President Trump upended nearly 70 years of American policy in early December 2017, when he recognized Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and announced the United States would move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in mid-May 2018. The announcement infuriated the Palestinians, heartened the Israelis, and sparked a heated debate over its potential to prevent the revival of moribund Israeli-Palestinian peace talks and its impact on the United States’ role as Mideast peacemaker.

Trump defended his decision as “a long overdue step to advance the peace process” and said it would be “folly” to keep pursuing what he termed the same old failed strategies. But critics said Trump has put the United States decisively on Israel’s side against the Palestinians and likely killed the U.S. role as a neutral broker in any peace talks. The uproar comes at a crucial time in the Mideast, with experts fearing that the hopes of achieving an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel — the so-called two-state solution — are slipping away. With negotiations having accomplished little since 2008, when the two sides nearly achieved a breakthrough, Palestinian frustration has been growing. In late March 2018, Palestinian activists began protests on the border with Israel to protest Trump’s Jerusalem decision and an Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip — the thin band of Palestinian territory on the Mediterranean Sea — as well as to commemorate the suffering of Palestinians.

The weekly protests, which continued into November, were frequently violent, with Palestinian protestors lobbing grenades
and burning tires across the fence at Israel troops and Israeli soldiers retaliating with tear gas and gun fire. By mid-November, more than 170 Palestinians, many unarmed, had been killed under fire from Israeli army soldiers.4

Israel responded forcefully over the ensuing months with air strikes against installations of Hamas, the militant Palestinian group that rules the Gaza Strip, while Hamas sent rockets into Israel. On November 13, after two days of the heaviest fighting since the 2014 war, Israel and Gaza’s Hamas rulers reached a cease-fire.5

However, the cease-fire is politically unpopular in Israel, dividing the conservative coalition government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Hard-right, hawkish ministers who favor a militaristic response instead of a cease-fire threatened defection and are expected to challenge Netanyahu in the next election. That internal dissent presaged the possible collapse of Netanyahu’s coalition and calls for early elections by his right-wing rivals. However, Netanyahu publicly opposed early elections November 18, saying they could bring an Intifada-level disaster, and appeared to have averted an abrupt dissolution of his government.6

While the cease-fire was holding in the days immediately following the agreement, the truce did not address the underlying issues that led to the conflict and is far from a long-term peace accord.7

For most Israelis, whether on the right or left, “it’s not enough to have a few months of quiet; all understand there needs to be a different solution,” said Noa Landau, diplomatic correspondent for the Israeli daily Haaretz, explaining public dissatisfaction with the cease-fire. Whether it’s a military operation or a cease-fire, she said, “if it’s short-term it’s not a solution.”8

For many Mideast observers, the challenges involved in reaching a longer-term peace accord are daunting. Mahmoud Abbas, head of the Palestinian Authority, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu “do not share mutual trust or intimacy, the gap between their positions is deep and both face domestic challenges from extremists at home,” wrote Elie Podeh, a lecturer in Islamic and Middle Eastern studies at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.9

Negotiations have long foundered on five crucial issues identified in the historic Oslo Accords of 1993, an agreement that was expected at the time to lead to a Palestinian state:

- Jerusalem’s status;
- the borders of Israel and a Palestinian state;
- the arrangements for refugees;
- Jewish settlements; and
- security.

With Palestinians demanding full control over the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem — lands captured by the Israelis in the 1967 Six-Day War — talks have revolved around whether Israel would give up all or most of this territory so the Palestinians could form their own state. In exchange, the Palestinians would have promised to cease attacking Israel — a compromise commonly dubbed “land for peace.”10

One obstacle to peace, but one that is still reversible, according to veteran American negotiators, is the growth of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, populated by religious Jews claiming a return to their historic homeland as well as Israelis seeking apartments in a crowded housing market.

As the impasse continues, both sides feel besieged. Israelis have long had to endure suicide bombings, rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip, and hostility from Palestinians (who are predominately Muslim) and neighboring Arab countries that oppose a Jewish state in the biblical land of Palestine. Jerusalem, revered home to three of the world’s great faiths — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — contains some of the world’s most hallowed religious sites, including for Jews the Western Wall and for Muslims the Dome of the Rock, known in Arabic as Haram al-Sharif.

The Palestinian side, meanwhile, is struggling with intense poverty. Those Palestinians who live in Israeli occupied territories reside primarily in the Gaza Strip; the West Bank, a Delaware-sized territory bordering northeast Israel; and East Jerusalem. The Israelis have walled off most of these territories for security reasons and tightly control the movement of people and goods into and out of the West Bank and Gaza.

The Palestinian economy in Gaza is in shambles and relies on international aid to survive. In Gaza, conditions are “disastrous,” according to spokesman Christopher Gunness of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency
Ground zero in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is three slices of land nestled between the Mediterranean Sea and Jordan: the West Bank and Gaza Strip, populated mostly by Palestinians, and the state of Israel. Both sides claim Jerusalem as their capital. Israel captured East Jerusalem in 1967, and some peace plans have called for it to become the capital of a Palestinian state and West Jerusalem the Israeli capital. As peace talks have faltered through the years, the economic divide between Israelis and Palestinians has grown. Israel’s per capita gross domestic product is $36,200, compared to $4,300 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israel

- **Area:** 8,019 square miles (slightly smaller than New Jersey)
- **Population:** 8.3 million (July 2017 est., includes the Golan Heights and East Jerusalem)
- **Religion:** Jewish 74.7%, Muslim 17.7%, Christian 2%, Druze 1.6%, unspecified 4% (2016 est.)
- **Per capita GDP:** $36,200 (2017 est.)
- **Unemployment rate:** 4.3% (2017 est.)

West Bank

- **Area:** 2,263 square miles (slightly bigger than Delaware)
- **Population:** 2.7 million (July 2017 est.)
- **Religion:** Muslim 80-85%, Jewish 12-14%, Christian 1-2.5%, unspecified less than 1% (2012 est.)
- **Per capita GDP:** $4,300 (2014 est.)
- **Unemployment rate:** 26.7% (2017 est.)

Gaza Strip

- **Area:** 139 square miles (about twice the size of Washington, D.C.)
- **Population:** 1.8 million (July 2017 est.)
- **Religion:** Muslim 98.0-99.0%, Christian less than 1%, unspecified less than 1% (2012 est.)
- **Per capita GDP:** $4,300 (2014 est.)
- **Unemployment rate:** 26.7% (2017 est.)

Source: The World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency, https://tinyurl.com/2h2e3k
Support for Two-State Solution Wanes

Fewer than half of Palestinians and Israeli Jews support the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel — a change from June 2016, when slim majorities still favored a two-state solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Nevertheless, both groups prefer a two-state approach over others, such as a single state with equal rights for Palestinians and Israelis or a single state with only partial rights for either group.

![Percentage Who Support a Two-State Solution to the Arab-Israeli Conflict](image)

**Note:** Israeli Jews reside inside Israel; Israeli settlers are Jews living in the West Bank; Palestinians live in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem.

**Source:** “Palestinian-Israeli Pulse,” Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Tel Aviv University and the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, Jan. 25, 2018, https://tinyurl.com/ycx6hflg

for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). Nearly 80 percent of residents depend on humanitarian aid. Ninety-five percent of the water is undrinkable, electricity supplies are dwindling, and the public health system is largely dysfunctional, “thanks to over a decade of blockade” by Israel and Egypt, Gunness said.11

Compounding Palestinian troubles are internal divisions. The Palestinian Authority (PA) — the governmental body established in 1994 to oversee majority-Palestinian areas in Gaza and the West Bank — has been feuding with the militant Islamist group Hamas since Hamas won parliamentary elections in Gaza in 2006. The two sides fought a brief war in 2007, which Hamas won. Hamas has been the de facto government in Gaza ever since then and is using the territory to attack Israel.

Given all these troubles, fewer than half of Israeli Jews and Palestinians favor a two-state solution, according to recent surveys, mainly because they do not see that approach as politically feasible. Nevertheless, a two-state solution still garners more support from both groups than the other options discussed most frequently, such as a binational state with equal rights for Palestinians and Israelis, one state in which equal rights are denied to either Palestinians or Israelis, or a single state in which the other side is expelled from the entire territory of historic Palestine.12

On both Israeli and Palestinian sides, today’s leaders are politically vulnerable, contributing to the public’s skepticism of a peaceful resolution. Abbas, the 83-year-old president of the Palestinian Authority, is in declining health. He has been accused of suppressing free speech and has not faced voters since winning a four-year term in 2005. Many Israelis, members of the Trump administration, and Mideast experts do not think Abbas is a viable negotiating partner because of his political weaknesses.13

Conservative Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu faces possible indictment on bribery and corruption charges as well as elections that could force a change in government — although not necessarily one more favorable to a Palestinian state.14

“If Netanyahu is knocked out, a more right-wing government” could well be the result, Tel Aviv political analyst Dahlia Scheindlin predicted in April. In November, even as Netanyahu faced criticism from his hard-right coalition partners and the defection of one of them from the coalition, Haaretz diplomatic correspondent Landau predicted, “Chances are we’ll see the exact same government after this round” of elections.15

Netanyahu’s coalition government depends on right-wing parties that explicitly reject a two-state solution. Netanyahu told his cabinet last year he was prepared to give the Palestinians only “a state minus,” where Israel would retain some territory captured in 1967 and control Palestinian air space for security reasons.16

