and Mearsheimer which emphasizes many of the bullet items above.

When all is said and done, US obeisance to Israel’s most extreme elements cannot stand as a contribution to whatever other strategic interests the US derives from its relationship with Israel. Israel constantly exercises its autonomy, and the argument is strong that the US is foolish for supporting the very forces in Israel that are, ironically, a threat to Israel’s own sovereignty.
XXI. PROXIMITY AND DIRECT TALKS: OBAMA’S BUMBLING AND SERVILE ATTEMPT AT PEACE-MAKING

Shortly after assuming the US presidency in January 2009, Barack Obama set former senator George Mitchell on “Mission Impossible”: resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Mitchell, whose official title is “Special Envoy for Middle East Peace,” was charged to ignore Hamas and promote agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, even though some kind of reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah is necessary for any real peace.

One of Mitchell’s first successes was to get the Israelis to agree to a 10-month settlement freeze, starting on November 26, 2009. But to the Obama administration’s disappointment, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu made it clear from the start that the freeze would not apply to East Jerusalem and that projects already under way in other occupied areas would continue to completion. In March, 2010, Netanyahu rubbed the US’s nose in the settlement situation by embarrassing US Vice President Joe Biden on his visit to Israel with the announcement that 1,600 new housing units would be built in East Jerusalem, an act of insolence Netanyahu repeated a few months later when he addressed a group of Israel’s supporters in the US with Biden present.

Obama’s next step in May 2010 was to sponsor “proximity talks,” i.e., indirect talks with the US as an intermediary. Agreement to the plan was followed by just a few preliminary meetings in which future timetables, topics, and rules for proceeding were agreed to. But the Palestinian Authority’s president, Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas, warned that unless the settlement freeze continued past the 10-month expiration on September 26, 2010, he would pull out of talks.

The proximity talks, which produced nothing of substance, were then replaced by “Direct Talks” between Israel and the Palestinian Authority which began on 2 September, 2010, less than a month before expiration of the 10-month so-called settlement freeze. Before the talks, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton warned the Palestinians not to set any pre-conditions (such as a cessation of settlement activity), but hypocritically ignored the following pre-conditions Netanyahu had set:

- A future Palestinian state must be demilitarized;
- A future Palestinian state must recognize Israel as the Jewish state, despite the fact that this would be traitorous to the million or so Palestinian semi-citizens of Israel;
- Other unspecified Israeli security demands would have to be met.
- A rejection of the pre-1967 borders as a basis for negotiations.

Failure to invite Hamas burdened the negotiating process with the ongoing conflict between Palestine’s two main political forces. As pointed out in Section XVI, the Palestinian Authority’s policies in the West Bank appear to be just as repressive as Hamas’s in Gaza. Not inviting Hamas, which has been over-the-top demonized by Clinton-Obama, will not help Palestinian democracy. "Divide and Conquer" thrives—keep the Palestinians split, with the weaker Palestinians dependent on the tender mercies of the US "honest broker."

When the September 26 expiration of the settlement freeze rolled around, Obama asked Netanyahu to extend the freeze for two months, but the request was refused because it would include East Jerusalem. Even if East Jerusalem were excluded, it is highly likely that Netanyahu’s right-wing allies in his coalition government would not agree to any settlement freeze that included other areas of the West Bank. Consequently, Abbas refused to continue
the talks. Obama, in an act of desperation, attempted to bribe Israel into the 60-day freeze with a fantastic, unprecedented package:

- A gift of 20 stealth fighters worth $3-billion;
- A blanket US veto of any UN resolutions unfavorable to Israel during talks;
- Removal of East Jerusalem from the freeze;
- A US commitment to ask for no more settlement freezes (thus making Obama’s desperate and rejected 60-day freeze meaningless);
- Support of a long-term Israeli military presence in the eastern part of the West Bank (next to Jordan) even after a “final agreement.”

Even though the requested freeze would last only 60 days, Israel rejected the bribe, undoubtedly because it knows it can just do what it wants regarding settlements and land grabs without any help from the US and particularly without a final agreement with the Palestinians, which is not in the interest Israeli right wing colonialists. There were also reports that Israel wanted the US to release Jonathan Pollard, who spied for Israel back in the 1980s and is in a US prison. But security forces in the US are adamantly against releasing Pollard, so Obama refused Israel’s demand.

