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## 6 Intervention in Israel-Palestine

### The troubled road to partitioning

In November 2014 my 11-year-old son Amir came to his public school in Jerusalem to find the grade one class burned down and the words "There is no coexistence with Cancer" and "Death to Arabs" written in Hebrew over the walls of the school. The bilingual Arab-Hebrew public school is one of the few bastions of coexistence in Jerusalem where parents send their kids to receive a bilingual and more tolerant education. Although the attack shocked the kids in the school, it came as no surprise to Jerusalem residents, who had become accustomed to monthly and at times weekly attacks against civilians, stabbings by Palestinian or Israeli youths, demonstrations, arrests, house demolishing and the removal of citizenship from Palestinian families linked to terrorist attacks. The recent escalation of violence followed the devastating Gaza war, which angered and alienated Palestinians including those living within Israel, shaking the already fragile coexistence between various groups living in the country.

As the recent surge of violence spirals, the question remains whether the international community is contributing to the escalation or the transformation of the ongoing conflict. Although the blame for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is generally attributed to one of the groups in the conflict or to unsolvable relations between Israelis and Palestinians, some of the external intervention, regardless of intention, has tended to fuel rather than contribute to the resolution of the conflict. Due to the length and the perceived strategic importance of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, external intervention has been plentiful, but far from ideal. Indeed, external process in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has suffered for the most part from divided international process and non-constructive group identity strategies. From the beginning of the conflict, the international intervention process has been divided, with different countries supporting opposing parties. As was discussed in Chapter 2, divided-partisan intervention tends to harden group divisions and fuel a conflict and this has been grossly evident in the Palestinian-Israeli case. Peace agreements have been discussed and not signed or signed and not implemented.

Spanning more than 60 years of engagement, the majority of external interveners in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have been politically, militarily, economically and diplomatically supporting different groups in the conflict. American policy makers have traditionally supported Israel, while the USSR

(later Russia) and regional actors have for the most part supported the Palestinians. Key European powers, depending on the governments, wavered between supporting Palestinians and supporting Israel but, until recently, had a relatively negligible role and political influence. A minor shift from a divided-partisan to a more united external intervention has begun to take place in the past few years. The creation of the Quartet, the Arab Peace Initiative and greater engagement of the EU have all contributed to a more united intervention. However, as will be discussed in this chapter, this shift has been more along the lines of establishing common principles than in practice.

Key international group strategies have also been unconstructive, contributing to building walls rather than bridges between the groups in conflict. Conflicting group identities have been impacted by external strategies stemming from the interpretation of the "intractable" nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The focus on partitioning has reflected an accepted external interpretation of an unsolvable conflict between two ethno-religious groups fighting over a single territory. This is based on an interpretation of two solid, one-dimensional ethnic group identities that are cohesive, unchanging, and presumed to be lacking in the capacity to coexist. Thus, the emphasis has been on separation, dividing territory and changing borders in line with ethno-religious groups, contributing to building walls rather than bridges between the groups.

Although the length and nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has indeed created deep divisions between opposing groups, the conflict is far more complex. Dividing lines but also coexistence may be found in many spheres. It is questionable whether the nexus between presumed homogeneous group identity and territory should also be readily accepted. For one, it does not reflect the present reality, since more than one million Palestinians (referred to by Israel as Israeli Arabs) live on the territory of Israel and over 300,000 Israelis live within Palestinian territory inside the West Bank. In effect, as evident in the surge of violence in Jerusalem, a two-state solution, which creates two exclusive, ethno-religious states, would be unlikely to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Indeed, if the "solution" also included ethnic cleansing and border adjustments along ethno-religious lines, it may very well serve to heighten divisions and intensify the conflict, as was the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This chapter will examine the external intervention process and conflict resolution identity strategies in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Following a brief historical overview, the chapter will reflect on external process and identity strategies during Oslo, Camp David 2000 and the more recent post-Annapolis process. The chapter will analyze the impact of the type of external process on the groups in conflict. Second, it will examine the recent principled shift towards more united international intervention. Lastly, it will analyze the impact of external strategies focused on partitioning along ethnic and religious lines. As in the other case studies, the question posed is whether the international community is contributing to a transformation or a solidification of the divisions between the conflicting groups.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the longest and most written about conflicts. This chapter cannot summarize the whole conflict but will rather focus on more recent key external interventions in the conflict. Subsequent to a brief background, the focus will be on external intervention during Oslo, Camp David II, and the more recent external attempts to bring peace up until the present time. Recent key events will be highlighted to shed light on the international process and identity strategies and their impact on groups in conflict.

### **Historical background**

Perpetuated by nationalists and extremists over the many years of conflict, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict contains one of the deepest divisions between ethno-religious groups. The divisions have been real as well as construed by those fearing annihilation, conversion, assimilation and domination. Ethnic and religious separation had been the foundation of policies promoted by much of the Jewish leadership fleeing from European persecution and hoping to create a safe Jewish homeland. Although arguably not the case before the massive European Jewish settlement in the 1930s and 1940s, one can say that since the large influx, Palestinians and Jews living on the territory of Palestine have been in a state of perpetual conflict, which has led to little space for the development of coexistence or non-conflicting group identities. The separation, segregation and uprooting of Palestinians not only destroyed the lives of the native Palestinians but also deepened the lack of trust and clashed with the potential for coexistence.

Zionism emerged from the desire of Jews to create a homeland in Palestine and became a political and humanitarian necessity as a consequence of the persecution of Jews in Europe and Russia. The settlement of Palestine by European Jews was conceived and presented as something that could potentially benefit the barren land and the Arab natives. The Father of Zionism Theodor Herzl wrote in 1899 that Zionism would not pose a threat of displacement for the Arab inhabitants of Palestine but "rather the arrival of the industrious, talented, well-funded Jews would materially benefit them" (Morris 2001, 21). However, as vividly illustrated by the Zionist slogan: "land without people for a people without land," which brought tens of thousands migrating Jews into Palestine, the policy treated the local, mostly Palestinian, inhabitants as invisible. Unsurprisingly, the massive migration was perceived as very threatening by the native population, which feared displacement.

The displacement of the Palestinian population using economic and other incentives was indeed promoted from the beginning of the Jewish settlement. The Jewish National Fund was established to acquire property from the Arabs and give or sell it to the Jews. Funds were allocated for the purchase of lands that became the key to settlement as large lands were bought, displacing the economically disadvantaged Palestinian tenants (Morris 2001). Absent or profiteering Arab landowners readily sold properties for a good price, not concerned with the fate of the dispossessed tenants (Segev 2000). The fear of territorial displacement and dispossession was the key motivation in Palestinian antagonism

towards the arriving Jews (Khalidi 1997). Many of the local Palestinian elite became tarnished politically, since on the one hand they were publicly outraged by the sale of land, while, on the other, privately directly profiteering from the sales (Segev 2000).

The establishment of a "Jewish" homeland in Palestine was not achievable without the support and help of major powers. The Zionist movement turned to Britain as the protector of Jewish self-determination. Britain readily agreed, first, in order to gain favor with American and Russian Jews in an effort to persuade their countries to join in World War I and, second, to counter French claims to Palestine (Morris 2001). The 1917 Balfour declaration gave official support to the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Subsequently, in 1922, the League of Nations included it in the mandate it gave to British rule over Palestine. As noted by Tom Segev, the 30 year British rule of Palestine achieved little, but the arriving desperate and industrious Jews managed to carve out a state (Segev 2000).