Such a limited state would differ little from the status quo, according to Rashid Khalidi, a professor of modern Arab studies at Columbia University. For decades, “an imposed reality of one state” has existed over the territory where Israel’s settlements have proliferated.
in which Israelis and Palestinians live, with Israel already enjoying total military control, Khalidi said.\textsuperscript{17}

Trump said he hopes to break through the obstacles by brokering an “ultimate deal” based on a new U.S. peace plan, whose release was promised [spring 2018] but has yet to surface. Since November [2017], a Trump-appointed team has been drafting the proposal. The team consists of the president’s top negotiator, Jason D. Greenblatt, a former chief legal officer for Trump’s real estate company; David M. Friedman, ambassador to Israel, Trump’s bankruptcy lawyer, and a strong supporter of Jewish settlements; and Jared Kushner, the president’s 37-year-old son-in-law and senior adviser. The plan’s final details have not been released.\textsuperscript{18}

Many observers say any Trump peace plan will be dead on arrival because of Palestinian anger at the Trump administration, while others speculate the administration will delay the plan’s release or not release it at all. Some experts predicted that Netanyahu would push to delay release of the peace plan until after Israel’s elections, because any Israeli concessions in the plan could be used by his hard-right rivals in the election to paint him as too soft on Hamas.\textsuperscript{19}

Despite talk of impending elections that could overturn the government, the Trump administration remains committed to releasing the peace plan within the next two months, a White House official told the Israeli newspaper Haaretz on November 15, 2018.\textsuperscript{20}

The Palestinians were further angered by Trump’s decision in March to appoint John Bolton, a former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, who opposes creation of a Palestinian state, as his national security adviser; Palestinians condemned him as a “war-monger.”\textsuperscript{21}

In an interview three weeks before his appointment to the post, Bolton told \textit{CQ Researcher} he favors a solution far outside the usual choices: Return Gaza to Egypt and split the West Bank between Israel and neighboring Jordan. Bolton said a Palestinian state is not economically viable and that Palestinians should instead be integrated into working economies in Egypt and Jordan. His solution, he said, would improve Palestinians’ “prospects dramatically.”\textsuperscript{21}

Since Trump’s Jerusalem announcement, Abbas has refused to meet with administration officials. Abbas declared the United States could no longer broker peace as an impartial party. But at the United Nations in February, Abbas appeared to leave the door open for the United States to participate in multilateral peace talks that he proposed.\textsuperscript{22}

Many advocates of a two-state solution saw Trump’s statement on Jerusalem as unwisely forgoing a bargaining chip: getting the Palestinians to recognize West Jerusalem as Israel’s capital in exchange for Israel recognizing East Jerusalem as Palestinian.

But Trump said he is merely recognizing “reality,” because Israel’s government already resides in Jerusalem. He added, “Israel is a sovereign nation with the right like every other sovereign nation to determine its own capital.”\textsuperscript{23}

In August, Trump said that as a result of his moving the American embassy to Jerusalem and recognizing the city as Israel’s capital, the Palestinians “will get something very good” in the peace plan because it’s now “their turn.”\textsuperscript{24}

Trump’s defenders also pointed to a carefully worded sentence in his initial announcement of the embassy move that “we are not taking a position [on] the specific boundaries of Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem, or the resolution of contested borders.” Some pro-Trump analysts saw that as leaving open the possibility for East Jerusalem to become the Palestinian capital — a concession long sought by the Palestinians.

But in an unscripted moment with reporters in January, Trump said he had taken Jerusalem “off the table.”\textsuperscript{25}

That statement more accurately reflects Trump’s pro-Israel intentions to hand over all of Jerusalem to Israel and effectively removed the United States as an impartial broker, say many advocates of a two-state solution. “It’s a shift in the American position to, ‘We are siding with Israel’ and is the ‘death certificate’ for America’s role as peacemaker, says Daniel Seidemann, founder of Terrestrial Jerusalem, a liberal, pro-peace group that tracks developments in the city that could affect peace negotiations.

Amid the controversies, here are some of the questions being debated by Israelis, Palestinians, and Americans:

\textbf{Is a two-state solution still viable?}

A joint Israeli-Palestinian poll released in June found a slow but steady decline in support for a two-state solution
among both Palestinians and Israeli Jews over the past 10 years. From a long-standing majority in favor as recently as June 2017 among Palestinians, support has fallen to 43 percent for both groups.26

The main reason, according to pollsters, is declining public confidence in its feasibility. The growth of Jewish settlements on land that Palestinians want for their state is one factor. For Palestinians, President Trump’s Jerusalem announcement is another, said the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, a polling organization in the West Bank city of Ramallah that conducted the survey with Israeli researchers.27

Nevertheless, the pollsters argue that this hardening of attitudes is reversible. The pollsters tested whether adding new conditions to the standard peace package would change the minds of those opposed to a two-state solution. For example, about 40 percent of Israeli Jews and Palestinians changed their minds to favor a two-state approach if a peace agreement were to promise that the new Palestinian state would be democratic, a December poll revealed.28

“The less democratic the Palestinian Authority becomes, the less excited Palestinians are to live under a state governed by the PA,” says analyst Scheindlin, who helped design the survey, pointing to recent PA crackdowns on the free press. In Israel, “people are really concerned [that] if it’s not a democracy . . . , revolutions and anger and violence will spill into Israel.”

A stumbling block right now is the leadership on both sides. Palestinian leader Abbas, viewed by many as autocratic, does not control the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip despite recent attempts at reconciliation. Young Palestinian adults told Khalil Shikaki, director of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, that they are so convinced a future Palestinian state would be corrupt and authoritarian that “they believe they have a better chance of obtaining equal rights in a future one-state solution,” as part of Israel, he says.

While still possible, a two-state agreement is unlikely under the divided Palestinian leadership and an Israeli government that permits settlements in occupied territories to grow, says Khaled Elgindy, a former adviser to the Palestinian leadership during the 2004-09 peace negotiations and a fellow at the Brookings Institution’s Center for Middle East Policy in Washington. “If I were advising the Palestinian leadership, I’d say, ‘Fix your own house first’” by holding elections or bringing Hamas into the political process.

Two-state advocates see Prime Minister Netanyahu’s government as another obstacle because of its commitment to building settlements, which the Palestinians and some legal scholars view as illegal, and Netanyahu’s support for a “state minus” for Palestinians — a state without full government authority, particularly in the area of security.

Columbia University’s Khalidi criticized the “state minus” concept, noting Netanyahu would deprive a Palestinian state of the fertile Jordan Valley on strategic grounds. “It matters little whether this travesty is called a one-state or two-state ‘solution,’” he wrote, because the state would be too small and weak to be viable.29

But former Netanyahu adviser Dore Gold says that if a Palestinian “self-governing entity” is created, Israel “must hold on to the powers and territory which are vital for its security in an unstable Middle East,” including the air space over the West Bank.

Gold, president of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, an Israeli think tank that specializes in foreign affairs, stresses Israel’s vulnerability in a Mideast where its Arab neighbors are acquiring state-of-the-art weaponry.

Mideast experts debate whether the growth of Jewish settlements has closed off the possibility of two states. The settlements now so permeate the 60 percent of the West Bank controlled by Israel that the map is “honeycombed” with them and it is hard to see how the Palestinians could carve a country out of the territory, says Scheindlin.

Seidemann of Terrestrial Jerusalem estimates that 163,000 Israeli settlers now live on the Palestinian side of what many agree would be the new borders between Israel and a Palestinian state. “If Israel has the will and capacity to relocate those settlers, the two-state solution is alive; if we don’t, it’s dead,” he says.

David Makovsky, who was on U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry’s negotiating team in 2013-14, says Kerry proposed to let Israel keep some large West Bank settlements and to compensate the Palestinians with land swaps. Kerry proposed to evacuate mainly settlements outside Israel’s security barrier, encompassing about 70,000 people. However, that number has since grown to about 97,000, estimates Makovsky, a distinguished
fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a research group that studies Middle East policy. “I do think there is a tipping point” where two states become impossible, says Makovsky. “I don’t think we’re there yet, but we could be getting closer to it.”

Supporting a different vision of a single state is former Palestinian negotiator Diana Buttu, a lawyer in the Israeli coastal city of Haifa. She envisions a country similar to post-apartheid South Africa, with no religious identity and all citizens enjoying equal rights. Such a state, she says, could bring people together “who’ve suffered under the weight of history.”

However, neither side has endorsed a single-state approach. One state is “not a solution; it’s a bloodbath,” says Jonathan Rynhold, a professor of political studies at Bar-Ilan University in Ramat Gan, Israel. “Israelis will oppress Palestinians or Palestinians will kill Israelis. It’s not going to be Switzerland,” says Rynhold, who fears that one state may be the direction in which Israel is drifting if it does nothing to limit settlements.

Dennis Ross, a U.S. Middle East negotiator under Democratic and Republican administrations and now a distinguished fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, agrees. A single binational country would negate not just Palestinian national aspirations but also Israel’s identity as a Jewish state. “If you look at the rest of the Middle East where you have more than one identity, you have ongoing conflict,” he says. “These two identities are only going to be satisfied with two states.”

Has Trump’s recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital removed the United States as an impartial broker in peace talks?

Both the Palestinian Authority leadership and numerous supporters of a two-state solution say President Trump’s Jerusalem move so favored Israel that the United States can no longer present itself as an impartial peace broker.

