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ISRAELI SOURCES OF CONFLICT AND CHANGE
AFFECTING THE MIDDLE EAST

by

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A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
IN
FULFILLMENT OF THE CURRICULUM
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ABSTRACT

TITLE: Israeli Sources of Conflict and Change Affecting the Middle East

AUTHOR: Patricia J. Harrington, Lieutenant Colonel, USAF

The stateless Palestinian, the occupied territories (West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights), and water are all sources of conflict and change within the Mideast--and especially Israel. Each issue has a long history of disputes. Israeli views have changed over time, and the United States has usually supported Israel. Only during the Bush administration did the United States begin to take a tougher stance with Israel. Negotiations are ongoing with the Israelis, Arabs, and Palestinians. These issues will have to be resolved before peace is possible.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses sources of conflict and change in the Middle East, focusing on Israel. The purpose of the paper is to assist members of future Air War College classes as they conduct their studies of the Middle East region. Due to size limitations, it only addresses three sources of conflict--the stateless nation of the Palestinians, occupied land, and water. These issues will have to be resolved prior to realizing peace within the region. The paper explores each issue by looking first at the background, then at Israeli policy and actions, and finally, at United States policy and actions.

Some introductory comments concerning Israel's current view of its security issues and the United States' special relationship with Israel are appropriate. In his first speech upon taking over as prime minister in the Summer of 1992, Mr. Rabin declared:

"No longer do we have to be a people that dwells alone and no longer is it true that the whole world is against us. We must overcome the sense of isolation that has held us in its thrall for almost half a century. We must join the international movement towards peace, reconciliation and co-operation that is spreading over the entire globe--lest we be the last to remain, all alone, in the station."

Mr. Rabin promised a change of style and priorities--more emphasis on domestic issues vice defense. (1:46) The United States welcomed this attitude change.

Initially, American support of Israel rested essentially on moral grounds--"sympathy for a small democratic state populated by survivors of the Holocaust and threatened with annihilation by the Arabs." By the late 1960s, the United States had begun to view Israel as a strong anticommunist ally in a

largely hostile area. In the 1970s, Israel's position as a "strategic asset" of the United States became central to American policy in the region. Lately, with the end of the "Cold War," the rise of Muslim fundamentalism throughout the Middle East increased the U.S. perception of Israel as a powerful military ally. (2:423) But what led to the three sources of change and conflict listed above, where recently, even the United States found itself at odds with its ally (until Mr. Rabin assumed power)?

STATELESS NATION

BACKGROUND

One cannot begin to understand the underlying tensions of the region without understanding the problems or issues surrounding the Palestinians--the stateless nation and "have-nots" within Israel. The conflict over Palestine represents the search for national identity and self-determination by two peoples: Jews and Palestinians. (3:46) The easiest way to explain the conflict is to break it into three periods: prior to 1948, 1948-1967, and 1967 to today.

PRIOR TO 1948

In 1850, neither Jews or Palestinians saw themselves as a separate political entity. Less than a century later, both viewed themselves as members of ethnically, culturally, linguistically homogeneous, territorially based nations. The nationalist and state-building movement within Europe prompted the development of a national identity among people who previously had been held together by other bonds such as community-based political loyalties. Also, Palestinians were affected by political developments within the Ottoman Empire while Jews were affected by the increasing hostility and persecution of European and Russian Jews. (3:11-46)

Although a state of Palestine governed by the Palestinians has never existed, the Palestinians justify their right to the Palestinian land by tracing their continuous occupancy of the land back at least to the seventh century. The first wave of Jewish immigrants to Palestine took place between 1882 and 1903. By 1903, perhaps 6 percent of the Palestinian population was Jewish. It was still less than 10 percent in 1919 and by 1939, had risen to only 31 percent of the population. As the Jews immigrated, they purchased

land from absentee landlords and then refused to let anyone but a Jew work for them. As a result, many of the Palestinians who had worked as share croppers lost their homes. Also, "in the eyes of the Palestinian community, the European immigrants were exclusivist and arrogant in their political and economic ideas, too Western, too modern, too aggressive, and in general a corrupting influence." In addition, Palestinians recognized that Zionism would be detrimental to nationalist aspirations. (3:2-25)

Initially, Arabs primarily wanted to replace Turkish Ottoman rule with local Arab political control. The Arabs already shared a language, culture, history, and a sense of community. By 1880, an Arab independence movement had begun. Palestinian nationalism, distinct from Arab nationalism, did not develop till after World War I when Palestinians realized the protection of Palestinian national rights did not have a high priority among the Arabs negotiating for their own independence. (3:21-24)

Palestinian political and national development, as well as violent clashes between Palestinians and Jews, accelerated in the 1930s. In 1937, the British who assumed control from the Turks after World War I and made contradictory promises to both the Palestinians and Jews, proposed partitioning Palestine into a Jewish state and a Palestinian area merged with Transjordan (See Appendix A). The resultant Palestinian Revolt and Zionist opposition caused Britain to scrap the 1937 partition plan and eventually, to turn the issue over to the United Nations. (3:23-29)

Intense lobbying from the world's Jewish population and guilt over their near destruction in Europe contributed to the United Nations passing a resolution for creation of a Jewish state within a partitioned Palestine-- giving the new Jewish state 57 percent of Palestine to include the fertile coastal region, even though Jews composed only about 33 percent of the

population and owned only 7 percent of the land. Fighting ensued.

An armistice was finally signed in 1949. By then, Israel had expanded its control over Palestine to include 77 percent of the area vice the 57 percent specified in the United Nations resolution (See Appendix B). "Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians had been displaced and lost their homes, their lands, and their livelihoods. The name "Palestine" was wiped off the political map of the world." (3:40-46)

1948-1967

Between 1948 and 1967, Palestinian nationalism was muted, and resistance to Israel was expressed almost entirely by the surrounding Arab states. Only 120,000 to 150,000 Palestinians remained in Israel, and they were isolated. Military law, finally abolished on 1 December 1966, allowed Palestinians to be arbitrarily jailed or deported, their economic activities limited, and their freedom of movement restricted under the guise of Israeli security concerns. (3:49-50)

A much larger group of Palestinians became refugees and exiles in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (joining other Palestinians already residing there), in nearby Arab countries, and in Europe or the United States--some leaving voluntarily, but many thousands more driven out by Jewish military forces or fleeing in terror. The West Bank remained under Jordanian control between 1948 and 1967. The Gaza Strip was under Egyptian military rule during the same time frame. The Palestinians of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip had mixed emotions. On one hand, they desired to regain Palestinian control of Palestine to reunite the Palestinian people socially, economically, and politically; on the other hand, there was a fear that further conflict with Israel would result in additional loss of territory and possibly the loss of the land and homes they now had. (3:50-54)

Of the Arab states, only Jordan granted citizenship to a significant number of Palestinians. The Arab states appeared to lack the unity to successfully aid the Palestinian movement. Few were willing to take political risks on behalf of the Palestinians. The Arab and international position was that the issues of compensation and repatriation were the first priority. However, Israel refused to allow more than a trivial number of refugees to return. (3:54-57)

Due to a growing belief among Palestinians that they would have to take control of their own future, they began to organize guerrilla groups to engage in military actions against Israel. As a result, the Arabs recognized a need to control nationalist guerrilla groups and called for the First Arab Summit in 1964. At this summit, President Nasser of Egypt proposed the idea for the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The purpose of the organization was to serve as an autonomous institutional expression of Palestinian national identity and to provide a means to achieve Palestinian self-determination. The Palestinian Liberation Army was created at the same time to facilitate the second purpose. (3:56-59)