The Peel commission was sent by Britain to propose changes to the British Mandate following the outbreak of violence, notably the 1936–39 Arab revolt in Palestine. Headed by Lord William Peel, it was sent to investigate the cause of the violence and judge Arab and Jewish grievances. The commission found the conflict to be "irrepressible" and "insoluble" and recommended partitioning the land between Jews and Arabs (Morris 2001). The commission also recommended an exchange of populations between the future states numbering in hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. According to the commission, the exchange of populations would be carried out by an agreement with compensation but "if the Arabs objected, the transfer should be implemented by the British 'in the last resort' by compulsion" (Morris 2001, 138).

Partitioning was perceived as the simplest of the options, since for the most part it did not involve untangling linked communities. The Yishuv, or the Jewish settlers who arrived in the late thirties, built separate communities, which had no intention of mixing with the local Arab population. Language, religion, culture, economics, violence and racism all served to divide the Arab and Jewish populations. The Haganah protected the Yishuv's settlements while the Irgun and Etzel, more radical groups, attacked Arab settlements (Laqueur 2003). Lack of trust in other communities deepened Jewish inclinations to remain isolated and independent from other groups. For the Palestinians, the partitioning option was unacceptable. The Arab leadership in Palestine perceived no justice in being displaced from land they saw as theirs. As exclaimed by local Arab leader Abd al Hadi, "We will fight. We will struggle against the partition of the country and against Jewish immigration. There is no compromise" (Morris 2001, 138).

Although the Jewish leadership was willing to accept partitioning, it was not perceived as a permanent solution for peace but rather as an opportunity for strengthening the Zionist hold on Palestine. Hence, the Jewish leadership was eager to accept a state regardless of the size, with the intention of expansion. According to David Ben Gurion, a primary founder and first Prime Minister of Israel,

a Jewish state in part of [Palestine] is not an end, but a beginning... Our possession is important not only for itself... through this we increase our power, and every increase in power facilitates getting hold of the country in its entirety. Establishing a [small] state... will serve as a very potent lever in our historical efforts to redeem the whole country.

(Morris 2001, 138)

The importance of the establishment of a Jewish state was perceived and sold as an existential necessity. Ben Gurion noted that "Jews could not rely on the benevolence of nations but had to forge their own national destiny" (Gurion 1945, 173).

European and American guilt over their own anti-Semitism and failure to prevent Jewish genocide during World War II helped to promote partitioning and generate a partisan intervention at the expense of the Palestinians. Although the British came to view the Zionist homeland idea as a mistake, they were unable or unwilling to reverse it. Following the Holocaust, the British found themselves incapable of stopping the waves of settlement and unwilling to "have a war with Jews in order to give Palestine to the Arabs" (Segev 2000). International and particularly European racism, anti-Semitism and most profoundly the Nazi rule made the creation of Israel be seen as a necessity. The murder of close to 6 million unarmed Jewish men, women and children in extermination camps across Europe was reflective of one of humanity's worst moments in history. Even today, few Jewish families are not directly affected by the loss, which wiped out two-thirds of European Jews, including a million children. Consequently, standing up against the uprooting of hundreds of thousands of native Palestinians was not considered an urgent international priority in the 1940s. The Palestinians attempted to stop the Jewish settlement and their displacement with official protest, terrorism and violence. The motivation of the survivors who fled the Holocaust helped to create a small but powerful army. It was an army that the international community was unwilling to fight, and Arab countries were unmotivated and too disorganized to defeat (Morris 2001).

Unable to control the violence, the British threw the hot potato into the hands of the UN, which also opted for territorial partitioning. The UN partition plan of 1947 formulated the establishment of a Jewish State in about 55 percent of Mandatory Palestine, and an Arab state in about 44.9 percent, with Jerusalem under international control (UN Res 181 1947). The "Jewish state" included more than half a million Arabs, making the population almost equal to the number of Jews living within the proposed boundaries. Although the UN plan enacted minority rights, it did not outline any enforcement mechanisms. Britain refused to enforce the partition plan, creating a power vacuum following the end of the British Mandate. The subsequent declaration of Israeli independence sparked further violence and a regional war that opened up opportunities for a solution to Israel's demographic problem. The newly established army managed to defeat a combined invasion by Egypt and Syria, together with forces from Iraq. 1948 infamously became a year of celebration for the Jews, having established their

own state, and a Nakba or national tragedy for the Palestinians, with the loss of their struggle, Arab defeat by the Jewish army and subsequent massive displacement.

Since, within the new “Jewish state,” the population of Arabs almost equaled the population of Jews, some of the more nationalistic Jewish leadership felt that expulsions were both necessary and, under the cover of war, quite possible. Within the span of a few months “more than 350 villages would vanish, [Palestinian] urban life would all but evaporate – war and exodus reducing Jaffa’s population from 70,000–80,000 Palestinians to a remnant of 3,000–4,000 – and 500,000 to one million Palestinians would become refugees” (Kimmerling and Migdal 1993, 127). As noted by Kimmerling and Migdal, “the experience of exile – of a tragedy perceived as both personal and national would overshadow all else for this generation” (Kimmerling and Migdal 1993, 128). As noted by Sari Nusseibeh, the surprised and outgunned Palestinians did not stand much of a chance.

There were hundreds of villages and cities to defend, and nearly no one to do so. Even more fatally they had no clear understanding of what the fighting was all about. In earlier rebellions against the Turks, territory was never the bone of contention. The Turks didn’t take over a village in order to drive out its people and replace them with settlers. With the Zionists, the struggle was for every inch of soil.

(Nusseibeh 2007, 45)

The subsequent dispersion of refugees and the experience of exile would become a defining element of group identity for the Palestinians. The IC condemned the expulsions of Palestinians and demanded a full return of all those displaced, and Palestine became a humanitarian issue, with the UN launching the largest and longest refugee aid project to Palestinians scattered throughout the Middle East.

Palestinians, however, were not the only refugees as the consequence of the Israeli–Palestinian and Israeli–Arab conflict. Beginning in 1948, between 800,000 and 1,000,000 Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews either fled from their homes or were expelled from Middle East and North African countries, namely Iraq, Iran, Morocco and Egypt (Shulewitz 2000). Most were forced to flee quickly, leaving behind belongings and property. In some cases, centuries of coexistence came to an abrupt end. Although much attention has been given to the plight of the Palestinians, many of whom retain refugee status, the Jewish refugees and their entitlements to reclaim their lost or stolen property have essentially been ignored. Part of the reason is that, unlike the Palestinians who were unable to become absorbed into wherever they settled in the Middle East, the Jews were readily and well absorbed into the state of Israel.