In a televised speech just after the announcement, Palestinian Authority President Abbas called Jerusalem the “eternal capital of the state of Palestine” and condemned Trump’s “deplorable” move as a proclamation that the United States was “abandoning the role of sponsor of [the] peace process.”

Former Palestinian adviser Elgindy wrote that Washington’s credibility as a peace broker was already strained by nearly 25 years of failed talks, but that Trump’s decision could be the last straw.

In Israel, by contrast, Trump’s announcement was warmly welcomed by Prime Minister Netanyahu and his supporters. “What Trump did is introduce an important correction in how people think about Jerusalem without determining what the borders will be between any future Palestinian entity and the state of Israel,” says Gold, a former Israeli ambassador to the United Nations. That correction was needed, he says, because international bodies such as UNESCO, the United Nations’ world heritage organization, have taken to referring to Jerusalem’s holiest site only by its Muslim name, Haram al-Sharif, without recognizing it also is the site of the Second Jewish Temple, destroyed in A.D. 70.

Israel’s position is that Jerusalem should be united under Israeli sovereignty. Gold says that is necessary to protect ancient sites from fundamentalist Islamists’ destruction.

A number of former U.S. negotiators say Trump’s Jerusalem announcement was misguided but add that the United States has never been totally impartial. Rather, America’s closeness to the Israelis and the U.S. government’s perceived ability to influence them is what has made the United States a uniquely indispensable...
force in peace negotiations, says Aaron David Miller, who advised Democratic and Republican secretaries of state on peace negotiations.

“If we didn’t have a relationship with Israel that was close, then I doubt that our phone would be ringing,” says Miller.

Other factors are far more crucial for a successful negotiation, according to Miller: an American president willing to apply both “the honey and vinegar” to close the gaps between the two sides, as well as Israeli and Palestinian leaders “who are masters of their politics, not prisoners of their constituencies and ideologies. Right now you don’t have that” in either the Trump administration or the Mideast, says Miller, vice president and Middle East program director at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, a nonpartisan policy forum in Washington.

Some analysts welcomed Abbas’s proposal to create a multilateral negotiating team of countries and organizations. Possible candidates mentioned by Abbas are the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, which includes the United States, and the so-called Middle East Quartet consisting of the United Nations, United States, European Union, and Russia. His proposal implied the United States could participate in, but not lead, the peace process.34

The days when the United States could monopolize the mediator role are over, especially for the current administration, according to Daniel C. Kurtzer, former ambassador to Israel under President George W. Bush. “If the Trump administration believes they can go back to the old business of shutting everyone else out and putting forward a plan the Palestinians are likely to reject, as we’re reading in newspapers, they’re not understanding reality,” said Kurtzer, a professor of Middle East policy studies at Princeton University. “A multilateral peace process is very hard to manage, but given the Trump administration’s policies, it may be the only alternative available to us.”

Other former diplomats who participated in peace negotiations under both Republican and Democratic administrations say multiple brokers will not work. Elliott Abrams, who supervised U.S. policy in the Middle East for the White House under Bush, says international peace conferences have been tried before — at Madrid in 1991, co-sponsored by the United States and Soviet Union, and in Annapolis, Maryland, in 2007, involving the Arab League, the United Nations, and others. Neither produced a final accord. “An international conference is not going to achieve a peace agreement,” he says.

Even if negotiations are presented as multilateral, the United States would still play the crucial brokering role, predicts former U.S. negotiator Ross. The Palestinians can propose a multilateral approach “if they need a face-saver,” he says, but “if it was so easy for others to play a role, they would have done it by now.”

Some say the issue of a broker is moot because “there is no real peace process to steward now,” according to Elgindy. “Unless you change the dynamics outside the room, talks can’t go anywhere,” he says, citing settlement-building and Hamas–Palestinian Authority conflicts as stumbling blocks.

Some Palestinians are so disillusioned with the peace process that they consider the question of the United States’ role irrelevant. “I don’t think there are going to be future negotiations. They’ve been stalled for well over a decade; there is no appetite any longer for it to be continued,” says former Palestinian negotiator Buttu, charging that previous negotiations were “a fig leaf for Israel’s expansion of settlements, construction of checkpoints, for home demolitions.”
Is the Palestinian cause still the primary concern of Arab countries?

The Palestinian issue has “probably never been the primary concern of the Arabs; what’s always been their primary concern has been their security and their survival,” and that is especially true today, says former negotiator Ross. “That probably does leave the Palestinians more alone than ever. They can’t count on the Arabs being of much support either material or political; the level of support they get is more in the category of slogans.”

Some experts suggest that changing regional dynamics could mean Arab countries will be more likely to support U.S. or Israeli peace efforts over Palestinian objections — or at least step out of the way.

Ongoing military conflicts have demonstrated that issues besides Israel have taken on new urgency for countries such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia with Sunni majorities. These Sunni nations face a growing threat from an expansionary, Shiite-dominated Iran, whose forces are fighting in Syria to support the Bashar al-Assad regime and are backing other forces hostile to Sunni countries.

(Sunnis and Shiites are sects with differing beliefs within Islam. Sunnis are the largest sect, making up about 85 percent of Muslims, while Shiites are the second largest sect.)

In an example of Iran’s assertiveness in February, Israel intercepted in its airspace what it said was an Iranian drone launched from Syria. Israel then attacked the Iranian command center inside Syria.35

Israeli government, military, and diplomatic experts see an opportunity for their nation to ally with Sunni countries as they face off against a common enemy — Iran — in the Syrian proxy war just across their border. “I think there’s been a sea change in the views of many key Arab states towards the state of Israel,” said former Netanyahu adviser Gold. “Iran has been in a mode of expansionism on overdrive: You’ve got Iranian revolutionary guards training forces in Yemen; in Iraq, where Shia militias are under Iranian command; in Syria and in Lebanon.”

“The important pragmatic Sunni states are more ready to do business with Israel because they understand that Israel is not the main problem of the Middle East,” compared with 10 years ago when “nobody was ready even to speak with us,” says Brigadier General (reserves) Udi Dekel, who has held senior positions in the Israeli military and is now managing director of the Institute for National Security Studies, a Tel Aviv think tank. That, in Dekel’s view, creates an opportunity for Arab states to help peacemaking efforts by telling the Palestinians, “Please play a positive game with Israel.”

At a White House meeting with President Trump on March 5, Netanyahu said, “Israel has never been closer to the Arabs, the Arabs have never been closer to Israel, and we need to use that to broaden our talks with the Palestinians.”36

While acknowledging these changes, former Palestinian adviser Elgindy says the Israeli government tends to overstate this convergence of interests with Arab states. Arab governments “still have to toe the line at the U.N. and talk the talk” in favor of the Palestinians for their domestic constituencies, he says.

Arab governments, other experts say, have long played a double game — forging secret alliances with Israel out of self-interest while stoking rage about the Palestinians’ plight to curry the favor of their citizens. “The Arab governments have spent the last 70-plus years trying to persuade the public that the Palestinian issue was the center of their concerns,” says former Ambassador Kurtzer. “It’s very hard today to turn that off.”

Rage over the Palestinians’ treatment is often cited as an ingredient in popular uprisings such as the Arab Spring, a series of anti-government uprisings in the Middle East that began in 2010 in Tunisia. “A lot of what fueled the rise of these movements is, they don’t see justice in Palestine,” says lawyer Buttu. “If Arab states want to address things holistically, they need to turn their attention back to Palestine.” The Palestinian cause, she says, has helped fuel the growth of the Islamic State and conflicts in Yemen, Syria, and Iraq.

But Ross disagrees with such a linkage. “It’s very clear that if you solve this [Palestinian-Israeli conflict], you’re not stopping one barrel bomb in Syria,” he said.37

The big unanswered question is whether the apparent shift among Arab countries will help peace prospects in the Israeli-Palestinian arena, says Miller at the Wilson Center. It could mean that Arab countries will step away from their role as Palestinian advocates, putting less pressure on Israel to compromise with the Palestinians.
Zionist leaders lobbied the British to endorse their national project. In 1917, the British issued the landmark 67-word Balfour Declaration, written by Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour.

“His Majesty’s Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish People and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being 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.”

With those words, the writer Arthur Koestler quipped, “one nation solemnly promised to a second nation the country of a third.” To this day, Palestinians see the declaration as a betrayal of Palestinians’ rights to their homeland. Jewish immigration to Palestine rose between the two world wars as anti-Semitism intensified throughout Europe. Some Jews managed to immigrate later during the Holocaust, as Adolf Hitler’s Nazi regime pursued a policy of genocide in which nearly 6 million European Jews were killed.

In 1936, when Jews constituted a third of the population in Palestine, Palestinians began a three-year revolt against British rule and the growing Zionist presence. British forces crushed the uprising.

When the revolt ended, Britain issued a “white paper” in May 1939 calling for an independent Palestinian state under majority Arab rule in 10 years and limiting Jewish immigration. The policy remained in effect until the end of World War II.

But after the war, the British were forced to change their policy. The Haganah, the primary Jewish militia, defied the British and smuggled shiploads of Jewish refugees into Palestine. After Jewish militias undertook an anti-British campaign, Britain in 1947 turned the Palestine issue over to the United Nations.

A U.N. commission recommended splitting the region into Jewish and Arab states, with Jews inhabiting 55 percent of the territory and Arabs 44 percent. Jerusalem would be under international rule. The Palestinians and Arab nations opposed the plan, but on November 29, 1947, the U.N. General Assembly voted for partition.