The six day 1967 war between Israel and the states of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria was preceded by a period of increasing tension in the region. Beginning in 1965, Palestinian guerrilla groups led organized attacks against Israel. Israel engaged in a "creeping annexation" of the demilitarized zone separating Israel and Syria--building fortified settlements and basing military personnel there. In April 1967, Israel announced it would begin cultivation of the entire demilitarized zone to include land owned by Syrians. Syrian forces shot at an Israeli working on the land, and in reprisal, Israel began a bombing attack against Syrian border villages. Despite a negotiated cease fire, Syrian and Israeli threats escalated. (3:69-70)

Responding to Syrian and Soviet intelligence reports that Israel was planning a massive attack against Syria at the end of May, President Nasser put the Egyptian military forces on alert, began moving forces into the Sinai, and closed the Strait of Tiran to Israeli ships--the last action being one which Israel had said it would consider an act of war. King Hussein of Jordan also traveled to Egypt on 30 May to sign a defense pact with Egypt. (3:70-71)

Despite the United States advising Israel that no Egyptian attack was imminent, Israel decided to launch a preemptive, defensive attack on Egypt. Factions within Israel wanted an increase of Israeli territory and the elimination of Egypt's President Nasser. Egypt provided a situation where Israel could claim justification for the attack. (3:71- '2)

Israel defeated Egypt gaining the Sinai and Gaza Strip. When fighting also broke out between Jordan and Israel, Israel was again successful and gained control of the West Bank as well as the Eastern side of Jerusalem. In the north, Israel attacked Syria and gained control of the Golan Heights. The entire area of Palestine, as previously controlled by Britain and called the British Mandate of Palestine, was now under Israeli control (See Appendix C). For the Palestinians, the 1967 war created another group of refugees and swelled the existing camps in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. (3:72) Just as important, the new land added more than 1.5 million Palestinians to Israeli rule--primarily rural cultivators who lived in unimproved housing and relied on labor-intensive agricultural techniques. In particular, "Jordan had done little between 1949 and 1967 to improve the lives of most Palestinians, whether urban or rural. Israeli rule would do no better and, in the areas of finance, education, and health services, much worse. (19:371-372)

Immediately following the June 1967 war, the Palestinian guerrillas attempted to create an autonomous base and mount an armed insurrection in the

Israeli-occupied West Bank. Although Palestinian attacks never reached the level of an armed insurrection or a campaign, the action gave the Palestinians and Arabs a psychological boost. The launch of this effort took place in August 1967. Poor organization, little training, and lax security resulted in the Israeli security services making numerous arrests--some prior to launch of the first attacks. By December 1967, continuing arrests caused a complete collapse of armed insurrection. Even though Palestinians failed to mount an effective resistance campaign, operations established the guerrilla movement as a mass force, set it on the path for taking over the PLO, and helped it become a regional actor in its own right. However, the failure doomed the guerrillas to operating from Arab sanctuaries across the borders. "Exile also implicated the guerrilla movement directly in internal Arab politics, and exposed it to massive Arab state intervention." (20:244,250-253,264-265)

AFTER 1967

After the June 1967 war and subsequent Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights, the conflict again assumed elements of a Palestinian-Israeli nationalist clash, but maintained the interstate character developed since 1948. Palestinian nationalist expression increased in strength. "This trend was accentuated with the beginning of the Palestinian uprising, or intifada, in December 1987." Global attention once more focused on the basic conflict between Jews and Palestinians. (3:49-50)

In 1967, Palestinian relations with the Arab state of Jordan became tense. (3:81-88) The 1967 war left Jordan with a quarter million new refugees from Israeli occupation. Unemployment doubled. Jordan's military forces were largely destroyed. (21:7) Many of the Palestinians looked down upon the Jordanian fighters for having lost the West Bank and asserted the Palestinians, vice the Jordanians, suffered as a result of Jordanian

failures. Some Palestinian groups went so far as to call for the overthrow of the Arab monarchies (including Jordan's) as a first step in the liberation of Palestinians. "Not suprisingly, these views did not endear the Palestinians to the Jordanian government or to the military." In addition, the Palestinian presence stressed the Jordanian economy and created fear that the military activities of the Palestinian guerrillas in Israel would result in Israeli retaliatory military attacks against Jordan. (3:81)

The Palestinians began to develop a state-within-a-state over which the Jordanian government had virtually no control. Cross border attacks by both the Israelis and the Palestinians became more frequent. Palestinians interpreted Nasser's decision in 1970 to accept a U.S.-mediated ceasefire agreement with Israel as an indication that the Arab states would forsake Palestinians, if necessary, to obtain peace with Israel. (3:82)

When a Palestinian group hijacked four commercial airplanes in September 1970--setting three down in the eastern desert of Jordan, and defying Jordanian efforts to negotiate the passengers freedom (although the group did eventually release the passengers)--King Hussein of Jordan finally gave an order for his military forces to attack Palestinian guerrillas. "In ten days of intense fighting, thousands of Palestinians were killed, and the guerrilla movement in Jordan was broken." Although the Palestinians had expected support from Iraq and Syria, neither provided reinforcements--strengthening the belief that Palestinians could not rely on the Arab states. "Palestinian fighters regrouped in Lebanon, where their presence was to provide the pretext for Israeli invasions in 1978 and 1982." (3:82)

The aftermath of a 1973 war between Israel and the Arab states of Egypt and Israel did not significantly affect the Palestinians. However, the Arab states had challenged Israel for the first time and although not winners, they

had not been humiliated. By publicly stating the intent of the war was limited to regaining territories lost in 1967, the Arab states achieved a positive status in much of the world. U.S. support of Israel during the war led Arab states to impose an oil embargo and price increase. "This in turn resulted in modification of the power relationship between the Arab states and the Western industrialized countries, particularly the United States." (3:77)

The Lebanese Civil War of 1975 and 1976 did affect the Palestinians. The large Palestinian population became involved in the war through their support of the Lebanese National Movement (LNM) which had been supportive of the PLO. The LNM was fighting the Lebanese Front, primarily made up of Maronite Christians, dominated by the Phalangist party. An estimated 2,500 Palestinians died during the Phalangist seige of a East Beirut refugee camp and subsequent massacre when it fell. This massacre helped convince the Palestinians they would be secure only in their own state. (3:83-84)

Also, Israel aligned itself with the Maronite Christians and invaded Lebanon in 1978 in an attempt to rid Lebanon of the PLO and isolate Lebanon from the Arab world through a peace treaty with the Maronites. Israel invaded Lebanon for a second time in 1982 in another attempt to rid Lebanon of the PLO. (3:85-88)

By June 1985, Israel had withdrawn from most of Lebanon when a Syrian-backed Lebanese Shi'ite militia group began a three year intermittent war to prevent the PLO from reestablishing a military presence in Lebanon. However, the PLO was able to return about 10,000 troops to Lebanon. The war in Lebanon continues to this day. (3:88)

The Palestinian intifada began in the Gaza Strip in December 1987 and also continues to this day. "The trigger incident occurred on 8 December 1987 when an Israeli army tank transporter collided with a line of cars filled with

Palestinian workers waiting at the military checkpoint at the north end of the Gaza Strip. Four workers were killed and seven others seriously injured. Rumors spread that the accident was a deliberate act in retaliation for the killing in Gaza of an Israeli salesperson two days earlier. That night, the funerals for three of the workers turned into a massive demonstration; protests and demonstrations continued the following day and a young Gazan man was shot." (3:96)