The Six-Day War in the 1960s only served to escalate the regional conflict. In 1967, subsequent to escalation of border disputes between Egypt and Israel and Syria and Israel, Egyptian closure of the Snapir and Tiran Straits to Israeli

shipping and the massing of Egyptian troops along Israel border prompted a surprise Israeli air attack. Israel’s well-planned and orchestrated attack destroyed virtually all of the Egyptian Air Force and, in the subsequent days, Israeli forces had taken control of the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria. Israel’s complete military victory during the Six-Day War was not only a humiliating defeat of the neighboring states of Egypt, Jordan and Syria, it resulted in further grief for the Palestinians. Although the Sinai Peninsula was returned, the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights remain occupied territory and are the main source of the current disputes. For Israel, taking over the heavily populated territory of the West Bank and Gaza brought in new populations “who were clearly not part of any conceivable notion of a nation and thus the cause of concern” (Migdal 2004).

Following the Six-Day War, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 242, which emphasized implementation of the “land for peace” formula and withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from occupied territories in return for peace with the Arab states. The UN resolution paved the way for the proposal of a two-state solution to the conflict. The current two-state solution is based on a formula, according to which Israel would relinquish the territory it had occupied during the Six-Day war, and Gaza, the West Bank and parts of Jerusalem would become included within the new borders of a future Palestinian state.

The occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem radically altered regional politics up to today. With the second humiliating Arab defeat by Israel, the Palestinians felt they had to turn to their own resources rather than hope for assistance from their Arab neighbors. As noted by Kimmerling and Migdal,

With the 1967 defeat, Palestinians felt the pan-Arab foundations of their hopes disintegrated. In the war’s wake, many turned to the feday [Palestinian infiltrating guerilla] – especially represented by Fatah and its record of direct, violent action against Israel – as their only chance for salvation.

(Kimmerling, 222)

Led by Yasser Arafat, the Fatah became the most organized group within the nationalist Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the leader of violent resistance. Arafat launched terrorist attacks against Israel, operating from Lebanon and Tunisia.

The 1967 conflict became a source of disagreements between the major international actors, as the US became a stronger ally of Israel, while Russia took sides with the Arab states. As noted by Harold Saunders of the US National Security Council,

For twenty years Israel has sought a special relationship – even a private security guarantee – with us. We have steadfastly refused in order to preserve our other interests in the Middle East. We argued that our policy

worked to Israel's best interest too. Now we are committed to side with Israel and, in opening the Straits of Tiran, even to wage war on the Arabs. In short, we have chosen sides – not with the constructive Arabs and Israel but with Israel alone against all the Arabs.

(Saunders 1967)

Although divisions among external interveners over Israel-Palestine always existed, the Cold War deepened the external political split into pro-Israel versus pro-Palestinian camps. During the Cold War, Americans viewed Israel as an essential barrier to Soviet inroads in the Middle East. On the other hand, Palestinians were regarded by the Americans as the tools of the Soviets (Christison 2004). Palestinian leadership during the height of the Cold War fitted nicely within the USSR camp and adapted ideological framing and language to garnish support. Although officially the Soviets stood against the use of terror, in practice they helped to arm and train the PLO (Golan 1986). Beyond clandestine military aid, in 1974 PM Leonid Breznev provided an official invitation to Yasser Arafat and, in 1978, gave USSR's official recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

Despite US protests and Arafat's terrorist activities, Arafat was able to gain international recognition. Yasser Arafat's 1974 famous "freedom fighter gun and olive branch" speech played a key role in the UN's recognition of the PLO as a legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, so that it received observer status within the UN. In 1988, when Arafat was once again invited to speak at the UN, Americans who were the host to the event denied him a visa. The UN response was to move (at exorbitant costs) the entire General Assembly from New York to Switzerland. Not wishing to be left out, the US then trumped the UN with the announcement of its official recognition of the PLO and their own bilateral diplomatic initiative (Bennis 1997).

The end of the Cold War and disintegration of the USSR changed the dynamics of the region, making the Americans the primary interveners in the conflict. The new reality had a dramatic impact on the PLO. As noted by Andoni,

Indeed, it was the US primacy and the increasing weakness of the Soviet Union, which had done nothing to challenge the US conduct of the Gulf crisis ... [that] confirmed what was already clear, [that] the PLO strategy based on the Cold War and Moscow's role as a counterweight to the US was irrevocably shattered.

(Andoni 1991, 3)

With the collapse of Soviet Union, the PLO was left without superpower support, changing the dynamics and the power relations and opening some doors towards a peace process. However, the divided international intervention process did not end. The following discussion will begin to explore the external intervention process in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, beginning with Oslo.

### *The divided international intervention process in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict*

In recently disclosed 2009 secret discussions between US Senator George Mitchell and Saeb Erekat, the Palestinian top negotiator, Erekat begged Mitchell not to prevent Palestinians from going to international bodies to address their concerns.

They [Israel] won't refrain from doing the illegal things that they do. If they refrain OK but they won't. This is my only weapon. We have actions by settlers, attacks, provocations, Al Aqsa, home demolitions, families thrown out of their homes. Either we retaliate in a civilized manner or through violence. Which one should we choose?

(Papers(4899) 2009)

asked Erekat. Mitchell responded that going to international bodies such as the UN would amount to negotiating in bad faith. "I would agree with Israel if you were negotiating and bringing actions against them it would be in bad faith" said Mitchell, requesting that the Palestinians refrained from approaching international bodies (Papers (4899) 2009). Regardless of intention, the repercussions of the type of external intervention, in this case the US preventing Palestinians from pursuing a legal means of protest, have the effect of weakening the moderate Palestinian leadership and a long-term impact on the conflicting groups.

Divisions between the main interveners – the US, UN, Middle Eastern states and the EU – have defined the international intervention process in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Unlike in BiH and Northern Ireland, where the external players eventually agreed on the type of intervention process and moved towards united-partisan and united-neutral intervention respectively, reaching a consensus on the type of intervention in the Israeli-Palestinian case has been arduous. The formations of the Quartet, the Arab Peace Initiative and deeper engagement of the EU have all contributed towards a greater attempt at a more united intervention; however, the shift has been more towards principles than practice. Although a consensus has been reached on the necessity of a two-state solution, the IC has thus far found it impossible to navigate a united process to get there. Differing interests and interpretations of the conflict have meant that key external players have been intervening in a partisan fashion, supporting opposing sides. The Americans, who have been the most active interveners, have remained partial to Israel, shielding the Israeli government from international condemnation. On the other hand, Russia, the majority of the UN General Assembly and regional players have tended to support the Palestinians. The EU, having until recently been left out of the peace process, has struggled to manage a single united policy, but has been progressively making slow strides towards tougher sanctions against Israel.

Perceptions of external intervention in the Israeli-Palestinian case have reflected the polarization of the different narratives. Both Israelis and Palestinians

tend to perceive most external interventions as partisan against them. This inclination is illustrated in the media, in which Palestinians and Israelis viewing an identical news report both believe the report is biased against them (Goldstein and Pevehouse 1997). This sentiment is linked to Israelis and Palestinians both perceiving themselves as victims in the conflict. Thus the perception that the IC is biased against their group is common among Palestinians and Israelis. For example, in a December 2009 survey, 69 percent of Palestinians said Obama's policy was biased in favor of Israel.<sup>1</sup> Among the Israelis, only 12 percent thought his policies were more supportive of Israel while 40 percent believed they were more biased towards the Palestinians.<sup>2</sup>

The perception of victimhood among Israelis is perpetuated by what some have called a siege mentality common among the Israeli public. As described by Daniel Bar-Tal and Dikla Antebi, siege mentality is a belief by group members that "the rest of the world has highly negative behavioral intentions towards them" (Bar-Tal and Antebi 1992, 49). Bar-Tal and Antebi note that the siege mentality has several effects, including that the threatened group develops a negative attitude towards the other groups and the rest of the world and, in view of a perceived threat, uses all means to protect itself (Bar-Tal and Antebi, 1992). Although particularly strong among the Israelis due to their regional isolation and the history of persecution and the Holocaust, a siege mentality is common among many groups in the midst of violent conflict and has been used to justify sentiments of victimhood and rationalize aggressive policies and violence.