Both Jews and Arabs saw the partition plan as a precursor to Jewish statehood. Fighting broke out immediately between Palestinian and Jewish residents, ending in the defeat of Palestinian forces.
### CHRONOLOGY

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<th>1800s-1930s</th>
<th>Zionist movement seeks a Jewish state in Palestine.</th>
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<td>1897</td>
<td>Viennese journalist Theodor Herzl convenes first Zionist congress in Switzerland.</td>
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<td>1917</td>
<td>Britain, which gained control of Palestine after the Ottoman Empire collapsed, promises to help achieve a Jewish homeland in Palestine.</td>
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<td>1939</td>
<td>Britain reverses policy, promising a majority-Arab state in Palestine. As the Nazis escalate their attacks on Jews, Jewish militia smuggles Jewish refugees into Palestine.</td>
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<td>1947</td>
<td>United Nations approves partition of British-occupied Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. Palestinian Arabs reject the plan but are defeated in civil war with Jewish militia.</td>
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<td>1948</td>
<td>Zionist leaders declare Israeli statehood; Arab states invade Israel but lose. More than 700,000 Palestinians flee Israel.</td>
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<td>1949</td>
<td>Armistices divide Jerusalem into Israeli and Jordanian sectors and make the West Bank part of Jordan.</td>
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<td>1967</td>
<td>In Six-Day War, Israelis conquer Jordanian section of Jerusalem, the West Bank, Sinai Desert, and Gaza Strip.</td>
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<td>1968</td>
<td>Israeli government endorses settlers moving into occupied territory in West Bank.</td>
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<td>1973</td>
<td>Syria and Egypt launch surprise attack on Israel on Yom Kippur holy day; Israel eventually repels them.</td>
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<td>1978</td>
<td>Camp David Accords result in peace treaty between Egypt and Israel.</td>
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<td>1987</td>
<td>Palestinians in West Bank begin six-year uprising (first intifada) against Israeli occupation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>At White House, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat, leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization, a group fighting for an independent state, sign Oslo Accords designed to lead to a two-state solution.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1995-Present</td>
<td>Prospects for a two-state solution dim.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Israeli extremist assassinates Rabin in retaliation for signing Oslo Accords.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Israeli-Palestinian negotiations at Camp David in Maryland fail. . . Second intifada begins in Israel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Second intifada ends. . . Israel withdraws from Gaza Strip, relocates Jewish settlers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Hamas, an Islamist group that rejects Israel’s legitimacy, wins parliamentary elections in Gaza; ruling Fatah party refuses to cede power, provoking civil war. Hamas wins and rules Gaza.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas nearly reach two-state deal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Olmert’s successor, Benjamin Netanyahu, refuses to impose a moratorium on Jewish settlements in the West Bank.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>President Barack Obama visits Israel and West Bank, leading to talks under Secretary of State John Kerry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Kerry’s peace effort collapses. . . Responding to Gaza rockets, Israeli operation kills more than 2,000 Palestinians.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>United Nations condemns Jewish settlements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>President Trump recognizes Jerusalem as Israel’s capital; U.N. General Assembly criticizes the decision.</td>
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</table>
Azzam Afifi, a Palestinian father of three who has lived in East Jerusalem’s Old City his entire life, was forced to do the unthinkable. After Israeli municipal officials ordered him to raze his house for being illegally constructed, he demolished it himself with a sledgehammer to avoid paying the city a fee to do it.

“The first hammer blow feels like you’re hitting yourself. It’s not easy to demolish your dream,” Afifi said in the 2014 documentary “Jerusalem: Hitting Home,” about Palestinian families forced to raze their homes deemed illegal by Israeli authorities.

More than 9,000 Palestinians have lost their homes in East Jerusalem since 2000, according to the Land Research Center, a Palestinian research and advocacy group based in Jerusalem. Israel captured Palestinian-dominated East Jerusalem in the Six-Day War in 1967 and annexed it.

Israeli government planning policies make it “virtually impossible” for a Palestinian to obtain a building permit and construct a home legally, said the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which responds to humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters. At least one-third of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem lack a valid building permit, putting 100,000 people at risk of displacement, it said.

Demolitions of Palestinians’ homes and commercial/agricultural buildings rose from an annual average of 84 between 2011 and 2015 to 203 in 2016 before falling slightly to 173 in 2017, according to Ir Amim, a liberal advocacy group in Jerusalem pushing for a peace agreement that would divide the city between Israel and a Palestinian state.

Many Palestinians forced out of their East Jerusalem homes will move to “slums,” where the municipality provides few city services, says Betty Herschman, director of international relations and advocacy at Ir Amim. These neglected neighborhoods are typified by large, unsafe apartment buildings separated from the city center by a security barrier that Israel erected 15 years ago in response to suicide bombings.

Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat’s office told CQ Researcher in March that “the city does not discriminate based on race, religion or gender.” It added, “The municipality receives a disproportionately low number of building permit applications in predominantly Arab neighborhoods.” Just 14 percent of all applications were in Arab neighborhoods from 2010 to 2016, according to the mayor’s office, which said that 99 percent of those applications were approved in 2016.

That small number of applications is no surprise, according to Ir Amim: Although Palestinians make up about 37 percent of Jerusalem’s total population, zoning plans have set aside only 9 percent of the entire city — and 15 percent of East Jerusalem — for Palestinian residences. As a result, large swathes of East Jerusalem in which Palestinians live lack an approved zoning plan to allow building, and many residents do not bother to apply for permits they believe are nearly impossible to get, says Ir Amim.

The battle over zoning and home demolitions in Jerusalem is one front in the long-running Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The United Nations says the annexation is illegal and refuses to recognize Jerusalem as the Israeli capital. President Trump, in December 2017, broke with long-standing U.S. policy by officially recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and announcing plans to move the U.S. embassy to the city, saying it is a “long-overdue...
step to advance the peace process.” The embassy opened in May 2018.

Since the 1967 war, the Palestinian population in Jerusalem has risen from 70,000 to more than 300,000 out of Jerusalem’s total population of 890,000.7 “Demographic anxiety” drives Israel’s policies as it seeks to ensure a large Jewish majority in Jerusalem, Ir Amim’s Herschman says.

“The birth of a Jewish child is a simcha (a celebration). The birth of a Palestinian child is a demographic problem,” says Daniel Seidmann, a Jerusalem-based lawyer, in describing the government’s view. Seidmann, who has represented Palestinian and Israeli residents before city planning boards, is the founder of Terrestrial Jerusalem, a nonprofit group tracking city developments that could affect peace negotiations.

City officials say the demolitions are needed to enforce zoning rules. David Cohen, an adviser to Jerusalem’s mayor, added that the demolitions also protect the city’s archaeological sites and green, or open, spaces from illegal construction. When Palestinians build on these sites, much damage is done to the civic fabric, he said. “Residents should understand that quality of life means many different things,” said Cohen, in explaining city demolition orders issued to Palestinians.8

Dore Gold, former director-general of Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, says the government has “permitted and even encouraged Palestinian construction in East Jerusalem.” The problem, he says, is that “we are in need of much more housing for both Jews and Palestinians. . . . You can get a building permit if you’re a Palestinian Arab, just as much as if you’re an Israeli Jew.”

Yet the governments of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Mayor Barkat have approved plans since 2009 for 10,000 housing units in Israeli neighborhoods and Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem. By contrast, zoning plans approved for Palestinian neighborhoods envision housing units only in the hundreds.9

— Sarah Glazer


Jewish Refugees from Arab Lands Get New Attention

“The Palestinians have to recognize there are two sets of refugees.”

Joseph Esses, who was born in 1919 in the Syrian city of Aleppo, had fond memories of growing up Jewish next to his Muslim neighbors. But Arab attitudes toward Jews took a fateful turn after 1948, when the state of Israel was founded.

One evening after that historic event, Esses was walking home from his clothing shop when three Muslim men cornered him on the street. Beating him with fists, rocks, and sticks, they taunted him, “You want a country? Here is your country!”

Esses recalled witnessing numerous atrocities against the Jewish community in Aleppo — the killings of friends and relatives in broad daylight and hangings for the “crime” of being a Jew. After being in and out of jail for two years and enduring torture, Esses escaped to Lebanon in 1950 and found his way to Canada, leaving behind all his family heirlooms and property.

After 1948, 856,000 Jews were forced to leave the Middle Eastern countries where their families had lived for generations. Most of this migration occurred rapidly: 90 percent of the Jews who fled Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Yemen had departed by 1951. About 650,000 ended up as refugees in Israel; another 200,000 went to the United States, Canada, or Europe.

The forces pushing Jews from their homelands included discriminatory laws — stripping them of citizenship, confiscating their property, and barring them from specified jobs — as well as anti-Jewish riots.

Within a few years, thriving Jewish communities in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Algeria, Libya, and Yemen had virtually disappeared. Today, outside of Israel, only 4,500 Jews remain in the Middle East, almost all in Morocco and Tunisia.

In Uprooted: How 3000 Years of Jewish Civilization in the Arab World Vanished Overnight, British writer Lyn Julius, the daughter of Iraqi Jewish refugees who fled to the United Kingdom in 1950, chronicles this story. More Jews than Palestinians were forced from their homelands after 1948, and about as many Middle Eastern Jews ended up as refugees in Israel as the number of Palestinians displaced from that land, she wrote.