Obama’s humiliating attempt at Middle East negotiations finally appear to have come to an inglorious end on 7 December 2010 when he announced that the effort to extend the settlement freeze wouldn’t be further pursued. According to the *New York Times*, Obama might revert to indirect talks, with Israeli and Palestinian negotiators scheduled to travel to Washington.

One path the Palestinian Authority is considering after the failed Obama negotiations is disbanding itself, asking Israel or the UN to occupy all of the West Bank including those areas where the PA has some control, and declaring statehood. As Lamis Andoni, a long-time commentator on Palestinian affairs, puts it,

> Abbas has raised a couple of prospects. Firstly, he has suggested looking to the UN Security Council for recognition of a Palestinian state. This is mainly intended to affirm the ‘occupied’ status of the Palestinian territories and to thus block Israel from annexing Jewish settlements. Secondly, he has discussed handing responsibility for the Palestinian territories over to the UN. Both of these options would likely be obstructed by a US veto at the UN Security Council.

But declaration of statehood was attempted by the PLO in 1988 and it led nowhere because declaration is meaningful only if politically approved by UN powerhouses. In fact, Palestinian statehood is now recognized by about 130 countries, but no traditionally Western advanced industrial US-allied countries have explicitly recognized a Palestinian state in the pre-1967 lines. For a list of countries and the extent of relations and recognition (not all include full diplomatic relations), see here.

The US and many if not all of its Western allies are almost sure to oppose recognition, though some have speculated that this is Obama’s next step after being so insulted by Israel. Regardless, recognition by rising powers can have a salutary effect. In December 2010, Brazil and Argentina, rising powers if not in the “big leagues,” recognized Palestinian statehood in pre-1967 boundaries. Bolivia soon followed and Uruguay is promising to do so in 2011. The hope is that more influential countries will follow.
XXII. TOWARDS A FINAL RESOLUTION: ONE STATE OR TWO? OR SOMETHING WORSE?

Israel, the anachronistic Jewish settler state, prides itself on being democratic. Of course, as explained in Section VI, Israel’s democracy is flawed from within, because its explicitly Jewish nature results in discrimination against the 20% of its non-Jewish citizens. Israel’s democratic project is also thwarted by the necessarily abusive expansionist impulses of Israel’s right wing extremists who have pushed for annexation of the West Bank and Gaza to supplement the earlier annexation of East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. If Israel does annex the West Bank and Gaza, stays democratic, and grants its Arab inhabitants citizenship, the higher Arab birth rate will eventually result in Jews being outnumbered by non-Jews, i.e., the Jewish nature of the state will eventually be voted out. The strong, even obsessive, commitment of most Israelis and many Jews world-wide to Israel’s official Jewishness means that this this alternative is unlikely. On the other hand, if Israel annexes the occupied territories but refuses full citizenship rights (especially the right to vote) to Palestinians, it will lose even the weakest claim to be democratic.

Most supporters of Palestinian rights are agreed that the best solution for both Israelis and Palestinians is for Israel to first give up the territories it took over in the 1967 war in return for security guarantees within the 1948 cease-fire lines. This important step can be achieved either through negotiations, or international pressure via the UN, mass civil disobedience, and other civil actions like the Gaza flotillas and the BDS campaign mentioned earlier. Ideally, a two-state solution requiring the elimination of the occupation and the establishment of a truly democratic Palestinian state would lead to peace between Palestinians and Israelis, perhaps with Jerusalem being an “international city” under UN supervision, as proposed in the original 1948 UN plan to partition Palestine. The next step would be for Israel to become a genuine 21st Century democracy by dropping its Jewish nature and working hard to eliminate discrimination against its non-Jewish citizens. It is not impossible that this could be followed eventually by the Israeli and Palestinian states uniting into one state of the traditional land of Palestine.

A big sticking point for a negotiated settlement is the insistence of many Palestinians and their supporting countries, such as Saudi Arabia, on “Right of Return,” i.e., the right of Palestinians to return to their or their ancestors’ homes in pre-1967 Israel. Right of Return is enshrined in the 1949 UN Resolution 194, which states:

(The General Assembly) Resolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible.