The debate on the type of intervention has resulted in a divided intervention that, I would argue, has been a hindrance to a resolution. As noted in Chapter 2, partisan and neutral interventions can be differentiated on the basis of principles, practice and perceptions. Many of the recent key principles concerning international intervention in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict may be construed as neutral, arising from a more inclusive and united formal process. For instance, the Quartet Roadmap for Peace, and the Arab Peace Initiative, launched in parallel in 2002, were an attempt towards a more united intervention. The Quartet roadmap outlined phased steps towards a two state solution, while the Arab Peace Initiative offered normalizing relations between the Arab region and Israel, in exchange for a withdrawal from the Occupied Territories and a "just settlement" of the Palestinian refugee crisis. Most of the official statements from US and European administrations as well as from many Arab countries reflected a principled consensus on strategies calling for a two-state solution, comprehensive peace settlement, complete settlement freeze and an end to terrorism. However, in practice, when it came to monitoring or implementation of the various agreements, or placing blame for lack of progress, different external players supported their own brethren's interests and their inability or unwillingness to implement aspects of the agreements.

The subsequent section will analyze the external process and its success or failures during Oslo, Camp David II, and more recent international attempts to mediate an end to the conflict. To what extent was the international process united or divided, and what effect did it have on the peace process and groups in

the conflict? What factors accounted for a shift between neutral and partisan intervention? Numerous academic accounts have described the Norwegian non-partisan role in the 1991 unofficial discussions that led to the signing of the Oslo Agreements (Rabinovich 2004; Waage 2004). The talks gradually became official and acceptable to other key international players including the US. The following section will revisit the Oslo process to examine its nature and consequences. Did the external processes include elements that promoted a positive shift in group identities or did the international intervention process harden group identities?

The Oslo Accords arose out of unofficial or track two secret discussions among Israeli and Palestinian academics and middle-range politicians, orchestrated by the Norwegians in the early nineties. Arguably the largest step forward in the peace efforts between the Israelis and Palestinians, the Oslo process offered a small window into the potential of a neutral external intervention in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Unofficial diplomatic intervention by Norway has generally been credited with bringing the Palestinians and Israelis closer to reconciliation, with the initial – symbolic – step of mutual recognition. The Norwegian secret channel was nestled between the unsuccessful American efforts at Madrid, which commenced in December 1991, and the failed 2000 US-led Camp David summit. There are two things that can be highlighted from the Oslo process: first, the role of Norway versus the Americans; and, second, the engagement of the PLO, pulled in by Norway, which until then had been shunned by the Americans and the Israelis.

The Norwegian channel provided an alternative to the American-led process that, during the 1990s, was essentially the only game in town and was perceived by the Palestinians as biased towards the Israelis. Subsequent to US victory in the Gulf War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Americans became the unchallenged power in the Middle East. Strategically aligned with Israel, the US mediators were accused by the Palestinians of adapting positions from the Israeli delegations and imposing them on the Palestinians. In one American proposal, which was to have a combined Israeli-Palestinian position, Arafat claimed "that 65 percent of the points in the US synthesis had been taken from an Israeli paper, 28 percent from an earlier American paper, and only 7 percent from the Palestinian delegation's paper" (Sanders 1999). As noted by Arafat in 1993, "the PLO was having to negotiate against not one but two delegations, the Americans with Israeli accents and the Israelis with American accents" (Sanders 1999, 5).

The Norwegians had good ties with both the Israeli and the Palestinian leadership and, being a minor power with no major interest in the region, were perceived as being potentially far more neutral. The PLO was keen to stall the American-led mediation effort, from which it was left out, in order to be included in the Norwegian channel. Reportedly, "Palestinian strategy was to block progress in Washington in order to prompt [Israeli PM Yitzhak] Rabin to deal directly with Arafat" (Makovsky 1995, 30). The Norwegian mediation team used their good relations to allow the secret channel to help build dialogue and trust between parties that had previously not spoken to each other. These were

the first meetings between Israeli officials and the PLO since they had been banned by Israel and the US. Due to the official ban on Israeli contacts with the PLO, the talks were held in secret, but were gradually accepted by the Israeli government. As was noted by Norwegian historian Hilde Henriksen Waage, for the Israeli government "it became clear that there would not be any progress as long as the PLO remained excluded" (Waage 2005, 7). As discerned by Waage, the PLO had "nothing to lose and everything to gain," and the Norwegian setting would bring the marginalized PLO back to the center stage and "give Arafat complete and direct control over the Palestinian side in the negotiations" (Waage 2005, 8).

Wary of American dominance in the peace effort, Norway presented Oslo as a supplementary rather than a competing peace track to assist in resolving the impasse in the American-led negotiations (Makovsky 1995, 27). The Accords were officially signed on September 13, 1993 in Washington and outlined principles of Palestinian self-rule, leaving final status issues for later discussions. The three key elements of the Oslo agreements were a phased Palestinian self-rule, renunciation of violence and mutual recognition. In the statement of principles, the PLO recognized "the right of the state of Israel to exist in peace and security" and committed itself to the Middle East Peace Process. In return, Rabin offered an official recognition of the PLO as the representatives of the Palestinian people and a negotiating partner. The Accords were based on an incremental strategy, allowing for future Palestinian elections, the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, cooperation on security and economics, and a timetable for reaching final status talks. With no accountability, and no improvement in the daily lives of Palestinians and Israelis, it did not take long before the process began to unravel.

Although Oslo represented a step forward in dialogue and progress towards an agreement between Palestinians and Israelis, Oslo did not improve the lives of most Palestinians or Israelis. Rather, it achieved recognition of the PLO, or the handing to the PLO of the reins over Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. The PLO, and most notably Arafat, earned this honor with populist nationalism and terrorism. In 1988 Arafat, as the chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, and with the support of the Palestinian National Council, declared Palestinian independence and assumed the title of President of Palestine. During the 1980s, Arafat had received significant financial assistance from Iraq, Libya, and Saudi Arabia, assistance that he used to fund the first intifada from Tunis where he was based until 1993. Oslo recognized the PLO as a representative of the Palestinian people and allowed Arafat to return to the West Bank, and, in return, the PLO officially renounced violence. However, Arafat lacked full control over all the disgruntled groups and the violence continued.

The Oslo accords and recognition of the PLO as the sole representative body of the Palestinians did not please much of the Palestinian leadership within the West Bank, Gaza or in the Diaspora. As noted by some local Palestinian representatives, as a consequence of attaining its international recognition, the PLO became far less demanding in its postulations for rights for Palestinians and its

monopoly on power led to corruption. At the moment of the signing of Oslo, prominent local Palestinian leaders such as Hanan Ashrawi noted the irony.