“The Palestinians have to recognize there are two sets of refugees — not just them,” says Julius, who thinks recognition of this fact and compensation for Middle Eastern Jews, known as Mizrahi Jews, should be on the agenda of any future peace negotiations. “This hopefully would lead to a recognition that a wrong was done to people on both sides and would lead to a kind of reconciliation.”

President Bill Clinton took a step in this direction in July 2000, immediately after the Camp David peace talks, when in an Israeli television interview he suggested creating an international fund to compensate Jews from Arab countries who became refugees in Israel. During the Camp David summit, “the Palestinians said they thought these people should be eligible for compensation,” Clinton told the interviewer. In 2014, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry proposed compensation for Jews from Arab countries ahead of a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. However, no such international fund has been established.

Recently, in Egypt, Tunisia, and other Arab countries, interest has grown in Jewish culture. Exemplifying this trend are a popular Egyptian TV series, “The Jewish Neighborhood”; the emergence of films and novels in Arabic featuring Jewish characters; Jewish cultural festivals; and the restoration of abandoned synagogues.

Palestinian scholar Najat Abdulhaq, who is based in Berlin and teaches at the University of Erlangen–Nuremberg, traces this growing interest among young people to the 2010-11 Arab Spring protests and the questioning of their governments’ official line. “Literature, culture and films are intellectual spaces where we can
discuss taboos” about Jews and can go beyond the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, she said during a recent talk in London. Curious about shuttered synagogues and nostalgic for the once-cosmopolitan, inclusive societies portrayed in films, young people are seeking a reappraisal of the role that Jews played in their societies, she said.\textsuperscript{7}

Julius said she is skeptical of a real rapprochement, suggesting the trend toward restoring Jewish synagogues is driven by Arab countries’ desire to attract Western tourism — garnering favorable public relations “without the inconvenience of live Jews.”\textsuperscript{8}

In her book, Julius argued that anti-Semitism in Arab countries predated the Israeli-Arab conflict. Bigotry against non-Muslims has a long tradition in the Middle East, she wrote.\textsuperscript{9} “Even minorities who’ve got no Israel of their own have been persecuted,” Julius says. “You only have to look at the plight” of Christian groups and Kurdish Yazidis.

For many years, the Israeli government described the migration of Mizrahi Jews as the product of a long-held desire to return to the Jewish homeland. But Julius says that most arrived out of desperation. Wealthier families went to the United States, Europe, or Canada. In the early years, Mizrahis were typically housed in tent camps and faced discrimination in a society dominated by European Jewry.

Only recently has Israel recognized the plight of the Mizrahis. In 2010, the Israeli Knesset (parliament) passed a law declaring that compensation to Jewish refugees from Arab lands for property losses should be part of any future peace negotiations.\textsuperscript{10}

— Sarah Glazer

\textsuperscript{2} Lyn Julius, \textit{Uprooted: How 3000 Years of Jewish Civilization in the Arab World Vanished Overnight} (2018), pp. 120, x-xxiii, 5.
\textsuperscript{3} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 132, 5, 264.
\textsuperscript{7} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{8} Julius, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 234.
\textsuperscript{9} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 87.
\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 270.
An Independent Israel

After Israel declared its independence on May 14, 1948, Egyptian, Syrian, Iraqi, and Jordanian armies immediately invaded. By the end of the conflict in March 1949, which Israelis call the War of Independence, Israel remained an independent nation. President Harry S. Truman had immediately recognized Israel in 1948, a move seen as vital to assuring international legitimacy, although the Arab world unanimously rejected the Jewish state. Approximately 750,000 Palestinians fled after Israel’s victory, most to Lebanon and Syria. Some 200,000 fled to Gaza. Palestinians call this displacement from their homes the Nakba (catastrophe).

The combatants signed armistices in 1949. These agreements effectively created Israel’s first borders — the so-called Green Line, including the division of Jerusalem between Israel and Jordan, leaving only 22 percent of the original Palestinian lands outside the new borders of Israel. The area on the west bank of the Jordan River was annexed by Jordan and renamed the West Bank.46

In Arab countries, Israel’s victory was followed by anti-Jewish violence. More than 800,000 Jews eventually fled those countries, most heading for Israel.

The 1948 borders held until 1967, when the Six-Day War redrew Israel’s map. Jordan lost the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Israel seized the Golan Heights from Syria and took the Sinai and Gaza from Egypt.

After the victory, Israel was a majority Jewish country of 2.7 million ruling 1.4 million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The government decided to occupy those territories, at least temporarily. Some Israelis began planning to settle the areas, claiming them as the biblical Jewish homeland of Judea and Samaria — a claim that settlers make to this day.

In September 1967, a top Israeli government lawyer concluded that settling the occupied areas would violate international law, which forbids the settlement of militarily occupied land. But the legality of the settlements remains highly contested, with the Israeli government maintaining that the territory involved is “disputed,” not occupied, and therefore settlements are legal, according to Bar-Ilan University’s Rynhold. “Israel has a legal case, but most of the world doesn’t accept it,” he says.

International opinion opposed the occupation from the beginning. In 1967, the U.N. Security Council approved a resolution setting out the parameters for a negotiated peace settlement between Israel and Arab states, including the “withdrawal of Israel armed forces” from territories it had occupied and a “just settlement of the refugee problem.”47

The Palestinians are not mentioned in the resolution, nor does it require that the Palestinians be given any territory, although they are alluded to as the “refugee problem.” The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), founded in 1964 and labeled by critics as a terrorist organization, opposed the resolution at the time. However, it later agreed the resolution should be one of the bases for the Oslo Accords it signed in 1993.48

The U.N. today counts 5 million Palestinians as refugees, including all descendants of the original 750,000 refugees. Nearly one-third live in refugee “camps” — which look more like cities than camps — in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.49

Early Peace Process

Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack on Israel on October 6, 1973, coinciding with Yom Kippur, the holiest day on the Jewish religious calendar. The attackers were trying to regain territory lost in 1967, and Egypt advanced swiftly into the Sinai. But Israel counterattacked and routed the Arab armies. The United States helped negotiate an end to the war, marking the beginning of long-term American participation in peace efforts.

In 1978 at Camp David, hosted by President Jimmy Carter, Egypt and Israel held direct talks leading to the 1979 Egypt-Israel peace treaty, Israel’s first with any of its neighbors. Under the treaty, Israel returned the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in 1982 in exchange for Egypt’s promise to maintain “normal and friendly relations” with Israel.50

Israelis continued building settlements, with the Jewish population growing to 11,000 in the West Bank and Gaza by the mid-1970s. Israel’s 1977 election marked a historic shift to the right when the conservative Likud party, which maintained that these territories were part of Israel, won.

In 1987, Palestinians in the occupied territories began to rebel, confronting Israeli troops with stones and barricades. During the ensuing four years of conflict, known
as the first intifada (uprising), and the seven years that followed, Israeli forces killed an estimated 1,376 Palestinians, and Palestinians killed 185 Israeli civilians and soldiers.

Israeli and Palestinian negotiators began meeting secretly in Oslo, Norway, in 1991, leading to the Oslo Declaration of Principles of 1993. PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin signed the agreement on the White House lawn on September 13, 1993, under the gaze of President Bill Clinton. The agreement called for mutual recognition by Israel and the PLO, complete Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, and a phased withdrawal from the West Bank. Palestinians would elect an interim government, the Palestinian Authority, to rule territory that Israel evacuated.51

Talks were to begin in five years to settle five major issues: borders, settlements, security, refugees, and Jerusalem’s status. However, a series of events — including the continued expansion of settlements and growing Israeli opposition to an independent Palestinian state because of the intifada — contributed to a breakdown in the peace process.52

In 1995, an Israeli extremist assassinated Rabin in Tel Aviv. In the wake of a breakdown of talks in 2000, armed Palestinian groups began the second intifada.

In response to the second intifada and to suicide bombings throughout Israel, Israel began to construct a wall between itself and parts of the West Bank. The insurgency ended in 2005 after Arafat’s death and the election of Mahmoud Abbas as Palestinian Authority president.53

In 2005, Israel unilaterally withdrew its troops from the Gaza Strip and evacuated more than 8,000 settlers. Hamas won parliamentary elections, but the Palestinian Authority rejected the results, as did Israel and the United States, calling Hamas a terrorist organization. Hamas, an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, called for the destruction of Israel and the establishment of an Islamic state. It also opposed the Oslo Accords’ two-state solution. Fatah — the Palestinian nationalist political party — and much of the international community called for a boycott of Hamas’ government until it accepted previous Palestinian commitments to recognize Israel and renounce violence.54 Increasingly violent clashes led to a civil war in Gaza that Hamas won in 2007, splitting the Palestinian population into two political spheres.