The intifada surprised the Israelis. "The massive size of the demonstrations in the early days of the intifada, its rapid spread from Gaza to East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank, the discipline shown by the demonstrators, the use of nonviolent actions such as tax resistance and commercial strikes, the rapid formation of an indigenous Unified National Leadership to coordinate the intifada activities, and the breadth of involvement by Palestinians were all unexpected." (3:96-97)

Finally, the gulf war of 1990-1991 politically isolated and economically ravaged the Palestinians. The intifada began to sputter. This came about because the Palestinians backed Iraqi President Saddam Hussein when he promised to withdraw Iraqi troops from Kuwait if Israel relinquished Arab lands it took in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. "The Palestinian economy, already crippled by the intifada, was virtually destroyed by Israel's wartime emergency measures, which included a 40-day, dawn-to-dusk curfew, a ban against travel outside the territories and severe work restrictions." In August 1991, unemployment among adult Palestinians rose to 60 percent. The intifada then appeared to turn inward--Palestinians suspected of collaborating with Israel were being killed by other Palestinians. (22:611)

The gulf war also created a new scattering of the Palestinians. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other gulf states expelled hundreds of thousands of

Palestinians for their support of Iraq. (See table at Appendix D for a 1991 dispersion of the Palestinians.) Financial aid also appeared to dry up. As a result, Palestinians appeared willing to negotiate with Israel in peace talks for the first time in history. (22:611-612)

ISRAELI POLICY AND ACTIONS

Serious cleavages developed at the beginning of the Zionist movement. Some Zionists called for a Jewish state to encompass historic Israel at its furthest boundaries--one group proposing military takeover and another, step-by-step state building. Others believed Palestine was the land of two national peoples, and it was necessary to accommodate the national aspirations of both Jews and Palestinians. Still others totally opposed establishment of a state in Palestine, believing only God could return Jews to the Promised Land. (3:19-21) The Jewish state was established through diplomacy and war. Opposition to the national aspirations of the Palestines prevailed until recently with the ascension to power of Yitzhak Rabin.

Israel basically divides the more than two million Palestinians within Israel into Israeli Palestinians and the Palestinians in the occupied territories. "Though the former are citizens of the republic, their citizenship does not assure them equality in law..." The latter have no political rights because they are under military occupation--although Jews in the territories are citizens. The Jewish Israelis hold total monopoly over governmental resources, the economy, education, objectives of the republic, and form the upper social stratum. (3:89-90)

Peace talks between the Palestinians and Israelis (and between the Israelis and neighboring states), sponsored by the United States, began in November 1991--a first. During the peace talks, both sides agreed to negotiate some form of limited self-government for the Palestinians for a five-

year transition period, but thus far no participant has had the ingenuity to find a mutually acceptable form of autonomy. (4:35) With the December 1992 Israeli expulsion of over 400 Palestinians from Israel, negotiations are now at a standstill.

During a visit of the U.S. Air War College Class of 1993, Mr. Lamden of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs verified that the Israelis see the need for a five year period of confidence building as regards the Palestinian issue. He stated that was difficult to negotiate with the Palestinians because there is no coherence in the Palestinian leadership. Israel is offering the Palestinians autonomy for five years with the chance to renegotiate the issues after three years. (23:36-37)

As to the question of the Palestinian deportees, Mr. Lamden said that Israel had watched Islamic fundamentalism (HAMAS) grow for the past two years throughout the Middle East. He further stated that the implication of Islamic fundamentalism is that it denies Jewish existence. He saw the threat to the peace process as terrorism and stated that an extreme step would be to halt HAMAS activism. He differentiated between temporary removal and deportation. Israel considered the expulsion of more than 400 Palestinians a temporary removal and therefore, not a major concern. Israel considers their capitulation in allowing the gradual, piecemeal return of the deportees to have solved the problem. Mr. Lamden stated that only the PLO does not want to continue the peace talks because of the question on the Palestinian deportees. He hopes to see the peace talks continue in April 1993. (23:38)

UNITED STATES POLICY AND ACTIONS

President Bush's administration took an aggressive stance toward a Mideast peace. In 1989, James Baker addressed the government of Israel as follows: "forswear annexation; stop settlement activity; allow schools to

reopen; reach out to the Palestinians as neighbors who deserve political rights." He also urged Israel to abandon "the unrealistic vision of a greater Israel." Baker was equally blunt with the Palestinians--remarking on their failure to act politically and urging them to choose diplomacy over violence. He called on Palestinians to accept the Israeli government's proposal for elections in the territories. (5:8) There is little doubt that Washington's stand helped force Israel and the Palestinians to the negotiating table.

In speaking to members of the United States Air War College Class of 1993, the U.S. Ambassador to Israel, William C. Harrop, appeared pleased with the progress made thus far in the peace talks. Although the process is slow, he believes the environment for some sort of settlement is probably is better now than at any time before. He said that the Israelis see the next 3 to 5 years as their "window of opportunity." Reasons include the Israeli leadership of Prime Minister Rabine who supports concessions while having the reputation as a warrior, the lack of an active threat, the reduction of military capabilities held by Israel's historical enemies, no superpower backing for Syria, and the lack of a real dispute between Jordan and Israel. One wildcard exists in dealing with Iran and its efforts to develop a nuclear capability and corresponding delivery systems. (23:22-23)

Ambassador Harrop stated that the United States objected to the deportation of the 400-plus Palestinians in December 1992 because of Israel's status as an occupying power. Under the Geneva Protocols, Israel's action is illegal--an occupying power cannot deport people from occupied territories. However, when the Israelis announced a plan to begin repatriating the deportees (100 right away and the remainder by the end of 1993), the U.S. and Israel declared the situation over. (23:23) The Palestinians objected saying

the Israeli plan had not gone far enough, and the deportees declared they would all remain until all were repatriated. However, a question remains as to whether the issue will keep the Palestinians away from the negotiating table. In an Air War College lecture on 13 April 1993, Mr. Allen Keiswetter of the U.S. State Department said that invitations had been sent out for peace talks on 20 April 1993 in Washington D.C.--the State Department is waiting for responses. (24)

An additional topic covered by Ambassador Harrop concerned human rights. He said that Israel's policies in the occupied territories and in dealing with its Arab minority leaves them vulnerable to pressure on human rights issues. As a result, the U.S. is often criticized for a apparent "double standard" in dealing with the Muslims of the world, because of strong support for Israel. (23:26)

OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

BACKGROUND

This second source of conflict had its beginnings in the mid 1960s. Much of the background is repetitive with that provided on the Palestinian question. However, the discussion will be repeated and expanded, where necessary, to provide a standalone analysis on the occupied territories.