It's clear that the ones who initiated this agreement have not lived under occupation. You postponed the settlement issue and Jerusalem without even getting guarantees that Israel would not continue to create facts on the ground that would preempt and prejudice the final outcome.

(Swisher 2004, 137)

The Oslo period was also plagued by an increase in Israeli settlements and violence from Palestinian extremist groups, notably Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Palestinian extremist groups, notably Hamas, were funded and militarily equipped by neighboring players including Hezbollah and Iran. Hamas and Islamic Jihad rejected Oslo, from which they were excluded, and worked together to derail the process. In a series of suicide bombings and attacks, Hamas and Islamic Jihad targeted Israeli civilians in crowded restaurants, buses and malls. The terrorism worked to frighten the population and tarnished the popularity of the peace talks. Although prohibited in the Oslo accords and condemned widely, to make matters worse, the establishment of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories continued, indeed increased, as did the violence surrounding the settlements. As noted by Shaul Arieli, a third of the Israelis living in the West Bank and Gaza strip moved to the settlements prior to the signing of the Oslo Accords (25 years), another third during the Oslo Accords period (8 Years) and another third between 2001 and 2009, following the official freezing of the settlements (Arieli 2010, 349). The Foundation for Middle East Peace noted that the settler population increase in the West Bank between 1994 and 2000 was 54 percent, compared to a 16.4 percent population increase within Israel (Foundation 2011). The settlements run up against the Fourth Geneva Convention, which states that "the Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies" (Convention 1949). Moreover, the increase of the Israeli settlements during the peace talks worked to bolster Palestinian extremists and weaken the moderates who supported the peace process.

The Oslo process, however, brought more funding into the conflict and opened the door for increased engagement of the EU. At a donors' conference in October 1993, following the signing of the agreement, the EU collectively pledged over \$500 million for economic recovery and development needs in the Palestinian Territories, making the EU the leading donor to the Palestinians (Peters 2010a). In 1995, the EU also increased its economic trade relations with Israel, signing the EU-Israel Association Agreement. However, despite playing a more significant economic role in supporting Palestinians and widening its economic ties with Israel, the EU continued to have marginal political leverage over the parties, in particular the Israelis, or enough strength to counter US influence (Peters 2010a). The funding was also not properly monitored, resulting in much corruption and public disillusionment with the PLO.

With little accountability, monitoring agreement or consensus on how to approach non-compliance, the IC stood by and watched the peace process disintegrate. Interventions were largely symbolic with little impact. Following a 1994 incident when an Israeli settler killed 29 Palestinian worshippers inside the ancient Al-Ibrahimi Mosque (Abraham Tomb) in Hebron, Norwegian and Italian observers were sent to Hebron. However, the tiny monitoring mission had little impact. Referred to as the "ice cream soldiers" because of the white color of their uniform and their limited mandate, which forced them to "melt" at the first sign of trouble, the soldiers had small impact even within Hebron (Bennis 1997). The limited mandate gave them reporting power, but, with no authority to intervene, they became merely witnesses to the ongoing violence.

The regional politics, however, were bolstered by the peace talks and heightened external economic investment. In 1994, the US played a prominent role in helping to secure a historic peace treaty between Jordan and Israel. As noted by Zittrain Eisenberg, Amman's worsening economy required a massive foreign intervention and, in exchange for signing a peace agreement with Israel, Washington offered generous assistance including US forgiveness of Jordan's \$700 million foreign debt (Eisenberg 2003). The treaty made Jordan the second Arab country after Egypt to sign a peace agreement with Israel. Egypt also played a positive role in the negotiations and supported the final agreement. As noted by Israeli President Shimon Peres, who was the then Israeli Foreign Minister, "President Mubarak, whose effort to advance the peace process has not received sufficient recognition, showed great willingness to assist both sides" (Peres 1993, 22).

The 1994 peace agreement had initially given a sense hope to a regional transformation. However, outside of Jordan and Egypt, the peace process did not have much regional support. Iran conducted a terrorist campaign designed to undermine the process, funding the militant group Hezbollah (Rabinovich 2004). Hezbollah launched rockets into Northern Israel, which incited Israel to dispatch large-scale military operations into Lebanon. The Israeli population was already dissatisfied with Oslo, since it did not lead to a decrease in violence against Israeli civilians. Indeed, the period between 1993 and 1995 was marked by ten suicide bombings, injuring hundreds and claiming the lives of 77 Israeli civilians. In 1996 the US launched a global campaign against terrorism in Sharm al Sheikh, aimed at isolating Iran and Syria and boosting the popularity of Peres (Rabinovich 2004, 76). However, the initiative had little impact as the Israeli public turned away from the peace process.

The election of PM Benjamin Netanyahu in June 1996 was partly a response to the suicide bombings and public disillusionment with the peace process. Focusing on security, Netanyahu imposed economic restrictions and slowed down Oslo. The election of Netanyahu further worsened relations between Israel and the EU. As noted by Joel Peters,

For European leaders, Netanyahu's policies were at best unhelpful and at worse catastrophic. In turn, Netanyahu dismissed Europe's projection of

normative power and its stress on cooperative security practices as naive and reflective of its lack of capacity and weakness as a global security actor. (Peters 2010a, 516)

Continued US support of Israel strengthened Israel's resolve to abandon the peace process and continue the settlement build up.

Although the IC, in particular the EU and the UN, objected to settlements, and the US voiced mild concerns, Washington took measures to protect Israel against international condemnation. On May 1995, the UN Council voted on a resolution condemning Israel's seizure of the Palestinian territory, but the US vetoed the resolution. On March 7 and 22, 1997, the Security Council once again challenged Israeli settlement policy as leading to violent clashes. The US cast its veto on both occasions. The resolutions had overwhelming international consensus against the building of Israeli settlements on Palestinian occupied territory. For example, in March 1997, the General Assembly voted 130 to 2 calling on Israel to abandon Har Homa, a new Israeli settlement built in Jerusalem. Only Israel and the United States voted against, and Israel went ahead with the construction. The building was met with violent protests and the Palestinian cabinet issued a statement saying it was not useful to hold talks with Israel as long as the policy of expansion of settlements and violating the agreement is continuing.

Without an effective external broker, the two sides blamed each other for the violence and the lack of progress in the implementation of the Oslo accords. Under Article 15 of the Oslo Accords, Israel initially agreed to binding arbitration of the dispute if and when negotiation should fail. The arbitration panel would have consisted of Israel, the Palestinians and the Madrid conference co-sponsors, Russia and the United States (Makovsky 1995). However, the final wording of the Agreement only called on the parties to establish an arbitration process that never took place. Extremists on both sides managed to derail the process that was designed as incremental implementation based on the growth of trust. Hamas and Jihad conducted deadly attacks against Israeli civilians, and, in 1995, a Jewish extremist assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. With the continuing of Palestinian violence, Israel saw no benefit in implementing Oslo. Although agreements were signed, with no trust and no external attempt to monitor, guarantee, or assist in implementation of the agreements, the process collapsed.