Right of Return has been incorporated into the Arab Peace Initiative’s 2002 peace proposal promising peace if Israel adheres to Res. 242 (see Section I) and allows the capitol of a Palestinian state in East Jerusalem. Israel is furiously against Right of Return, focusing on the phrase “live at peace with their neighbours” in the resolution, and arguing that Palestinian returnees would not want to be at peace with Israel. This is a strange argument, because all proposals that include the Right of Return are premised on the assumption that peace between neighbors will be part of an agreement. The real reason for Israel’s opposition of Right of Return, of course, is that its implementation would dilute the state’s Jewish population with non-Jews, and again, this would threaten the Jewish nature of the
This is just one reason why Israel insists it be recognized as a *Jewish* state as a *precondition* to negotiations.

There have been several private efforts by Israeli and Palestinian former officials to propose plans for peace, the best-known being the *Geneva Initiative or Geneva Accord*. The team that hammered out the accord was led by Ami Ayalon, former head of Israeli security, and Sari Nusseibeh, respected Palestinian president of Al-Quds University. The document is very ambiguous on the Right of Return, seeming to leave it up to Israel’s “sovereign discretion.” A better compromise might be to limit the right to only those still living who were driven from their homes now in Israel. The one common element in all plans is compliance with UN Res. 242, i.e., a return of Israel to its pre-1967 borders with adjustments agreeable to both sides. As mentioned above in Section X, the US’s position for many years was along this line until Bush (and now it appears Obama) prejudiced negotiations by supporting Israel’s retention of large settlement “blocs” in the West Bank.

Many supporters of Israel argue that a two-state solution is not realistic, because Israeli settlements are so extensive (in some cases sizable cities) that there is no way they will ever be evacuated and dismantled. This is just a cheap argument to stall a resolution of the conflict. In addition, Israel would have to give up East Jerusalem, which has great religious significance for Jews worldwide. Palestinians, and the Muslim world in general, also want East Jerusalem for the same reason. Finally, establishment of a separate Palestinian state could lead Israel to pressure or even force its non-Jewish inhabitants to leave their ancestral homes and go to the new state.

An alternative is to bypass a two-state stage and directly negotiate a single state encompassing all of the original Palestine Mandate. Jerusalem should, so this argument goes, be put under international control. Such a state, to have any cohesion and be democratic, must be secular (treating Jews, Christians, and Muslims equally), so this too destroys Israel as a Jewish state. It seems very unlikely that either Israelis or Palestinians are willing to go this route at this time.

A third alternative is federation between pre-1967 Israel and a separate Palestinian state in the occupied territories. The federation concept is *eloquently explained by the well-known Israeli peace advocate Uri Avnery*, who points out that its precise form between any two states is up for negotiation. Avnery reminds us of some of the details of the original UN partition plan:

It should be remembered that the original partition plan adopted by the UN General Assembly on November 29, 1947, did envision a kind of federation, without using the term. It provided for the establishment of a Jewish state and an Arab state, and a separate entity of Jerusalem, administered by the UN. All these entities were to be parts of an economic union that would cover customs, the currency, railways, post, ports, airports and more. This would have, in practice, amounted to a federation.

Avnery and his associates unsuccessfully pushed for federation in 1948 and again after the 1967 war. Federation as envisioned by Avnery could be a healthy complement to a two-state solution, not necessarily an alternative.

There are two other solutions to the conflict, neither of which offers justice to long-suffering Palestinians. First, Israel could forcibly ethnically cleanse Palestinians from the occupied territories and its pre-1967 boundaries. This would cause extreme tension with neighboring Arab states, and make Israel even more of a pariah state than it already is. An attempt to do this would probably cost Israel US support, so it is not likely at the moment. On the other hand, Israel has been executing a “slow motion” ethnic cleansing by their continuous settlement activity, which has squeezed Palestinians into constricted
“bantustans.” The accusation of Apartheid against Israel is thereby irrefutable, and under the blind eye of the US, we can expect to see more slow-motion takeover accompanied by death and suffering of Palestinians.