The mid 1960s were marked by a series of Palestinian guerrilla raids into Israel and retaliatory raids by Israel into Syria--who the Israelis accused of supporting the guerrillas. The Israelis were conducting a "creeping annexation" of the demilitarized zone separating Israel and Syria--building fortified settlements and basing military personnel there. In April 1967, Israel announced it would begin cultivation of the entire demilitarized zone. Syrian forces responded by shooting at an Israeli working on the land. In reprisal, Israeli jets crossed into syrian airspace and engaged in a dogfight downing several Syrian planes. (3:70;6:243)

In May 1967, after a Soviet Union warning that the Israelis had massed forces on the Syrian border and were preparing to invade, President Nasser of Egypt requested the United Nations withdraw their peacekeeping force (established by 1957 agreements), sent 80,000 men into the Sinai, and closed the Gulf of Aquaba to Israeli shipping. Israel denied the allegations and requested the Soviet ambassador go north and see for himself that nothing was happening. Due to internal unrest in his country, Jordan's King Hussein flew to Cairo and signed a defense treaty with Nasser. (King Hussein faced a choice between war and civil war--his advisors warned him that if a war broke out they could not hold their men in check because of the Palestinian frenzy.) Egypt did not withdraw. Instead, Nasser reportedly saw this as an

opportunity for him to impose on Israel some Arab demands regarding Palestinian refugees and territory it held in excess of what the UN had allotted twenty years before. However, there were no indications that Nasser wanted war or planned to attack Israel. Egypt was already engaged in Yeman. The U.S. investigated the issue and advised Israel that no attack was imminent. (3:71;7:44-45)

However Israel perceived that it was being abandoned on an international scale in an ever-tightening siege. "In a matter of 10 days, the 1957 understandings regarding the Aquaba and the United Nations Emergency Force were wholly broken by Egypt, and the cascading events threw the Israeli cabinet off balance." (25:232) For this reason and because Israel saw a chance to end the Arab-Israeli conflict on its own terms, Israel delivered a devastating surprise attack on Egypt on June 5, 1967. In three successive strikes, Israeli pilots removed their Egyptian counterparts from the war and determined the outcome of the war. Jordan joined the war engaging Israeli forces in the Jerusalem area. The result was that the Jordanian forces were driven back across the Jordan river, putting Israel in control of the West Bank as well as the eastern side of Jerusalem. On June 9, Israel turned to Syria and overran Syrian fortifications on the Golan Heights. The entire war lasted only six days. (3:72;6:244;7:44-45)

Originally, Israel announced it had no territorial aspirations, but then realized advantages of "secure boundaries" and discussed areas that would not be evacuated. When the United Nations passed Security Council Resolution 242 calling for an end to belligerency and mutual recognition, the resolution also called for Israeli withdrawal from "occupied territories." However, failure of the English version to specify which territories became the basis for an Israeli argument that withdrawal did not have to be complete. (6:245-246)

A state of official war still exists between Israel and all of its neighbors except Egypt. Israel traded the Sinai to the Egyptians in return for peace as a result of the Camp David Accords. Israel has continued to occupy the remaining lands won in the 1967 war to this day. These lands include the Jordanian or West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights and East Jerusalem (See Appendix C).

ISRAELI POLICY AND ACTIONS

Israeli public and political opinion is divided about the right to hold onto these territories. Four categories of arguments arise concerning Israel's right or need to hold onto these territories--religious, political, defense, and economic. Each poses a dilemma for Israel's government.

In 1989, an argument arose over whether the land was God-given. The minority view among religious Israelis is that Israeli withdrawal from the occupied areas would be justifiable. Ovadia Yosef, who retired in 1983 as one of Israel's two Chief Rabbis said the land-holding tenet is overridden by the precept of preservation of life. "If returning territories would endanger Jewish lives, it is certainly forbidden. But if returning territories would prevent bloodshed and bring true peace, preservation of life applies." The Biblical verse underlying this theme is Deuteronomy 30:19, "I have put before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life--if you and your offspring would live--by loving the Lord your God." On the other side, the current Chief Rabbis argue that in Jewish tradition, the life-preserving principle applies to individuals, not a nation. They quote Numbers 33:53, "And you shall take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given the land to you to possess it." (8:67)

However, even in Biblical times, Jews never controlled or occupied the entire land of Israel. In Genesis 15:18, God promised Abraham, "Unto thy

seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." Later, Deuteronomy describes God's command to Moses to occupy the country from the Mediterranean in the west to the Euphrates in the east, and from the Negev desert in the south to the Lebanon in the north. The full land claim would include chunks of present-day Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. (See Appendix E) Any Zionist claim that this promise was made exclusively to the Jews is incorrect. Abraham, through his son Ishmael, is also the father of the Arabs. Therefore, Arabs are included in the promise. Later in Genesis, God foretold the establishment of one nation through Abraham's son Issac and a second, through Ishmael. No rabbis currently advocate Israel trying to recapture the Land of Israel as defined in the Bible. (8:67;26:164-165)

During discussions with members of the Air War College Class of 1993, Mr. Lamden of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs discussed both Jerusalem and the West Bank. Israelis, Muslims, and members of other religious sects all see Jerusalem as a holy city. In addition, Israelis consider Jerusalem as its capital and will not consider a divided city. The Israelis plan to maintain access to the holy places in Jerusalem. However, a compromise such as power sharing might be possible. (23:37)

Further, Mr. Lamden said there are two types of settlements in the West Bank--political and military. The political settlements are tied up with religious arguments for the territories. Political settlements are usually established by Israeli fundamentalists who believe the West Bank is a part of the historic Jewish state--since the land is conquered, they see no reason to give it back. However, Mr. Lamden stated the Israeli government does not see this type of settlement as precluding some sort of arrangement for Jewish and Arab cohabitation. (23:37)

On the other hand, military settlements are established on the frontiers to provide security for the interior. (22:37) Some sort of security must remain to reassure the Jewish people in Israel. During discussions at Ramat David Air Base in Israel, Air War College Class of 1993 classmembers heard time and again the fear of Israelis that one mistake will cost them their country. They hope for early warning, but cannot count on it. The occupied territories add an element of strategic depth lacking in Israel, but not a great deal. (23:29-30) The Israeli Prime Minister cannot appear "soft" on Arab issues and stay in power. The concern is that too soft a stance might endanger Israel.

Prior to 1992, the Israeli government was "hard over" on the "no land for peace stance" despite polls indicating the electorate was evenly split on the issue. Another poll indicated that 72 percent of Israelis wanted a halt to the settlement drive. Many made the distinction between a political border and a security border--the former involves Israeli sovereignty and control of the territory and people and the latter maintains the defense integrity. One retired general developed a plan under which Israeli deployment on the ridges and along the river Jordan required between 1-2 percent of the West Bank to be under Israeli jurisdiction. A formal group of senior military officers argued that Nablus, Hebron and Gaza did not add to security, but lessened it. (9:15)

These changes in Israeli public and bureaucratic attitude led to a toppling of the old government and the rise of Prime Minister Yitzhad Rabin. He advocates that a combination of peace agreements, military strength, better relations with the United States and economic renewal is a better guarantor of Israel's security than simply maintaining the Mideast's strongest military might and building more Jewish settlements in the West Bank. He also is working to convince Israelis they can now make some painful concessions in

order to secure a lasting peace. He opened the door to a partial Israeli withdrawal from some of the strategic Golan Heights and canceled 7,000 Israeli settlement units about to be established in the West Bank and Gaza. (10:41-42)

The process of economic integration of the territories has been accomplished through the linkage of infrastructure grids (roads, electricity, water, communications), unification of administrative systems, institutionalization of the social stratification, and the establishment of political relationships. About 55 percent of the land of the West Bank and 30 percent of the Gaza Strip is now controlled by the Jewish National Fund. However, on the negative side of the equation, the settlements, which are often completely self-contained, are tremendously expensive for Israel to establish and maintain. Their existence strains Israel's economy and increases reliance on the foreign aid. (3:89-91) These problems will aid the Israeli government in making concessions.

However, access to about a fifth of Israel's water supply lies in the occupied territory of the West Bank. (15:36) The Golan Heights is equally important, because Syria can no longer threaten the tributaries of the Upper Jordan. (17:9) Israel will want to ensure this access continues whatever the solution their new conciliatory policy permits in the occupied territories.