Oslo's gradual, incremental approach only worked to heighten mistrust between the conflicting groups. The incremental approach went hand in hand with a transformational method of mediation that worked well for the Norwegian attempts at mediating the conflict. As noted by Hilde Henriksen Waage, "At the outset, only minor issues are put on the negotiating table. Once some sort of compromise has been reached on these, the parties move on to the more difficult problems. This idea underlay the Oslo process" (Waage 2007, 162). However, once Norway handed its gains to the Americans, Norway's role as well as the positive incremental process came to an abrupt halt.



The gains, such as mutual recognition and bringing in the PLO, did not amount to much without group transformation. Although bringing in Arafat and the PLO was useful for an agreement, treating Arafat and the PLO as the de-facto representative of the Palestinian state had dire consequences felt to this day. Oslo created one party, which was led by the Palestinian authority, making it responsible for parts of the West Bank and Gaza but without a proper state apparatus, no national consensus, and no control over use of force. Both sides took advantage of the agreement to create facts on the ground. For Arafat, Oslo allowed Fatah to tighten its political hold over the Palestinian territories and opened up wide opportunities for corruption. The Israeli government created their own facts on the ground by increasing settlements. The UN's condemnation of Israeli settlements was overridden by American vetoes, reflecting the American continuing need to protect Israeli interests and weaken international tools.

Thus, although Oslo could be seen as an attempt at a united-neutral process, it failed for a number of reasons. First, international support was minimal and not united, local public support was marginal, and Palestinian and Israeli extremists were successful at derailing the process. Second, the interim step-by-step process in which the majority of the steps were implemented, worked only to deepen the mistrust when the steps were not implemented and the process lacked monitoring and accountability. Israeli, Palestinian and American participants in the center of the process all echoed this point. As noted by Alon Pinkas, the former Israeli political advisor to President Shimon Peres, "the longer the process was stretched, the more exposed and vulnerable it became to its detractors. Every delay or disagreement was magnified to vindicate the opposition" (Pinkas 2013). Erekat blamed the failure on the lengthy peace process with no accountability. As noted by Saeb Erekat, "Oslo failed because there was no accountability, because some parts of the international community took it as an end in itself" (Miller 2013). Former Clinton administrator Aaron David Miller noted that

The key flaw of the Oslo process lay in the philosophical conceit that the most intractable differences could simply be deferred to the end of the process while the implementation of interim agreements would build the mutual trust and confidence to be able to tackle the tougher issues.

(Miller 2013)

Although Norway began a constructive process, in the absence of international unity, accountability and a means of arbitration of disputes, Oslo failed to end the violence, occupation, or settlements or to improve the lives of Palestinians or Israelis. Neither the Israeli nor the Palestinian public saw gains from the peace process. In a final attempt for all-out resolution of the conflict, the US trumped the failing Oslo process with behind-closed-doors intense US-led final status mediation at Camp David. However, despite the mutual recognition achieved by Norway, the Oslo process in which neither party lived up to its promises had worsened trust between the parties, creating a poor backdrop to the

mediation. The US, with its continuing and unconditional support of Israel, was also not perceived as an honest broker.

American mediation efforts at Camp David II, though well intended, can best be described as a textbook case for what international mediators should not do as process managers. By basic norms and practices, mediators should not let one side hijack the process, should not be manipulated by one of the sides, should not agree to have one side dictate the terms of the agreement and should not renege on their own promises. However, all of these were done at Camp David. On the other hand, mediators should attempt to set up a fair process, foster trust, encourage mutual gain rather than bargaining, and foster good communication between the conflicting parties. Sadly, none of these were evidently done at Camp David.

The reasons behind this well-recorded process failure were twofold: the US partisan position towards Israel; and the American overconfidence that PM Ehud Barak would deliver and was ready to make a historic compromise. According to chief US mediator Denis Ross,

The [US] President was basically reluctant to say no to Barak... I mean Barak was the guy who was taking the big leaps! Barak was the guy who was going to confront a terrible reality at home when he did this! Barak was the guy who had enormous courage to do it!

(Swisher 2004, 260)

Regardless of intention, the US was unable to curb its support for Israel sufficiently to be an effective mediator between the two sides.

Overconfidence in Israeli leadership had led the US to essentially surrender summit controls to the Israeli team. According to Dennis Ross, Barak had his own completely arbitrary process strategy, in which nothing would happen the first two days, and the key point of decision should come on day five of the summit (Ross 2004). Barak was willing to have the US list Israeli and Palestinian issues, provided that he would have the chance to modify the parameters before they were presented to the Palestinians (Ross 2004). President Clinton, apparently to the frustration of Dennis Ross, acceded to Barak's demands.

When the President briefed us on the meeting, he made it clear he had acceded to Barak's wish on how to handle the parameter exercise. He did not want to "jam him" at the start of the summit. Naturally, this meant that we had to redo the approach for the President's meeting with Arafat. Already we were altering our strategy for the summit. We were not bounding the discussions and crystallizing them; as a result we were not taking control of the summit at the outset.

(Ross 2004, 656)

In the end, the American delegation not only gave sneak previews of official US drafts and ideas to the Israeli delegation but subsequently altered them and

presented Israeli positions as if they were American proposals. According to a member of the US negotiation team Robert Malley “the US ended up (often unwittingly) presenting Israeli negotiating positions and couching them as rock bottom red lines beyond which Israel could not go” (Malley and Aqha 2001, 16). The proposals promoted by the Americans were those submitted by the Israeli team and tended to favor the Israeli side. For the Palestinian delegation, this intensified the sense of distrust about the fairness of the process. As noted by Swisher, “For the Palestinians, there was no conceivable way the Americans could have listed these principles as ‘estimations based on the discussions with the parties,’ unless the only parties they really listened to were the Israelis” (Swisher 2004, 268).

The fact that many members of the American negotiation team were Jewish Americans and the team attempted to use a divide and conquer method against the Palestinians did not help matters. Barak’s personal strategy was to use the summit to place pressure on Arafat. When the frustrated Dennis Ross asked Barak why we were here, considering the lack of progress, Barak replied that “the pressure cooker had to work first on Arafat; then things would happen” (Ross 2004, 667). The US mediators’ methods and process helped to confirm Arafat’s worst fears that the summit was one great US–Israeli conspiracy (Swisher 2004). The Palestinian team became increasingly suspicious, perceiving everything presented by Americans as disguised Israeli proposals (Qurie 2008).

Backing down to Barak’s pressure that nothing should be written down, to prevent the Palestinians from pocketing of concessions, the lack of written agreements meant miscommunication and misunderstandings. With no direct negotiations, nothing written down and Americans acting as go-between, the Palestinian and Israeli delegations experienced numerous misunderstandings, which reflected a children’s broken telephone game. Although Arafat was blamed for the failure of Camp David, by any mediator’s yardstick, the process was very mismanaged. Subsequent attempts at agreements, such as the one in Taba where direct negotiations took place in a more conducive atmosphere, came too late, since elections had removed both American and Israeli leadership from power. US President Bill Clinton’s term ended shortly after Camp David and Israeli PM Ehud Barak was voted out of office.