Second, Israel and the PA could negotiate a phony two-state settlement that leaves Israel with extensive parts of East Jerusalem and large settlement blocs such as Ma’ale Adumim (see Section XI), with roads connecting all Israeli West Bank regions. A more-or-less permanent presence of Israeli troops in the eastern part of the West Bank (along Jordan River and Dead Sea) would probably also be part of the package. If accepted by the US, the UN, and other countries, this phony “2-state” resolution would legitimize the annexation of territory obtained by force, in violation of UN Resolution 242 and other tenets of international law. More seriously the remaining puzzle pieces left to the Palestinians would hardly be sufficient for a viable state, so the phony 2-state would be totally unjust and would result in continuing Palestinian unrest and opposition. As mentioned earlier, the phony 2-state is precisely the promise George Bush made to Ariel Sharon in 2004, and there are troubling indications that the Obama administration is in agreement with this ruinous approach to the problem.

It appears that the only just solution to the conflict is along the lines required by UN Res. 242. If it happens, it will surely require a repudiation of Israel’s Zionist fanatics. In that felicitous event, there is every reason to assume that the highly educated Israelis and Palestinians will prosper side by side, and eventually, a single secular state might evolve.

How can a 242-type resolution be achieved? Following Obama’s direct-talks failure, Richard Falk, professor of international law at Princeton University and UN Special Rapporteur on Palestinian human rights has written that negotiations are largely useless.

Others argue that negotiations shouldn’t be eschewed altogether because Israel, with US backing, is so powerful that all opportunities must be exploited to force their hand. If nothing else, negotiations can serve to show the world how intransigent Israel and the US are. This is pretty much what happened recently with Israel’s refusal to renew the settlement moratorium despite Obama’s corrupt bribe.

Falk emphasizes the importance of non-governmental action. For example, the Palestinian Solidarity and BDS movements (see next section) can act as a pressure on negotiations, helping to push them to a realization of the goals encompassed in UN Res. 242. But the relevance of negotiations depends on circumstances. As circumstances change, negotiations may be more or less useful or may become totally useless.
XXIII. WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Americans infused with a sense of justice should realize that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not a marginal foreign policy issue as most seem to think, but should be put near or at the top of the list of issues relevant to electoral consideration of how the US behaves in the world and how the world behaves to the US. This change can take place only if Americans come to realize that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is felt deeply by Arabs and Muslims world-wide, even though their governments (many of them dictatorships) talk the talk but don’t walk the walk. The depth of Arab-Muslim feeling in fact threatens US security, so it is an illusion to consider it a marginal issue. The most important thing to do, then, is to educate the general public as to its importance of the issue not just for fulfillment of the principles Americans believe their country stands for, but also for the security of the country.

Another important task is to join and/or financially support some of the many organizations world wide that are working for Palestinian justice. Here are a few suggestions.

In the US, one of the most active BDS groups is U.S. Campaign to End the Occupation, a coalition of more than 300 local, state, and national groups dedicated to the cause. This group is eminently deserving of whatever support you can give it. Here is its “Call to Action”:

One member of the End the Occupation coalition is the US-based Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), a grassroots organization which is quite critical of Israel’s settlement policies and does not support Israel as a Jewish state. JVP gained some notoriety in November 2010
by disrupting a talk by Israeli PM Netanyahu before a gathering of US Jewish establishment
groups that offer uncritical support to Israel.

In its own words, JVP:

• Conducts global campaigns to defend and free Israeli and Palestinian human rights activists

• Fights McCarthyite censorship of debate and misuses of the charge of anti-Semitism, especially in the Jewish community

• Supports the growth of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement through divestment from companies that profit from the occupation

• Works in coalition with others including Arab, Muslim, Palestinian and Christian groups to fight bigotry and end the occupation

• Facilitates Congressional outreach regarding policy in the region

• Supports alternative Jewish rituals that include Palestinian narratives

Another Jewish group, J Street, formed in 2009. Like AIPAC, JStreet has a largely Jewish membership and targets the US congress. But unlike AIPAC, J Street is more willing to criticize Israel for the purpose of making US policy on Israel more rational and in the interest of both countries. And unlike JVP, JStreet is essentially a mainstream pro-Israel organization, committed to Israel as a Jewish state, but is more enlightened and willing to criticize gratuitous Israeli violence and its settlement policies. JVP takes no position on one-state vs. two-state, while J Street supports Israel as a Jewish state and advocates a two-state solution. In April 2010, another group, JCALL, has sprung up in Europe and has the same goals as J Street.