UNITED STATES POLICY AND ACTIONS

The United States welcomed Israel's new conciliatory policy by freeing America's long-delayed guarantees for \$10 billion of new borrowing to help Israel absorb the new immigrants from Russia and elsewhere. (11:33) Israeli and American representatives also negotiated a package of new military aid and technical cooperation with Israel. (10:47)

In addition, the world community reached a substantial international consensus on the major principles that must guide a complete settlement of the

Arab-Israeli conflict. "In essence, a settlement must meet the legitimate and reasonable aspirations of Palestinian nationalism and end Israeli occupation of Arab lands (now defined as territory occupied in the 1967 war), while simultaneously protecting the genuine security interest of Israel. The core of this consensus solution is "land for peace": Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories in the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights; a new partition of the ancient land of Palestine and the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza; a variety of security measures to preserve the new status quo; the end of the state of war between Israel and the Arab Middle East; and eventually, the normalization of all diplomatic and economic relations. The Palestinian state must be a limited one: sufficiently independent and sovereign to satisfy the nationalist goals of the mainstream moderates in the Palestinian movement, but sufficiently limited and constrained to ensure the security of its neighbors--both Israel and Jordan. The security measures must include severe limitations on the arms allowed to the new state, neutralization of its foreign policy, the presence of significant international peacekeeping forces to enforce the limitations and in other ways stabilize the situation, and international guarantees of the overall settlement." (2:412-413) As regards Jerusalem, the U.S. has not recognized Israel's declaration of Jerusalem as its capital. Our diplomats believe the question of Jerusalem should be handled as one of the last items on the settlement agenda. (23:33-35)

The world is waiting to see whether the Clinton administration maintains the hard line with Israel and continues the cover of allowing the Israelis, Palestinians and Arabs to make concessions to Washington vice each other.

WATER

BACKGROUND

"By the year 2000, water--not oil--will be the dominant resource issue of the Middle East...The prognosis for Egypt, Jordan, Israel, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Syria, and Iraq is especially alarming. If present consumption patterns continue, emerging water shortages combined with a deterioration in water quality, will lead to more desperate competition and conflict." (12:5) "The next Arab-Israeli war could well be sparked not by conflicting claims for land, but by water, according to international water experts." (27:1) King Hussein, acknowledging the politicized nature of the problem, "...believes that water is the only issue that could provoke a conflict between his kingdom and the Jewish state." (27:1,17) The Crown Prince of Jordan stated, "The water here is crucial. Unless by 2000 we have an agreement between states, then countries in the region will be forced into conflict. There's no two ways about it." (13:25) "Water...is the primary limiting factor governing human habitation." (28:1)

There are three primary causes of the water crises outside the fact that most regions of the Middle East are rain deficient: increased consumption (population growth, industrial expansion, agricultural expansion, and increased urbanization); inefficient maintenance and improper operation of water facilities; and poor cooperation among countries sharing common resources. While the United States and other Western nations annual population increase is at or below 1 percent, rates in the Middle East range from 1.6 percent in Israel to 3.8 percent in Syria. Most water infrastructures in the Middle East operate well below peak efficiency levels and budgetary constraints prohibit governments from adequately maintaining

them once they are established. (12:11-13;28:1) In a region with ethnic, religious, and political hostility, almost all water resources are shared between countries or people with different ethnic backgrounds. (12:13-14) Israel competes with Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan for water--consuming five times more water per capita than its neighbors and about 115 percent of its annual water supply. (12:6;13:24) In addition, internal to the country, the Jewish population competes with the Palestinians.

Israel's water comes from three main sources: the Sea of Galilee (Lake Tiberias) in the north, which acts as a natural reservoir and is fed by the River Jordan, and two aquifers, or underground supplies. (13:24) There are four main tributaries of the Jordan River--the Hesbani in Lebanon, the Banias in Syria, the Yarmuk shared by Syria and Jordan, and the Dan (shortest of the four and the only one wholly within the original boundaries of Israel). The complete system reportedly provides over 60 percent of Israel's water and almost 75 percent of Jordan's. (14:227) In the early 1960s, Israel began diverting the Jordan River's waters at the Sea of Galilee by building a giant pipeline, 3 meters in diameter, across country, down the coast, and into the Negev Desert--called the National Water Carrier. Israeli engineers also started piping saline water from the springs round the banks of the Sea of Galilee directly into the Jordan River to prevent it from contaminating Israel's water. (15:37) As a result, the little water that flows southward from the Sea of Galilee is nowadays too salty for Jordan's use. (16:10)

Similarly, Israeli pumps are overpumping the coastal aquifer, and water is seeping in (saline intrusion). (13:24;15:36) The mountain aquifer, which provides about a fifth of Israel's water, does not have a saline problem, but does lie in the occupied territory of the West Bank. Politics prevail, and Israeli authorities restrict Palestinian use of water so that water can flow

into Israel. Israel pumps more water from the mountain aquifer than what is added by rainfall. (15:36)

Israel recognizes the problems and has began taking steps to solve them.

ISRAELI POLICY AND ACTIONS

Israel views water problems as a question of survival (13:24). As a result, the government is addressing the causes of the water crises, but only to a limited extent. In fact, during the Air War College Class of 1993's visit to Israel in February of 1993, there seemed to be almost no emphasis on water as an issue. This appeared to be a result of the unusually large amount of rainfall in the Middle East over the last year.

"Water in the Middle East", a 1992 Israeli working paper, stressed Arabs could address the consumption issue by emulating Israeli measures: conservation, encouraging water-saving techniques, changing to crops requiring less water and enlarging underground storage reservoirs. (17:2) How successful Israel has been is somewhat of a mystery as most Israeli water statistics have been official secrets since 1983. (17:9) Supposedly, by 1987, Israel had managed to reduce the water used in agriculture by 15 percent over the previous two years. (12:6) Desert farmers are using "fossil water," a moderately salty water, for irrigating plants which can tolerate it. Mining companies are making use of the same water. Israel recycles waste water by treating a third of Israel's sewage distributing it on a dedicated pipe network to farmers and parks. There is some fear that greater use of treated sewage for irrigation may rob the aquifers of oxygen and cause metals present as salts in the rocks to enter the water--making the water toxic for many crops. (15:37-40)

On the other hand, "a recent report by the state comptroller general accused the government of 25 years of mismanagement of the nation's water,

pandering to the farmers' whims and subsidizing the national dream of greening the deserts." Authorities still water "drought resistant" plants in a national park every morning and night. (15:37-40) Therefore, Israel's Arab neighbors still might question how seriously Israel is in implementing conservation, encouraging water-saving techniques, and changing to crops requiring less water.