The failure of the Camp David summit had dire long-term consequences. Israeli and Palestinian public disillusionment with the peace process, coupled with political incitement, led to an intifada and spiral of violence and shelved the possibility of a negotiated settlement. It also tarnished the Americans as the potential mediators, at a time when only the Americans were seen as capable of mediating an agreement. Unlike the case of BiH, where the US used its powerful leverage against the dominant and uncooperative party and had the capacity to impose an agreement, in the case of Israel-Palestine, this was considered impossible. The US did not use its leverage on the Israelis and was unsuccessful in imposing a solution on the Palestinians. Indeed, American mediation and support for the Israelis played a role in discrediting external intervention and undermining prospects for peace.

Regardless of intention, Oslo as well as the US-driven process at Camp David failed as an effective external process and served to tarnish future mediation.

### *The arduous road towards a united intervention process*

Following the failure at Camp David and the subsequent escalation of violence, there was a US attempt towards a more inclusive and united international intervention in the conflict. While the US, headed by President George W. Bush, became less active directly in attempts to solve the conflict, the EU took the opportunity to become more actively involved. In 2002, the United States decided to formally expand external mediators in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and called for the establishment of the Middle East Quartet. The Quartet, composed of the United States, the European Union, the Russian Federation and the Office of the Secretary General of the United Nations, was established to coordinate external peace efforts in the Middle East based on a two-state solution. The Quartet’s road map, launched in 2003, was a performance-based, three-phase plan intended to conclude in a final agreement and a Palestinian state. Until this point, the Americans had generally snubbed the participation of EU, UN and Russia in Middle East negotiations.

The establishment of the Quartet and an attempt at united international intervention policies had more to do with September 11, Iraq and the war on terror than shifts in positions or events related to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. President Bush began his term in office strongly allied to Israel but was forced to take a more cooperative stance alongside his European and Arab counterparts on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Former Middle East envoy Dennis Ross summed up the reasoning behind the new strategy:

with the tactical need to gain support for or at least acquiescence in its Iraq policy, the administration agreed to work with the European Union (EU), the United Nations, and Russia in drafting a roadmap that might reflect the President’s vision. While the United States would not let these other countries determine its response to Iraq, it would let them help shape the conduct of US diplomacy between Israelis and Palestinians, an unprecedented step in the US approach to Arab–Israeli issues.

(Ross 2004, 788)

As noted by Laura Zittrain Eisenberg, Washington aimed to do just enough to satisfy its European and Arab allies, whose support it needed for Iraq and Afghanistan (Eisenberg 2010).

Although itself divided on how to intervene, the EU pushed for a need for a common strategy on the conflict and an end to an exclusive US-led partisan mediation process. The EU made a link between the Israeli–Palestinian peace process, September 11, and the rise of terrorism in Europe, emphasizing the need for regional peace to ensure regional security and stability. As noted by Joel Peters, “for the first time, the EU created a link between the collapse of the

Israeli–Palestinian peace process and its own direct security interests and, in particular, its efforts to combat terrorism and al-Qaeda . . .” (Peters 2010a, 520). In its 2002 meeting, which included a Declaration on the Middle East, the Council of Ministers noted that the Middle East has reached a “dramatic turning point” at which “further escalation will render the situation uncontrollable” and called for an end to the Israeli occupation and the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian State (Council of Ministers 2002). The Council of Ministers outlined an urgent need for involvement by the Quartet and the “establishment of a democratic, viable, peaceful and sovereign State of Palestine, on the basis of the 1967 borders, if necessary with minor adjustments agreed by the parties” (Council of Ministers 2002, 35).

Sidelined by the Quartet, the Arab states in 2002 signed their own parallel peace initiative which included a full Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied since 1967, a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem, and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. In return, the 22 Arab countries would consider the Arab–Israeli conflict ended and normalize their relations with Israel. The Arab initiative signaled a potential step towards a united intervention, since its propositions echoed those of the US, EU and the Quartet. However, in the immediate aftermath of September 11, the Americans were suspicious of a unified Arab position and did not accept an Arab-led framework of international legitimacy for its war against terrorism and rogue states (Awan 2007). Washington disregarded the Arab Peace Initiative until it was revived in 2007 and taken more seriously following the election of President Barak Obama.

Though the intervention process was united on principles, this was not always reflected in practice. Although the US created the Quartet and was its key member, Washington’s continual support for Israel trumped and undermined its functioning. When the Quartet’s performance-based road map was ignored by Israel and derailed by PM Sharon’s disengagement plan, which called for a unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, the US supported Israel’s actions. US President George Bush wrote a supporting letter regarding Israel’s unilateral disengagement noting that “[t]he United States is strongly committed to Israel’s security and well-being as a Jewish State” (Bush 2009). Despite ending the direct occupation of Gaza, Israel’s unilateral disengagement meant a loss of an opportunity, altering Palestinian political dynamics with long-term dire consequences.

The presumably unintended consequence of the unilateral disengagement, made possible with American support, succeeded in strengthening Palestinian extremists and weakening the moderates. First, the Israeli pullout from Gaza was perceived as a victory for Hamas, boosting its popularity. Second, there was little attempt to hand over power in Gaza to the Abbas leadership, which eventually resulted in a Hamas takeover in Gaza and complete political separation between Gaza and the West Bank. To make matters worse, the evacuated areas bordering Israel were subsequently used to launch further attacks against civilians in adjacent Israeli cities including Ashkelon and Be’er Sheba, thus escalating the conflict and giving justification to fierce Israeli retaliation.

The withdrawal not only added fuel to extremists it also resulted in some regrettable lessons for Palestinians and Israelis, detrimental to the peace process. For many Palestinians, particularly those favoring Hamas, the lesson learned was: make the occupation costly in terms of Israeli lives and Israel will withdraw from the Occupied Territories. The lesson learned for many Israelis was: give land back to the Palestinians and it will be used for strengthening terrorism and launching further attacks against Israel. The Quartet, which was overseeing the handover, took the fall for the failure. As was noted by Levy, “The Quartet failed to seize the post-Arafat moment, failed to support Abbas after his election to the presidency, lent a hand to Israeli unilateralism, and gave no opening for engagement to the new Hamas government” (Levy and Shtender-Auerbach 2006).

The inability of the Quartet to be more pro-active was largely due to its own internal divisions. As noted by Costanza Musu, the

US itself, despite being a member of the Quartet, has had a mixed attitude towards it, almost fuelling the suspicions that it had contributed to its creation in order to respond to external pressures (mainly from the European allies) while at the same time aiming to maintain an undisputed role as the sole mediator accepted by both parties.

(Musu 2006, 13)

James Wolfensohn, the first Special Envoy of the Quartet, identified several issues requiring special attention: border crossings; connecting Gaza with the West Bank, air and sea ports; and transferring housing and the agricultural infrastructure (greenhouses) in the settlements (Peters 2010b). He was placed in charge of Israel’s disengagement but eventually resigned in frustration, complaining that his mandate was too weak and his work undermined by the American administration.

The 2006 elections of a Hamas majority in Gaza deepened the existing divisions within the Quartet. According to Wolfensohn, there was no international consensus on how to operate under the new Hamas leadership in Gaza. The US and some EU countries listed Hamas as a “terrorist organization” while Russia considered the organization “a legitimate actor in Palestinian politics, not a ‘terrorist’ entity to be boycotted” (Pradhan 2008, 322). Russian President Putin proposed talking to the Islamic organization without any preconditions and officially invited a Hamas delegation to Russia. On the other hand, the US and EU coordinated a move to withdraw aid money from Gaza on the grounds that, until Hamas renounced violence, honored past peace agreements and recognized Israel, funding would be frozen.