Before Israel’s Gaza withdrawal, the George W. Bush administration (2001-09) had undertaken a so-called road map to peace, which sought to establish an independent Palestinian state by 2005, preceded by an end to Palestinian violence and a cessation of all Israeli settlements built since March 2001.55 But that plan died after Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon called for additional measures banning Palestinian violence.56

Starting in December 2006 and continuing until mid-2008, Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert met 36 times, and both have said they got closer to a peace agreement than any effort since then. Olmert said he offered a near-total withdrawal from the West Bank, keeping only 6.3 percent for settlements and compensating the Palestinians with equivalent land swaps, and a Jewish withdrawal from Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem with holy sites under international control.57

As talks were drawing to a conclusion, however, Olmert became enmeshed in a corruption scandal for which he later went to prison. Abbas was unwilling to sign a deal because he would be closing a negotiation with a lame-duck leader, according to Palestinian negotiators. “I feel he [Olmert] was assassinated politically as Rabin was assassinated materially. I feel if we had continued four to five months, we could have concluded the issues,” said Abbas.58
The Obama Years

President Barack Obama’s visit to Israel in 2013 culminated in a major pledge of friendship — a memorandum of understanding, signed in September 2016, in which the United States promised $38 billion in military aid to Israel over 10 years.\textsuperscript{59}

Secretary of State Kerry began peace talks in July 2013. But nine months later, in April 2014, they broke down. Some participants blamed Kerry for fostering misunderstandings between the parties.\textsuperscript{60}

In December 2016, Kerry pinned the blame largely on Netanyahu, whose government he called “the most right-wing in Israeli history.” He warned that growing settlements were pushing Israel toward a “separate but unequal” nation. “If the choice is one-state, Israel can either be Jewish or democratic; it cannot be both — and it won’t ever really be at peace,” Kerry said.\textsuperscript{61}

Kerry defended the Obama administration’s last act regarding Israel. On December 23, 2016, the U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 2334 condemning Israeli settlements as a “flagrant violation” of international law. The United States, departing from its long-held stance backing Israel, abstained, permitting the resolution to pass in a 14-0 vote.\textsuperscript{62}

Israel warmly welcomed Trump’s election as U.S. president. Naftali Bennett, leader of the right-wing Jewish Home party, which opposes a two-state solution, proclaimed Trump’s victory the end of the Palestinian state.

In February 2017, Trump met with Netanyahu at the White House for the first time, but the president baffled experts with a statement that either overturned decades of U.S. support for two states or was simply ill-informed. “I’m looking at two-state and one-state, and I like the one that both parties like,” Trump said.\textsuperscript{63}

Trump’s unorthodox statements have kept experts guessing about his intentions.

CURRENT SITUATION

Israeli Politics

The future of Israel’s leadership remains uncertain. Prime Minister Netanyahu was left with a razor-thin one-seat majority for his ruling coalition following the November 14 resignation of his defense minister protesting a new cease-fire with Hamas in Gaza. The resignation cast doubt on the survival of Netanyahu’s government and had been expected to push the country toward an election months earlier than expected — possibly to March 2019 instead of a year from now. (Elections must be held by November 5, 2019.) The defection of Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman and his ultranationalist party, Yisrael Beiteinu, left Netanyahu with only 61 seats for his coalition out of 120 in the Israeli parliament.

Most political commentators viewed Lieberman’s resignation as the opening salvo in the next election campaign, where Lieberman, a defense hawk, is expected to challenge Netanyahu and paint him as too soft on Gaza, along with other right-wing rivals. Lieberman has called the recent cease-fire a “surrender to terror.”\textsuperscript{64}

Theoretically, Netanyahu could rule until the next elections, scheduled for November 2019. But with the threatened resignation of another cabinet minister the same week, Minister of Education Naftali Bennett, and the possible departure of Bennett’s right-wing Jewish Home party from the coalition, Netanyahu’s government appeared to be teetering on collapse.\textsuperscript{65} Other cabinet members crucial to Netanyahu’s coalition joined Bennett in calling for early elections.\textsuperscript{66}

However, the situation appeared to be turning in Netanyahu’s favor by November 19. A few days before, Bennett had joined the criticism of the cease-fire and threatened to resign if Netanyahu didn’t give him the post of defense minister; however, Netanyahu didn’t grant that demand and assumed the defense portfolio for himself November 18 following the resignation of Defense Minister Lieberman. On November 19 Bennett announced that he was dropping his demand for the post and would not withdraw his party from the coalition after all. That left only one coalition partner, Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon of the hawkish party Kulanu, calling for an early election.\textsuperscript{67}

The government crisis erupted in the wake of a new cease-fire negotiated November 13 with Palestinians’ Hamas rulers in Gaza, after two days of heavy fighting. Netanyahu’s likely conservative campaign rivals, including Lieberman and Bennett, are expected to tap into the public’s anger over the unpopular cease-fire, which was brokered by Egypt, following other cease-fire attempts over the previous five months that failed to last.\textsuperscript{68}
Is President Trump right to recognize Jerusalem as Israel’s capital?

**YES**

**Dore Gold**  
President, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs; former Israeli Ambassador to the U.N.

Written for *CQ Researcher*, April 2018

Since 2001, the international community has become increasingly aware of the fact that holy sites across the Middle East and South Asia have lost the immunity that they were thought to have had. The current era was ushered in by the Taliban’s destruction of the 2,000-year-old statues of the Buddha in Afghanistan. It intensified with the church bombings by ISIS in Syria, Iraq, and Egypt.

This international experience is something Israelis understand well. In 1948, Jerusalem was put under siege by invading Arab armies and much of its Jewish legacy was assaulted. By the time armistice agreements were reached in 1949, some 55 synagogues and religious academies had been destroyed or desecrated. The residents of the Jewish Quarter faced exile, imprisonment, or extermination. For 19 years, Jews were not allowed to visit their holy sites in Jerusalem. These experiences hovered in the minds of Israelis in 1967 when the Israeli army was ordered to retake the Old City of Jerusalem and guarantee the security of its holy sites.

How best to resolve the question of Jerusalem has defied diplomats for decades. In 1947, the United Nations proposed that the city be internationalized. But when it was invaded in 1948, the United Nations did not lift a finger to protect its residents. Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion declared in 1949 that Jerusalem would be Israel’s capital. It was hoped and expected that states would establish their embassies in Jerusalem as a result.

While President Trump did not envision the future borders of Jerusalem when he recognized the city as Israel’s capital in December 2017, implicitly he gave an important boost to Israel’s claim from the days of Ben-Gurion. Today, the international community has to ask itself, who will protect Jerusalem? Will it be the Fatah movement or Hamas? In 2002, a joint unit of the two Palestinian organizations invaded the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and took its clergy as hostages. Should they become the protectors of Jerusalem? Should we turn to internationalization again? What is the English expression? “ Been there, tried that.”

Only a free and democratic Israel will protect Jerusalem for all faiths. Trump is carrying out the bipartisan will of Congress, which passed the Jerusalem Embassy Act in 1995 calling on the administration to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem. He is also setting the stage for the protection of our common religious legacy in Jerusalem from those who threaten our common civilization.

**NO**

**Sam Bahour**  
Managing Partner, Applied Information Management; policy adviser, Al-Shabaka, the Palestinian Policy Network

Written for *CQ Researcher*, April 2018

President Trump’s recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital ignores the city’s historical and spiritual importance to Palestinian Muslims and Christians, while violating fundamental tenets of international law. Meanwhile, the decision threatens core U.S. interests in the region by contradicting America’s own long-standing neutrality on this issue.

Jerusalem, al-Quds in Arabic, is the heart of Palestine for Palestinians around the world. For more than 20 years of U.S.-dominated negotiations, American negotiators have known that peace is not possible without establishing East Jerusalem as the sovereign and independent capital of Palestine. Before the Palestinians would engage in the 1991 Madrid peace conference, the United States affirmed that it did not recognize the Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem or any attempts to change its status.

Previous U.S. administrations have gone to great lengths to uphold this stringent neutrality. The arguments are always the same: Recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital would “critically compromise the ability of the United States to work with Israelis, Palestinians and others in the region to further the peace process.” But now, in one fell swoop, Trump recognized Jerusalem in order to “take Jerusalem off the table.” But in reality, he took the table altogether.

This declaration encourages maximalist Israeli claims of Jerusalem as the “eternal and undivided capital of the Jewish people.” Trump has endorsed those who want to turn a political conflict into a religious war and has wholeheartedly taken the side of the right-wing Israeli government. On the other side stand the Palestinians, backed by international law.

Israel’s military occupation must first end. Everyone knows how to solve Jerusalem: to have an open and shared city, with the West as Israel’s capital and the East as Palestine’s capital. But this U.S. administration has provided diplomatic cover to the obstinate Netanyahu government and set back a peace process already on life support.

Even as the Trump administration threatened them, nearly every country in the world weighed in following Trump’s ill-fated Jerusalem Declaration, saying this move not only is illegal but puts at risk the achievement of a two-state solution.

As the Palestinian leadership says, this unprecedented and flagrantly one-sided declaration means the United States can no longer be the principal mediator. Given how recklessly Trump has acted, the global community is now contemplating how to deal with an America that is part and parcel of the problem.
Residents of Israeli towns on the southern border with Gaza, which had been battered by rockets from Hamas, protested in the streets following announcement of the truce, while residents of Gaza celebrated the truce as a victory.69

Over two days of fighting beginning November 11, set off when an Israeli undercover operation in the Gaza Strip had its cover blown, Hamas militants fired 460 rockets and mortars at Israel, while the Israeli air force hit more than 160 targets in Gaza — the longest and heaviest fighting since the 2014 war.70

Violence had been simmering since the beginning of mass protests on the Gaza-Israel border in late March by Palestinians protesting Israel’s crippling blockade and demanding a right to return to lands lost to Israel in the 1948 war. Those protests intensified in violence as anger grew over the opening of the U.S. embassy in Jerusalem on May 14, with its symbolic rejection of the Palestinians’ claim to a capital in East Jerusalem. Some 60 Palestinian protestors were killed and thousands injured by Israeli troops on that day alone — the deadliest day of violence in four years.71

Protesters lobbed grenades, flaming tires, and firebombs toward Israeli troops, who responded with tear gas and live fire. By November 13, some 170 Palestinians, many unarmed, had been killed by Israeli fire, the Associated Press reported.72

In a poll published the day after the cease-fire negotiated November 13, 74 percent of Israelis said they were dissatisfied by Netanyahu’s performance in the latest confrontation with Gaza. That poll also showed Netanyahu’s center-right Likud party dropping in the polls for the first time after months of popularity.75

Netanyahu faces another threat to his political future — recommendations from Israel’s police that he be indicted on corruption and bribery charges. Netanyahu is accused of accepting nearly $300,000 in gifts over 10 years, and more police recommendations are expected on bribery charges in another case.74 If Israel’s attorney general decides to press charges before an election, Netanyahu’s chances could be weakened or he could be forced to step down.75

“He’s in the fight of his life,” former U.S. adviser Makovsky said after the police recommendations were released.