Prior to the excess of rain in the Spring of 1992, Israeli political attention had already turned to the country's long neglected water infrastructure. A \$100 million expansion of a wastewater recycling plant south of Tel Aviv was underway. The Agriculture Ministry was trying to obtain approval of a 10-year master plan that would include the construction of several large scale desalination plants. However, the Finance Ministry would not fund construction of the desalination plants until local water prices were raised to match the real cost of water. In 1991, the Israel Electric Corporation was permitted to desalinate water at its powerplants on the Mediterranean. (18:22)

"Water in the Middle East" also suggested regional cooperation through joint projects for desalination, the recycling of waste water, and making more efficient use of water for irrigation. Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Qatar discussed these and other water issues at a 1992 water committee meeting. (17:2) However, Israel has been a major obstacle in Jordan building a dam (Unity dam) on the Yarmuk river near the Sea of Galilee. Israel wants a guaranteed share of the water. Although shrouded in secrecy, Israel, Jordan, and Syria also began holding indirect talks about this dam. (16:11) Israel appears to favor the proposed Turkish "peace pipeline" that would take water through the Middle East from its Ceyhan and Seyhan rivers. While the original plan did not include Israel, Israeli and American

water consultants have been working with Turkey on the idea of a spur from Amman through the hilly Ghor country to the Jordan Valley. (16:11;17:13)

UNITED STATES POLICY AND ACTIONS

The United States has been working on water issues in the Middle East since the 1940s. In 1944, an American water engineer, Walter Lowdermilk, suggested using the Jordan and its tributaries to irrigate the Jordan Valley. He also proposed using the Litani in southern Lebanon to form an artificial lake in Galilee whose waters would be pumped southward to irrigate the Negev desert. To carry out these projects, he proposed a Jordan Valley Authority modeled on the Tennessee Valley Authority in the United States. James Hayes and Joseph Cotton, American water consultants to the Water Planning Authority of Israel, helped work out the details of Lowdermilk's plan. None considered the political questions caused by the birth of the state of Israel. (17:3-4)

In 1951, American water expert, Millsunger, proposed construction of a dam to turn the Yarmouk River valley and basin into a natural reservoir. This failed as discussed above. The 1953 Johnston Plan (during President Eisenhower's administration) refined the above plans and unsuccessfully proposed sharing the Jordan River's waters among Jordan (46.7 percent), Israel (38.5 percent), Syria (11.7 percent), and Lebanon (3.1 percent). (17:2-7)

A 1987 study by U.S. government and private sector representatives recommended the U.S. government concentrate on technical issues for discernible, near-term gains to temper or avert the looming water crisis. (Diplomacy was recognized as essential, but "long-term, laborious, and usually tortuous.") Four policy areas were singled out: advanced water technologies; resource management and conservation strategies; coordination among U.S. agencies dealing with water resources; and long-range research and planning. (12:2) Looking at advance technologies, a completely new approach was

developed by a team of U.S. hydrologists and British researchers. The concept is based on the identification of fractured rock aquifers occurring within megawatersheds. "In the Middle East where, in general, the main supplies are obtained from ground water, it would seem particularly appropriate to define basins by subterranean geological factors. A major fault system cuts through the countries of the Lebanon, extending from the Red Sea, through the Dead Sea and Lake Tiberias, to Lebanon and Turkey. The potential for supplies represented by such a large, natural water collection and transmission system could be at least as significant as the combined surface water resources of the region." In other areas where this concept has been applied, some 85 percent of wells drilled have found water. (14:227-230)

Meanwhile, the U.S. is concentrating on two possible solutions--the "Peace Pipeline" as discussed above and the Middle East conference specifically formed to discuss water resources. (13:25) The United States chairs the negotiations on water in the current Middle East Peace Talks. Thus far, the talks have been limited--no negotiating as yet on solutions. (29)

CONCLUSION

The stateless nation of Palestine, the occupied lands within Israel, and water are three of the major sources of conflict and change within Israel and the Mideast. Population growth is another source of conflict and change within Israel which affects all the others. Religious/ethnic conflict is incorporated into the Palestinian issue. Another large source of conflict is that of military imbalance. Time and space prevent the discussion of these additional issues. Israelis, Palestinians, and Arabs each have their own views, but all recognize the a variety of issues need to be resolved before peace can come to the Middle East. Issues include:

- "- Specific, fixed, agreed-upon boundaries for Israel and for the Arab states in the region
- The status of Jerusalem
- The political and civil status of Jewish Israelis currently living within the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip
- The political and civil status of Palestinians currently living within Israel
- The political and civil status of Palestinians and Jews currently living outside the borders of the British Mandate of Palestine
- Compensation for Palestinians and Israelis who were forced to leave their homes and property as a direct result of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict
- The allocation of resources such as water among the states in the region

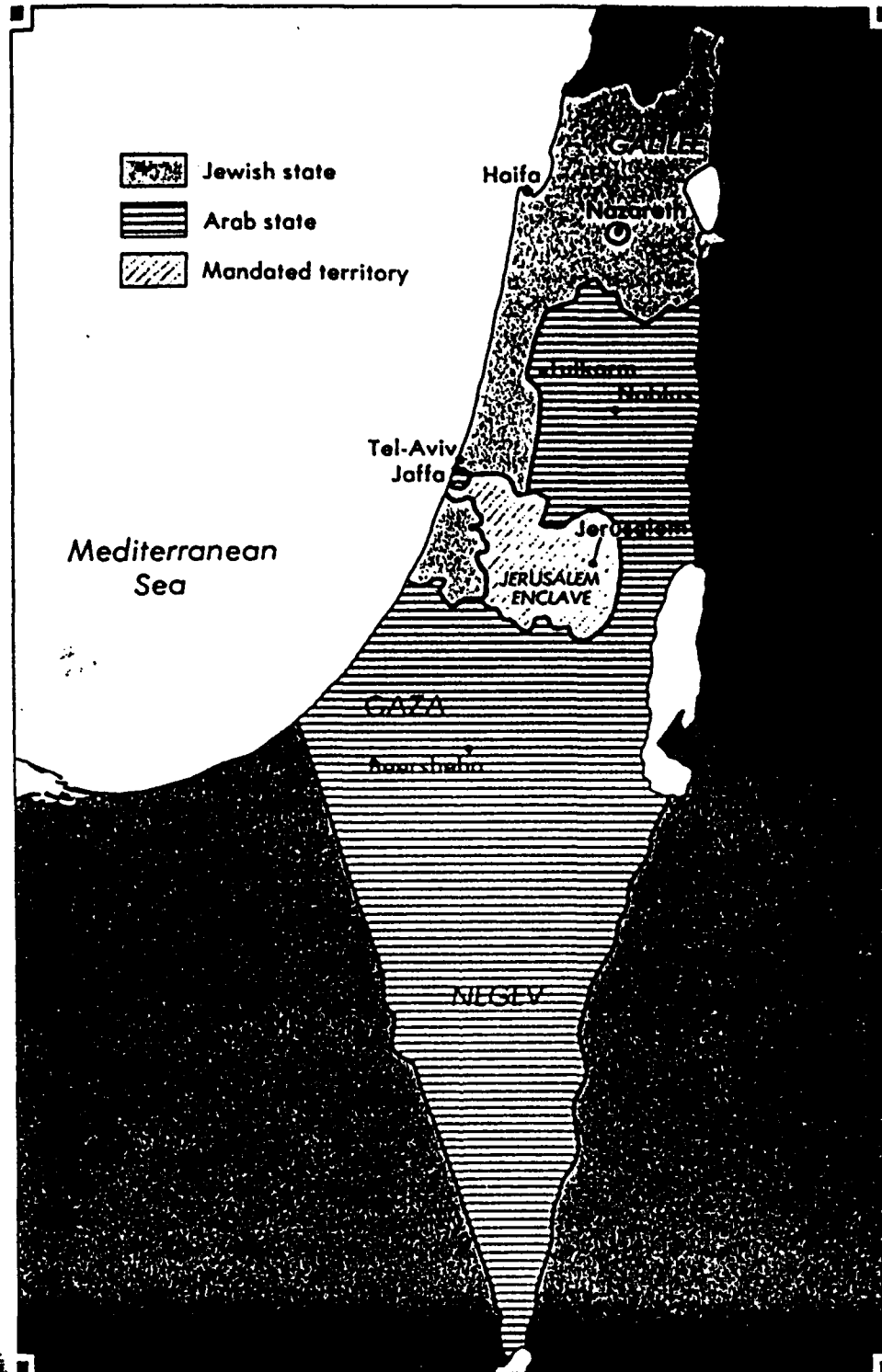
- The economic viability of Israel, Palestine, and the other states in the region
- The assurance of mutual security for all states and all peoples in the region
- The role of the international community in supervising a negotiated settlement." (3:169)

The United States should continue to support the peace process--taking a tough stance with both the Israelis and Palestinians. The U.S. cannot afford to have a "double standard," but the large Jewish lobby within the U.S. makes any sanctions against Israel difficult for U.S. politicians to handle. Skilled diplomacy on the part of U.S. negotiators and support for compromises by all actors in the region is the only answer to long-term stability.