Another promising development is the very important “Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions” referred to above a number of times. BDS goals have been taken up by a number of US unions and college campuses and more importantly operates internationally. The BDS movement is reminiscent of a similar movement which had great effect in forcing South Africa from its ugly apartheid past. A wealth of information on this most important movement can be found at the Global BDS web site.

The “Boycott” part of BDS lists for boycott a number of products produced by Israeli settlements, and also advocates buying products produced by Palestinians in the occupied territories. A list of Israeli settlement goods to boycott and Palestinian goods to buy can be found here and further details at the Global BDS Movement web site here.

The “Divestment” part of the campaign is defined as “…putting and end to investments in Israel and companies supporting Israeli occupation and apartheid.” The campaign has focused on pension funds and college/university has been used on college and university campuses to pressure administrators to sell off assets of businesses in their endowments that are located in Israel or other businesses that support Israel’s settlements. For details, see here.

The “Sanctions” part of the campaign is a call for sanctions against Israel that are similar to those leveled by the UN against other countries like Iran, e.g., restrictions of exports/imports to/from Israel. Details can be found at the Global BDS Movement web site.
The BDS movement is a part of a larger effort by Palestinian civil society to achieve freedom not through negotiations, but through direct action against the occupation using such tactics as mass demonstrations and civil disobedience.

A great way to right the wrongs of the past is to write letters and op-ed pieces to your local newspaper. For a collection of mine, go to http://munley.weebly.com/the-israeli-palestinian-dispute.html.
APPENDIX A

“THE” HOLOCAUST: UNIQUE OR RECURRENT?

The Nazi genocide of Europe’s Jews is widely known as “The Holocaust,” but the term “holocaust” is a dictionary term that pre-dates World War II. Webster’s unabridged dictionary defines holocaust as “a complete or thorough sacrifice or destruction esp. by fire.” The more relevant term in the World War II context is genocide, defined as “the use of deliberate systematic measures (as killing, bodily or mental injury, unlivable conditions, prevention of births) calculated to bring about the extermination of a racial, political, or cultural group or to destroy the language, religion, or culture of a group.” Other terrible acts of genocide in the past 200 years and before have occurred and are deserving of the term, outstanding examples being those against Armenians during World War I (the Armenian Holocaust), the populations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in World War II (the Hiroshima and Nagasaki Holocausts), Cambodian intellectuals and urbanites in 1975-1979 (the Cambodian Holocaust), Tutus in the 1990s (the Tutu Holocaust), and with good justification, genocide against American Indians (the Amerind Holocaust). While the Jewish experience with Nazis is unique like every holocaust is, it is incorrect and disrespectful of other victims to give the Nazi attempt to eliminate Jews sole ownership of the term.

It might be argued that Nazis had as a goal the complete elimination of Jews, while in other examples cited, there was no such intention. But the Nazis didn’t succeed completely (not for lack of trying, of course), to some degree because there were non-Jewish Germans and other Europeans who were willing to give harbor to Jews. It is also important to remember that Gypsies were no safer from the intention of complete annihilation than Jews were. Similar qualifications can be cited for other examples of genocide just cited: surely, there were many Hutus who were appalled by the attacks on Tutus, many whites appalled by treatment of American Indians,…etc., and the attempts at elimination were never total. So I feel compelled to call the Nazi’s genocide against Jews the “Jewish Holocaust,” the American genocide of Indians the “Amerind Holocaust,”…etc.
APPENDIX B
ZIONIST MCCARTHYISM IN THE US—A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

In 1991, I had an article published in the local daily newspaper (The Roanoke Times) opposing the Gulf war on the basis that Iraq had legitimate grievances (some shared by other Arab oil-producing states) against Kuwait. The main point of the article was that more diplomacy was called for.