To survive, Netanyahu, who has vowed not to resign, needs to hold the right-wing parties in his coalition together. In a television address November 18, he warned his coalition partners considering defection that breaking up the government at a time of delicate national security would be “irresponsible.”76

Netanyahu wants to delay the election as long as possible for “right-wing voters to forget what they feel was a failure in Gaza; and for the public storms that the indictments will create to pass,” wrote political commentator Anshel Pfeffer in the Israeli daily Haaretz. After the police corruption charges were recommended in February, Netanyahu had maintained his popularity in the absence of an indictment; however, some political analysts anticipate an indictment could come in early 2019.77

Many observers say that the political necessity for Netanyahu to maintain support of the most right-wing parties in his coalition will keep him from agreeing to any long-term peace accord with the Palestinians, despite his support for a short-term cease-fire. Indeed, producing calm in Gaza through a successful cease-fire would reduce international pressure on Netanyahu to make concessions to the Palestinians, said Haaretz commentator Anshel Pfeffer.78

While storms were buffeting the government in November, many political observers still considered Netanyahu the favorite to win an election. “People see him as a statesman even if they are sick of him,” Tel Aviv consultant Scheindlin said. “He has a stature in the country that no one else seems to have.”79

Even if Netanyahu resigns, forces opposed to a Palestinian state could continue to run the government. “Right now, nobody who stands a chance at becoming prime minister is offering a different outlook on regional foreign policy” from Netanyahu’s, Daniel Levy, president of the U.S. Middle East Project, a policy institute in New York City that supports two states, said in February.80 In a podcast discussion in mid-November, Haaretz analysts Landau and Pfeffer took the same view. In fact, said Landau, “The political system has become more right-wing; Netanyahu appears more moderate compared to his [coalition] partners.”81

The number of Jewish settlers in the West Bank continues to grow. Last year, the population reached 435,159, a 3.4 percent increase over 2016, according to
Bet El Institutions, a settler organization opposed to a
Palestinian state. “We are changing the map,” said settler
leader Yaakov Katz. “The idea of a two-state solution is
over. It is irreversible.”

However, the settlers’ population growth rate has
been slowing for at least the past six years, according to
government statistics. That is because fewer people are moving to settle-
ments than previously, said demographic analyst Shaul
Arieli. “Israelis are voting with their feet and clearly [are] not enthusiastic about moving to the West Bank,” he
wrote. He said the increase has come from internal birth
rates.

Pro-settler parties are expected to push parlia-
mentary bills aimed at annexing part or all of the West
Bank. In January, they passed a bill in the Knesset
(parliament) requiring the approval of an 80-member
parliamentary “supermajority” before the government
can transfer any part of Jerusalem to a “foreign entity,”
such as a Palestinian state. Previously, approval could
be obtained with a 61-member majority and a public
referendum.

The pro-peace group Terrestrial Jerusalem blasted the
bill, saying opponents of two states “will be able to block
the will not only of any future Israeli government, but of
the Israeli people as a whole.”

But Baruch Gordon, director of development for Bet
El Institutions, says gaining full control of the West
Bank is vital so that Jews can return “to our historic
homeland.” It’s also vital for security reasons, he says, so
that Israel does not repeat the mistakes it made in Gaza
in 2005. In Gaza, where Israel withdrew its troops and
evacuated settlers, Israel has essentially “created a
Palestinian state by removing Jews. And what resulted
was so catastrophic for Israel,” he says, pointing to
Hamas’ attacks.

**International Developments**

In December at the United Nations, 128 countries voted
to condemn the United States for its recognition of
Jerusalem; only 9 countries supported the United States.
In retaliation, Trump threatened to withhold billions of
dollars in U.S. aid to countries that voted against the
United States. However, when his administration
unveiled its budget for 2019 in February, not a single
country had lost funding.

Meanwhile, Abbas has been refusing to meet with
U.S. officials ever since Trump’s Jerusalem move. Calling Trump’s forthcoming peace plan — some details
of which have reportedly been shared with the
Palestinians — the “slap of the century,” he said “we will
not accept it.”

Tensions rose in late March as Hamas began mass
protests on the Gaza Strip border at the start of Passover,
with Hamas claiming that at least 15 Palestinians were
killed and more than 1,400 wounded in clashes with
Israeli soldiers on March 30. (Israeli officials said they
could not verify those figures.) The Israeli army and
security services were bracing for further protests con-
ected with the U.S. embassy’s scheduled move to
Jerusalem on May 14, Israel’s Independence Day, fol-
lowed by the Palestinians’ Nakba Day (day of catastro-
phe) that mourns the 1948 loss of their homelands on
May 15.

Tensions between the Palestinian Authority and
Hamas also have been increasing following an assassina-
tion attempt on Palestinian Authority Prime Minister
Rami Hamdallah during a visit to Gaza in March. A re-
conciliation plan, in which Hamas would turn over the
administration of Gaza to the Palestinian Authority in
exchange for the PA ceasing its blockade of vital services
to Gaza, has still not been implemented.

Under the plan, Hamas agreed to turn over civil
administration of Gaza to the Palestinian Authority. But
Hamas refuses to surrender its weapons or ban armed
resistance groups, something the PA is insisting upon.
“The Gaza Strip has been hijacked by Hamas,” Abbas
said in March. “They must immediately hand over
everything, first and foremost security, to the Palestinian
national consensus government.”

In the meantime, say Palestinian experts, the
Palestinian Authority is depriving Gaza of vital funds
and supplies to pressure Hamas. “Abbas doesn’t want to
bear responsibility for Gaza, as well as the rocket fire
from Gaza [aimed at Israel], unless he knows he’s fully in
control,” former Palestinian adviser Elgindy said in
March. “The view in Ramallah is to keep on squeezing
Hamas until it capitulates to all demands.”

In early November, the Egyptian government was
reportedly attempting another reconciliation between
Abbas’s Palestinian Authority and Hamas while pres-
suring Abbas to accept the cease-fire that Egypt was
negotiating between Israel and Hamas. The deal would reportedly have given the Palestinian Authority eventual government control over Gaza. Palestinian officials in the West Bank had resisted the cease-fire, contending that the Palestinian Liberation Organization, which Abbas chairs, is the only legitimate group to negotiate a cease-fire with Israel.92

However, by the time the Israel-Gaza cease-fire was negotiated November 13, brokered by Egypt and Qatar, it was clear that Abbas had not played any role in negotiating the truce, demonstrating that he is becoming increasingly “irrelevant” to issues involving the Gaza strip, the Jerusalem Post reported. Abbas was reportedly “furious” with the parties that negotiated the truce, believing that direct negotiations with Hamas would only strengthen its hand in ruling the Gaza Strip, according to the Jerusalem Post.93

Abbas’s irrelevancy was highlighted the week before, when Qatar sent $15 million to Gaza to pay civil servant salaries there as a way of relieving the humanitarian crisis. The Palestinian Authority had halted salary payments as part of its strict economic sanctions on Gaza.94

Over the weeks of Palestinian protests at the Gaza-Israel border this year, the United Nations sided with the Palestinians. On June 13, the United Nations General Assembly overwhelmingly passed a resolution castigating Israel for the deaths that had occurred among protesters at the border fence since late March. The U.N. resolution deplored the “excessive use of force” employed by the Israelis but did not explicitly criticize Hamas, whom the Israeli and U.S. governments have accused of instigating the clashes.95

The United States and Israel voted against the resolution, which passed 120-8 in the 193-member body. The resolution, which is not legally binding, was hailed by the Palestinian delegation as a moral victory at a moment when more than 120 Palestinians had been killed and hundreds wounded by Israeli soldiers on the other side of the fence over 10 weeks of protests, according to Palestinian Health Ministry officials.

U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki R. Haley, had proposed an amendment to the resolution criticizing Hamas, but it failed to gain the necessary two-thirds majority. She had also vetoed a similar resolution that would be legally binding in the Security Council, where the United States has veto power. Israel and the U.S. government accused Hamas of inciting the protests as a ruse to invade Israeli territory and kill civilians.96

U.S. Policy

The United States will no longer contribute to the U.N. agency that provides relief to Palestinian refugees, the State Department announced August 31, raising widespread criticism that it was cutting off aid in the midst of a humanitarian disaster in Gaza. The State Department called the U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) an “irredeemably flawed operation.” It has criticized the way the United Nations counts Palestinian refugees. The administration would like to reduce the number from the 5 million counted today — which includes some 700,000 Palestinians who fled or were forced to leave their homes after the 1948 war together with all their descendants — to the several hundred thousand original refugees.