The United States has a major and tough role to play with friends on both sides of the issue. The U.S. government must stay involved to allow both sides to make concessions to it that they might not make to each other. The United States must become more of an honest broker to increase its effectiveness at peace negotiations. Specifically, although U.S. aid to Israel and Egypt is nearly equal monetarily, the U.S. directs how Egypt can spend the aid given while giving Israel a blank check to use as it will. (23:57-58) The U.S. should manage Israeli aid as well, and keep Israeli aid on a par with Egyptian aid. Both may have to be reduced to fund President Clinton's domestic program and to provide aid to a new Palestinian state when formed. When talks stall or breakdown in the peace process, the United States should have and use the leverage necessary to restart them.

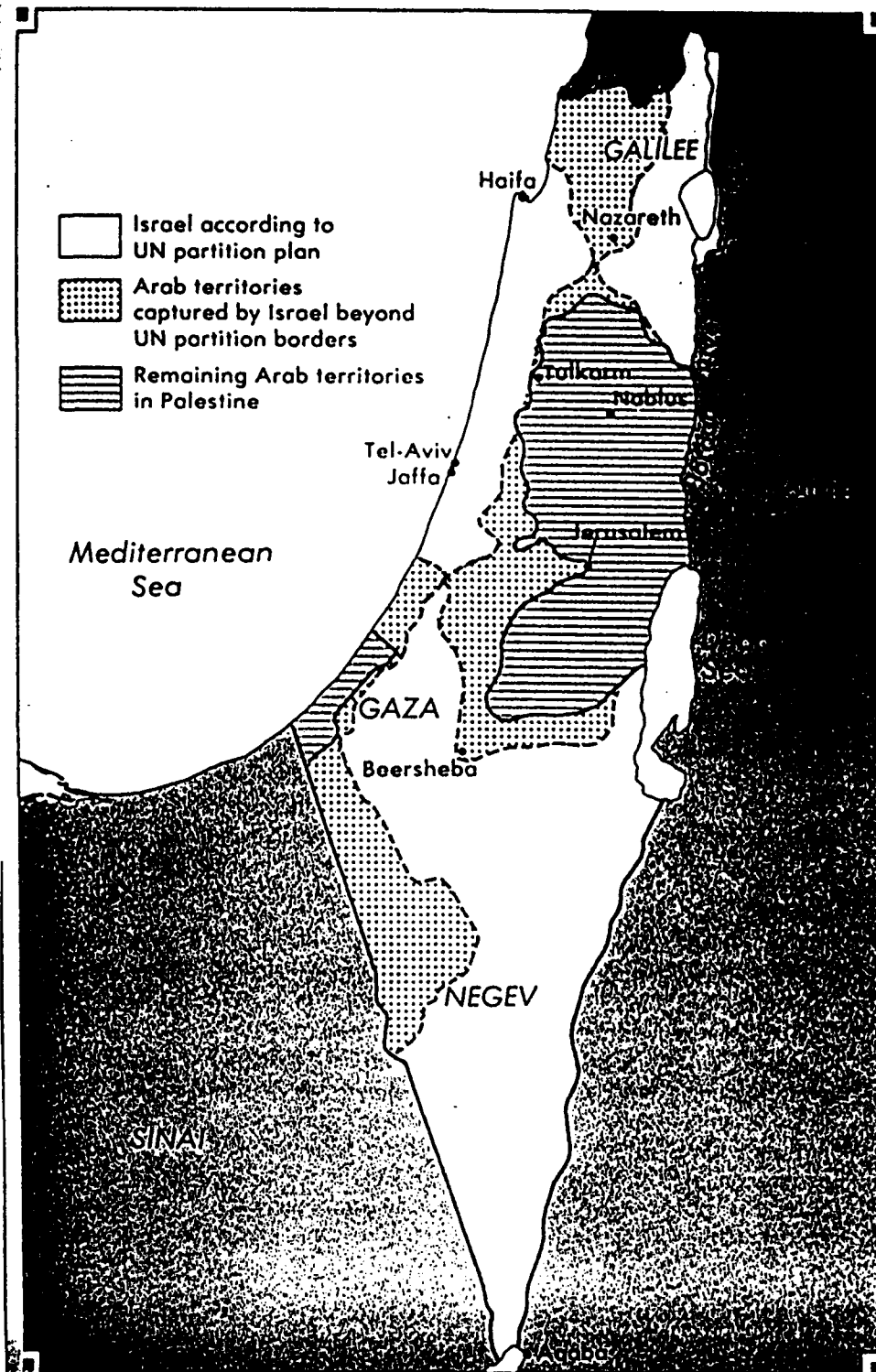
The road to peace in the Middle East is a long one with no easy solutions. Perseverance is key.