A prominent Zionist arch-supporter of Israel, who was on the board of trustees of the college I was teaching at, requested a meeting with me after my article appeared. At the meeting, he asked about Iraq’s nuclear capability. I told him I thought it was probably not important, since Iraq was a member in good standing of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the small amount of highly enriched uranium Iraq was given by another country for research purposes was monitored by and under the control of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

I also mentioned in the article that Israel has nuclear weapons, and he challenged me on the source of this information. Of course, it was common knowledge even then, so I thought it was probably disingenuous on his part to raise the question. I told him one source—the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, which is a highly reputable publication. I may have also mentioned Israel’s imprisonment of Mordecai Vanunu, the Israeli who spilled the beans on Israel’s nuclear weapons.

A few days later, I wrote him a letter saying that the possibility of an Iraqi nuclear program couldn’t be completely discounted, but that it was probably minimal given news reports that they were using electromagnetic separation, which is not very efficient, that the enriched uranium they had was under UN inspection, and that in any case there was no evidence that Iraq was anywhere near deploying a weapon. That didn’t prevent him from attacking me at a public meeting a few months later, charging that I had told him that Iraq had no nuclear program.

A more disturbing run-in with this same fellow occurred in 2002, when I had an article in the newspaper critical of Israel’s all-out attack on Palestinians. When we met, we first agreed that the settlements were a big problem. In fact, he said that if he were the head of Israel, he would give all the settlers two weeks to completely evacuate the occupied territories. Well, I thought, we must be in almost-complete agreement! But he brought up some very minor issues in my article and dictated that he would consider me “anti-Israel and anti-Semitic” if I didn’t write a correction to the newspaper on some points he raised. I told him I would double-check what I said, and if I found a correction was needed, I would do it but only if he would also write a letter to the newspaper saying what he said to me about settlements. Without any hesitation, he refused.

At one point in our exchange, he raised the question: “what makes a people a nation?” I could have mentioned many things he was thinking about and go without question, like common language and customs, but I mentioned instead a common sense of suffering. The issue was quickly dropped, because that is a good bit of the glue that holds Israel together, and he wasn’t about to deny Palestinian suffering.

I called a few days later and said I saw no need for correction, but he insisted I was wrong, and “anti-Israel and anti-Semitic.” I never let this kind of attack sway me from speaking and writing publicly on Israel’s abuses of Palestinians, but nevertheless, I did feel somewhat defensive in voicing my views. I’m sure anyone in a political position would be more worried than I about being branded “anti-Israel and anti-Semitic,” and hence the power of the Israel Lobby.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Following is a list of books and internet resources I have used to study the issue.

BOOKS

Ashrawi, Hanan, This Side of Peace: A personal account, 318 pp. (Simon & Schuster, New York, 1995). Ashrawi, a Christian Palestinian, was very active in Palestinian politics, and took a role in negotiations with the US. This is a most engaging book, told, as the title suggests, in a very personal style and full of insights into Israeli and US officials. Of particular interest is Ashrawi’s discussion of the tensions between the “inside” Palestinians, i.e., those in the occupied territories, and the “outside” Palestinians, particularly the exiled leadership based at the time in Tunisia, during the negotiations leading to the 1993 Oslo Agreement.

Ball, George, and Douglas B. Ball, The Passionate Attachment: America’s involvement with Israel, 1947 to the present, 382 pp. (W.W. Norton & Co., New York, 1992). George Ball was a former Undersecretary of State under presidents Kennedy and Johnson, and served as UN Ambassador for a short time in 1968. He was an enlightened opponent of the Vietnam War. This book, written with his son, is crystal-clear and full of important details. Ball, a lawyer, presents his case skillfully.


Bickerton, Ian J. and Carla L. Klausner, A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 276 pp. (Prentice Hall, N.J., 1991), a scholarly and detailed analysis focusing on the last 500 years. Each chapter starts with a short chronology of important events, and ends with texts of important documents.

Cockburn, Alexander and Jeffrey St. Clair (eds.), The Politics of Anti-Semitism, 178 pp. (Counterpunch and AK Press, CA, 2003. This is a trenchant critique of Israel’s arch-supporters who are quick to smear anyone who should dare to criticize Israel in the slightest. One surprising chapter takes Noam Chomsky to task for his dismissal of the importance of the Israel Lobby’s influence on the US Congress.