UNWRA provides aid in the form of education, health care, food, and other needs to some 1.3 million Palestinians registered as refugees in the Gaza Strip, some 800,000 Palestinians in the West Bank, and other refugees in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. The United States contributed about one-third of a $1.1 billion budget to UNWRA in 2017. Germany and Japan pledged to donate more, but it was unlikely that would cover the U.S. cuts, the Washington Post reported.97

Saeb Erekat, secretary general of the Palestine Liberation Organization, said of UNRWA “there is an international obligation to assist and support it until all the problems of the Palestinian refugees are solved.”98

Separately, the Trump administration announced the previous week that it was planning to cut more than $200 million in aid to Palestinians and divert it to other high-priority projects. Aid programs said they would have to cut food programs for poor Palestinians and medical aid. In a tweet the same day, Aaron Miller of the Wilson Center commented, this is the “First Administration in history to provide unqualified support to the Government of Israel while waging political/economic war on Palestinians.”99

On March 13, the White House held a one-day conference on Gaza’s struggles, attended by representatives of 20 countries, including Israel. However, the Palestinian Authority boycotted the event out of anger over U.S. policies.100
A White House statement issued the day after the conference said solving the humanitarian crisis is “a necessary step” to reaching a peace agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians as well as between Gaza and the West Bank.101

The Palestinians remain angry over Bolton’s appointment as national security adviser. With Bolton’s selection, said senior Palestinian official Hanan Ashrawi, the Trump administration “has joined with extreme Zionists, fundamentalist Christians and white racists” leading to a “devastating reality for Palestine.” J Street, a two-state advocacy group in Washington, said it was “horrified” by Bolton’s appointment, calling him an advocate for “dangerous use of military force in the Middle East” and noting he “has opposed U.S. leadership toward a two-state solution.”102

But Israeli Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked, of the Jewish Home party, praised Bolton’s appointment. “President Trump is continuing to appoint true friends of Israel to senior positions. John Bolton stands out among them,” she said.103

While Bolton’s favored solution — returning Gaza to Egypt and the West Bank partially to Jordan — would be bitterly opposed by the Palestinians, analysts say it is unclear how Egypt, Jordan, or Israel would react.

According to a Saudi news report, Egyptian intelligence chief Abbas Kamel told a Hamas delegation in February that Egypt opposed Trump’s “ultimate deal,” saying “Gaza is part of Palestine and Sinai is part of Egypt.” He appeared to be referring to ideas discussed in unofficial talks between American and Israeli officials, of which Egypt was informed.104

After a year of shuttle diplomacy, U.S. peace envoys Kushner and Greenblatt had failed to persuade leaders in Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and other key Arab states that the United States could broker a fair peace between Israel and the Palestinians, USA Today reported in August. “Most of the Arab world — including Egypt and Saudi Arabia — have rejected the U.S.-proposed Deal of the Century,” said Saad El Gamal, head of the Egyptian Parliament’s Arab Affairs Committee.105

More recently, tensions between the United States and Saudi Arabia over the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, which the CIA concluded was ordered by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, may have dimmed prospects for Saudi Arabia as a major player, which was expected to play a key role financially in the plan, according to Bloomberg News.106

OUTLOOK

Pessimism Prevails

The mood among Israelis and Palestinians, as well as veteran negotiators, is decidedly more pessimistic about a potential peace settlement than 10 years ago.

A March poll of Palestinians found that only 9 percent expect there to be peace and a Palestinian state 10 years from now. Twenty-five percent of Palestinians anticipate a continuation of the status quo, with settlement expansion continuing.107

Meanwhile, most Israelis have felt little sense of urgency about changing the status quo, pollster Scheindlin said shortly after the poll was released. In the midst of intermittent rockets fired at Israel by Hamas in Gaza, “you’d think people would say, ‘Stop! We can’t live through it anymore.’ But people say, ‘Ah, well, there’s terror everywhere in the world, we have our Iron Dome missile defense system, the rest of the world is not pressuring us, and we can live with the situation.’”

Even those who have spent their lives trying to negotiate peace say the ongoing conflict does not seem intolerable enough to produce an agreement. For years, “a lot of people said the status quo is not sustainable. It turns out it is sustainable,” says veteran negotiator Ross.

Some veterans of the peace process suggest new tactics are needed to build trust on both sides. Former U.S. adviser Makovsky says he now thinks Trump’s predecessors made a mistake trying for “a home run,” with every issue settled. What is needed, he says, is “a solid single,” such as Israel stopping settlement expansion or the Palestinians agreeing to cease “martyr” payments to families of Palestinians who kill Israelis.

“If each side did one thing that was hard for them, it would at least convince their respective publics this exercise is genuine and has some promise,” Makovsky says.

Dekel, who headed the negotiating team for Israeli Prime Minister Olmert in 2008, wants to go even further. He says he is tired of waiting for a comprehensive peace deal, even though he sees two states as the only way to keep Israel a “Jewish, democratic, moral state.” Dekel proposes simply giving the Palestinians the land they need for a state (suggesting Gaza and 60 percent of the...
West Bank), to create “a two-state reality,” and working out the final borders and other contentious issues later.

But that kind of unilateral action, without first bringing Palestinians to the table, will not work, says Betty Herschman, director of international relations and advocacy for Ir Amim, a Jerusalem group advocating a two-state solution. “We can’t take it upon ourselves to decide.”

Jerusalem resident Seidemann, who has participated in back-channel peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians for years and still hopes for a two-state solution, worries about violent religious conflict among increasingly fundamentalist Jews and Muslims.

Nevertheless, this American-born Israeli retains hope. “I’m 66 years old, and I don’t think I will live to see the two-state solution. But I think it will be the ultimate outcome,” he says. Noting that no one ever thought the Cold War would end or the Berlin Wall would fall, he says, “The skeptics are always right until they’re wrong.”

NOTES


23. “Statement by President Trump on Jerusalem,” op. cit.

24. David Wainer and Nick Wadhams, op. cit.


27. Ibid. See also Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, Public Opinion Poll No. 67, March 20, 2018.


29. Khalidi, op. cit.


41. Ibid.
45. Ibid., pp. xiv, 60.
53. Ibid., *ibid.*, p. 103.
57. Ibid., Federman.
62. Ibid., pp. 480-81.
68. Ibid.


72. Akram, op. cit.


74. Haaretz Weekly Podcast, op. cit.

75. Associated Press, op. cit. See also Halbfinger and Kershner, op. cit.


77. Anshel Pfeffer, op. cit.


96. Ibid.


98. Ibid.


**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

**Selected Sources**

**Books**


A former Middle East editor for the Guardian presents a comprehensive history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, offering both points of view but ending on a pessimistic note: “No end to their conflict was in sight.”


A British writer chronicles how more than 800,000 Jews were driven from their homelands in the Middle East after Israel’s founding in 1948.


U.S. relations with Arab countries were never determined by U.S. actions on Israel and Palestine, the author argues in this history encompassing his years as an adviser and Middle East envoy during the administrations of George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama.

An associate professor of international history at the London School of Economics presents a step-by-step account of Arab-Israeli peace negotiations.

**Articles**


President Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner has been discredited as a Middle East negotiator because of conflicts of interest and phone conversations in which foreign officials sought to manipulate him, according to The New York Times’ Editorial Board.


A former adviser to President George W. Bush says President Trump was right to cut U.N. aid to Palestinian refugees, arguing the program perpetuates the refugee crisis.


Even before President Trump’s announcement that the United States would recognize Jerusalem as the Israeli capital, rumors that his peace plan was heavily tilted toward the Israelis had roused anger among Palestinians and their supporters.


The president’s recently appointed national security adviser, writing while still a senior fellow at the conservative American Enterprise Institute in Washington, praised President Trump for providing an “injection of reality” into the Middle East peace process.


Reports and Studies


A survey produced jointly by Palestinian and Israeli researchers finds that support for the two-state solution has slipped to a minority of both Palestinians and Jewish Israelis — and to its lowest level in a decade.


A liberal Israeli advocacy group that tracks developments in Jerusalem reports that only 9 percent of the city is zoned for Palestinian residential construction, but that the city makes it so difficult for Palestinians to obtain a construction permit that many build illegally.
For More Information


**American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)**, 202-639-5363; www.aipac.org. Pro-Israel advocacy group with offices in all 50 states.

**Americans for Peace Now**, 2100 M St., N.W., Suite 619, Washington, DC 20037; 202-408-9898; peacenow.org. Sister organization of Israel peace movement organization Peace Now; advocates policies leading to a two-state solution.

**Institute for Middle East Understanding**, 2913 El Camino Real, #436, Tustin, CA 92782; 718-514-9662; www.imeu.org. Independent nonprofit that seeks to provide accurate information to journalists about Palestine.

**Institute for National Security Studies**, Haim Levanon Street, Tel Aviv 6997556 Israel; +972-3-640-0400; www.inss.org.il. Research organization focused on Israel's national security agenda that includes prominent former Israeli and U.S. government and military leaders among its staff.

**Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research**, Off Irsal Street, PO Box 76, Ramallah, Palestine; +972-2-2964933; www.pcpsr.org. Independent think tank conducting polls of Palestinians and joint polls with Israeli researchers.


**Terrestrial Jerusalem**, t-j.org.il. Israeli nongovernmental organization tracking developments in Jerusalem that could affect the peace process.