BRITISH 1937 PROPOSAL FOR PARTITIONING PALESTINE



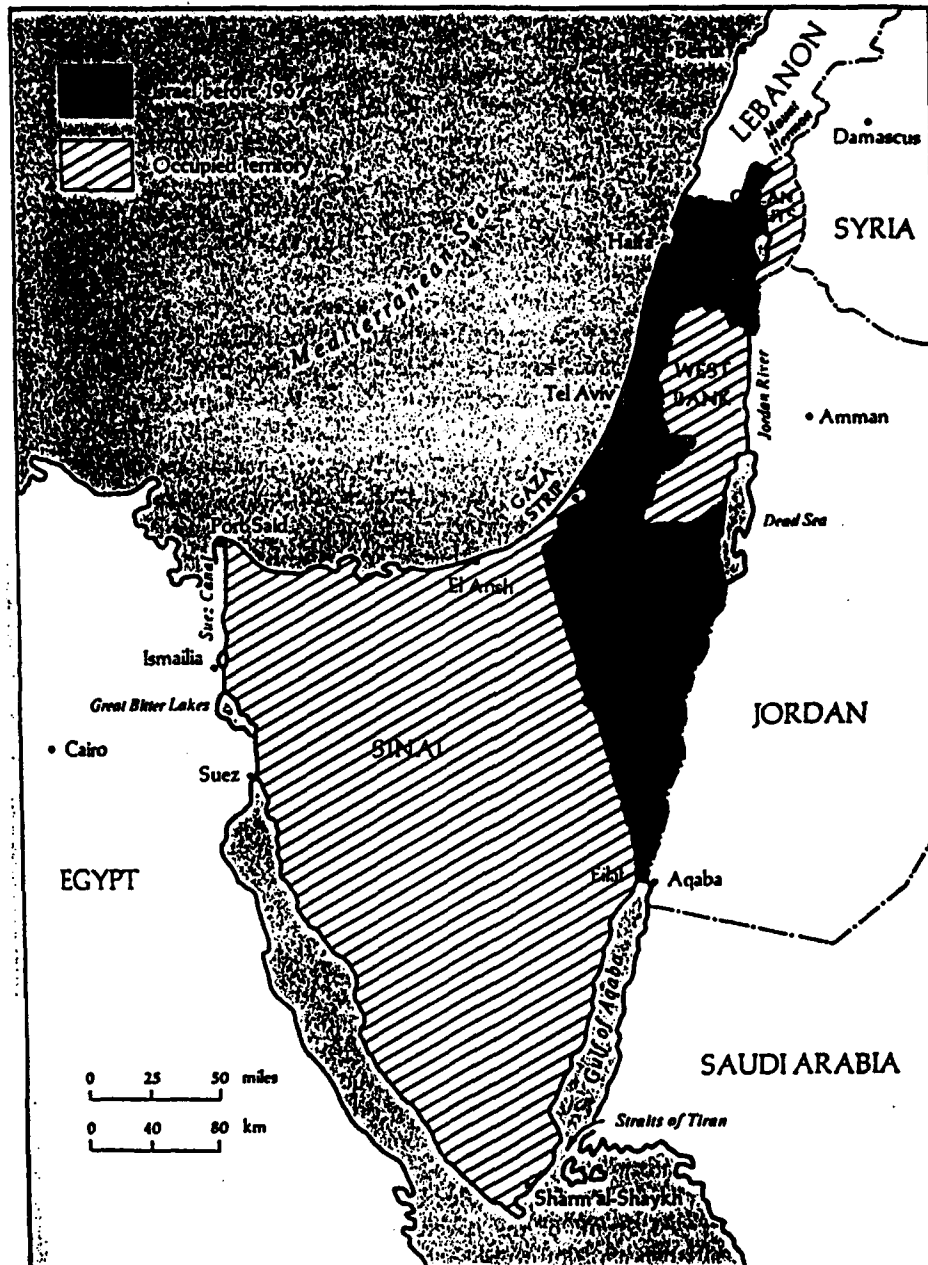
The Peel Commission plan, 1937. Source: Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), p. 19. Copyright © 1987 by Simha Flapan. Reprinted by permission of Pantheon Books, a division of Random House, Inc., and by permission of the heirs of Simha Flapan.

TERRITORIES CAPTURED BY ISRAEL IN 1948 AND 1949



Territories captured by Israel in 1948 and 1949. Source: Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), p. 51. Copyright © 1987 by Simha Flapan. Reprinted by permission of Pantheon Books, a division of Random House, Inc., and by permission of the heirs of Simha Flapan.

ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES



Israel and the Occupied Territories, 1967. Source: Arthur Goldschmidt, Jr., *A Concise History of the Middle East*, 3d ed., revised and updated (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), p. 307. Original cartography by Don Kunze.

WHERE THE PALESTINIANS LIVE
(1991 POPULATION FIGURES)

Israel and the Occupied Territories

Israel.	.650,000
West Bank	.1,000,000
East Jerusalem.	.125,000
Gaza Strip.	.700,000

Arab Countries

Jordan.	.1,500,000
Lebanon	.325,000
Syria	.300,000
Kuwait.	.150,000
(400,000 before gulf war)	
Saudi Arabia.	50,000
(150,000 before gulf war)	
Other Arab countries.	.200,000

Other

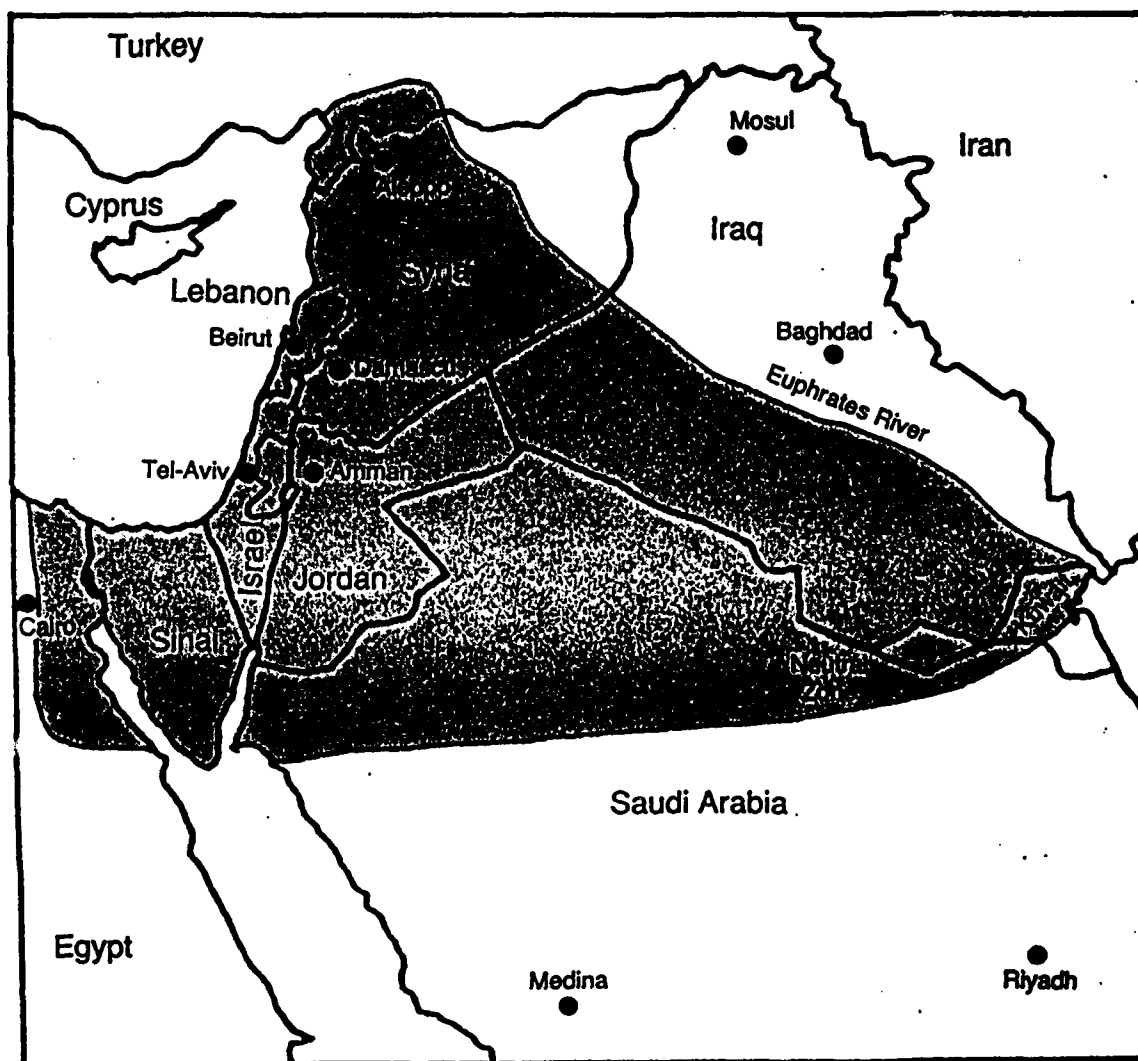
United States	.150,000
Other non-Arab countries.	.200,000

Source: Compiled from estimates and projections from the
Palestine Affairs Center and the United States Committee for
Refugees.

THE LAND OF ISRAEL ACCORDING TO GENESIS XV:18

The Growth of 'Eretz Israel': Fulfillment of the Zionist Mission

'Eretz Israel' According to Genesis xv, 18.



Shown with 1967 ceasefire boundaries.

Note: "Eretz Israel" means land of Israel.

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