Findley, Paul, Deliberate Deceptions: Facing the FACTS about the U.S.-Israeli Relationship, 326 pp. (Lawrence Hill Books, Brooklyn, NY, 1993). This book, in “Fact” and “Fallacy” format, covers a lot of ground, some not covered by other books, such as Israeli spying on the US and Israel’s nuclear weapons.

Goldschmidt, Arthur Jr., A Concise History of the Middle East, 3rd ed., revised and updated, 448 pp. (Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 1988). This is another scholarly work, full of important details on the history of Islam, Judaism, and all Middle East countries in addition to Israel/Palestine.

Jaber, Faiez, Lest the Civilized World Forget: The colonization of Palestine, 47 pp. (Americans for Middle East Understanding, Inc., New York, 1992). This short pamphlet refutes five popular Zionist myths and compiles a list of “394 Palestinian villages and towns that Zionist Jews have obliterated since 1948.”

The Middle East, an occasional publication of Congressional Quarterly (CQ Press, Washington, DC. The latest (11th) edition was published in 2007, the 10th in 2005, the 9th in
2000, and the 7th in 1990. (I don’t have the 8th edition.) I can’t recommend these publications too highly for historical data, but the political perspective is not exactly pro-Palestinian. They have country-by-country analyses and chronologies, and are very complete for the 5 or so years between editions.

Said, Edward, *The Question of Palestine* (Vintage Books, New York, 1979). This is a great book by a great scholar who was forced to leave Palestine in 1948 when he was 12 years old. Said offers a sharp analysis of the politics of the situation.

Tolan, Sandy, *The Lemon Tree: An Arab, a Jew, and the heart of the Middle East*, 362 pp. (Bloomsbury USA, New York, 2006). This book looks at the conflict from the perspective of two individuals, one Jewish, one Arab. But it is more than a personal account, including details of negotiations and analysis of important events.


**INTERNET SOURCES**

Israeli Occupation Archive, Noam Chomsky’s “first and foremost resource for all Occupation and Israeli-Palestinian matters,” gives up-to-date information. You can subscribe to the daily digest at [http://www.israeli-occupation.org/](http://www.israeli-occupation.org/).


ProCon.org, an educational web site that gives pro and con positions on a number of issues, from abortion to energy. Its site for the Israeli-Palestinian dispute is very detailed: [http://israelpalestinian.procon.org/](http://israelpalestinian.procon.org/).

B’Tselem The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. B’Tselem is a fantastic source for abuses in the occupied territories. It keeps a close count of casualties on both sides. [http://www.btselem.org/english/About_BTselem/Index.asp](http://www.btselem.org/english/About_BTselem/Index.asp).

MidEast Web. It is self-described as follows: “MidEast Web was started by people active in Middle East dialog and peace education efforts. Our goal is to weave a world-wide web of Arabs, Jews and others who want to build a new Middle East based on coexistence and neighborly relations.” As mentioned above, this web site is a great source for timelines. [http://mideastweb.org/](http://mideastweb.org/).

The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy, a rich source of important documents on a variety of issues, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/mideast.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/mideast.asp).

Boycott Israel Campaign lists businesses that invest in Israel or whose owners are big supporters of pro-Israel organizations. It is a bit too inclusive, including, e.g., Intel. It’s hard to avoid patronizing Intel, since almost all computers (now including Macs) use Intel chips. [http://www.inminds.co.uk/boycott-israel.html#list](http://www.inminds.co.uk/boycott-israel.html#list).
Global BDS Movement: Boycott Divestment and Sanctions for Palestine. This is a news site for recent and planned BDS actions and news articles on the campaign. 
http://www.bdsmovement.net/.

Boycott Toolkit has information on boycotts of all kinds, including boycotts of some Israeli products. It also encourages purchase of specific products manufactured by Palestinians. 
http://boy.co.tt/.

S. Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace, a pro-Israeli group founded on April, 2010. Its main value is as a source for maps showing possible land swaps in a final settlement, few of which would be acceptable to Palestinians. 

When all else fails, try a search engine like Google.