Wolfenson noted his disappointment with American and European policy for completely cutting all aid to the Hamas-led Palestinian government. In a radio discussion with Condoleezza Rice, Wolfenson emphasized “it would surprise me if one could win by getting all the [Gaza] kids out of school or starving the Palestinians . . . I think that’s losing gambit” (Kelemen 2006). The harsh policies resulted in an economic collapse in Gaza, a dysfunctional local government, and

contributed to the complete takeover of Gaza by Hamas. Wolfenson placed the largest blame on the Americans. "I have no doubts that I may have made tactical, strategic mistakes, but the basic problem was that I didn't have the authority. The Quartet had the authority, and within the Quartet it was the Americans who had the authority." Wolfenson noted:

There was never a desire on the part of the Americans to give up control of the negotiations, and I would doubt that in the eyes of [Deputy National Security Advisor] Elliot Abrams and the State Department team, I was ever anything but a nuisance.

(Shahar 2007)

Although Wolfenson spent months negotiating an agreement between Israelis and Palestinians on border crossings, freedom of movement and checkpoints, seaports and airports, any gains went ignored. According to Wolfenson, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Deputy National Security Advisor Abrams clarified to him that his mandate was limited and intervention in peace negotiations was not within his purview. As noted by Wolfenson,

I had to fight my way into the November [2005] meeting when Secretary Rice announced the six-point plan. I was there with Javier Solana when it was announced, and what I didn't realize was that that was the death penalty, because after that the Israelis and the Americans took apart that agreement one by one, and I knew less and less what was happening. And my team of 18 people was fired. So I was left with no office and no people, and even though they asked me to stay on, it was pretty clear to me that the only thing to do was to get out.

(Shahar 2007)

Although in principle the Quartet had shifted the multinational intervention towards a united-neutral intervention, in practice, intervention remained partisan and divided as Washington, regardless of intention, undermined a united external process.

The 2008 election of US President Barak Obama initially brought rays of hope for a more united and cooperative international approach towards resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Obama administration outlined adjustments from previous US administrations, including better cooperation and coordination among external interveners. However, the Gaza war that ended two days before President Obama was inaugurated and the subsequent Goldstone Report that investigated the war, once again divided the international community. Launched on December 27, 2008, in response to rocket fire from Gaza, Operation Cast Lead was a coordinated massive Israeli airstrike killing hundreds of people in Gaza within the first four minutes. Up to 1,400 people, mainly civilians, were estimated to have been killed in the 22 days of the war (Amnesty 2009). The attack was a response to the increasing number of Qassam rockets

launched from Gaza targeting southern Israeli towns and killing or maiming dozens of Israeli civilians.

The Gaza attack once again divided the IC into countries that condemned the attack and those, mainly the US, that justified Israeli actions. The subsequent UN inquiry headed by Richard Goldstone accused Israeli Defense forces of war crimes, crimes against humanity and serious violations of international law, recommending further investigation and bringing those responsible to justice (Mission 2009). The UN Human Rights Council endorsed the report and the UN General Assembly urged Israel and Palestine to conduct an independent investigation into the alleged war crimes in Gaza. The EU Parliament also endorsed the Goldstone report, noting that EU member states should demand that the report's recommendations be carried out and that there should be accountability for all violations.

On the other hand, US Congress voted the Goldstone report to be "irredeemably biased" against Israel and called on President Obama to maintain his opposition to the report. The bill, passed by majority in Congress, "supports the Administration's efforts to combat anti-Israel bias at the United Nations and considers the UN report as 'unbalanced, one-sided and basically unacceptable'." The Congress called upon the President to "strongly and unequivocally oppose an endorsement of the report, including through vetoing any United Nations Security Council resolution that endorses its contents" (Congress 2009). The Congress also "reaffirms its support for the democratic Jewish State of Israel, for Israel's security and right to self-defense, and, specifically, for Israel's right to defend its citizens from violent militant groups and their state sponsors" (Congress 2009). President Obama called the report "flawed" and asked both parties to investigate the allegations. In response to the criticism, Goldstone noted that the report would have looked different had the Israeli government cooperated with the investigation.

In the end, Washington persuaded the Palestinian leadership to shelve their complaints to the UN and international legal forums, contributing to the plummeting credibility of the moderate leadership. The US diplomatic plan, known as a "non paper," presented by George Mitchell's team noted that "the PA will help promote a positive atmosphere conducive to negotiations; in particular during negotiations it will refrain from pursuing or supporting any initiative directly or indirectly in international legal forums that would undermine that atmosphere" (Swisher 2011, 67). The Palestinian public responded in uproar and disillusionment. Protests were held across the West Bank and Gaza, once again weakening the moderate leadership and strengthening the extremists. International and national human rights groups heavily criticized the decision. UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the Occupied Territories Richard Falk noted with astonishment

The Palestinians have betrayed their own people. This was a moment when finally the international community endorsed the allegations of war crimes and it would have been an opportunity to vindicate the struggle for the

Palestinian people for their rights under international law and for the Palestinian representatives in the UN themselves to seem to undermine this report is an astonishing development.

(Meloni and Tognoni 2012, 131)

The response to the 2009 Gaza war highlighted the ongoing divisions within the international community. Although there has been growing international consensus on principles to resolve the conflict, in practice the divisions have remained. The conflict over Palestinian versus Israeli legitimacy and accountability to international law has been fought within international bodies. For the Europeans, the plight of the Palestinians and unyielding behavior of Israeli governments has become an internal security issue. As noted by Joel Peters,

Europe is increasingly looking at the conflict as constituting a direct threat to Europe's global, regional and, above all, its domestic security concerns. The daily images of the suffering and humiliation inflicted on the Palestinian population by Israeli policies are perceived as threatening the stability of many European capitals.

(Peters 2010a, 526)

Although the EU has played an increasingly important role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, its influence on Israeli policies has been negligent (Pardo and Peters 2009).

The 2014 Gaza war that resulted in the death of 2,220 Palestinians including 1,492 civilians was the deadliest escalation in hostilities since the beginning of the Israeli Occupation in 1967 (OCHA 2015). In addition, almost 500,000 people were internally displaced and, because of the high level of destruction, a fifth have been unable to return to their pre-war homes. This is beyond the damage and destruction to schools, hospitals and infrastructure. The 2014 Gaza war also resulted in accusations of war crimes. Palestinians officially joined the International Criminal Court in hopes of prosecuting Israel for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity during the Gaza war. It remains to be seen whether the Court will be able to investigate the war crimes, given the lack of support and cooperation from not only Israel but the US. Despite the widely covered conflict and atrocities committed against civilians, the lack of consensus among the international community has meant that little progress has been made.

In the past few years, with the establishment of the Quartet, the Arab Peace Initiative, and the election of US president Barak Obama, external policies have in principle shifted from divided to more united intervention and brought some rays of hope to the Middle East. There has been greater external agreement on the principles of the solutions as outlined by the Quartet and the Arab Peace Initiative. In practice, however, Europeans have had little political influence and Americans have continued to behave in a unilateral and partisan fashion, supporting Israel diplomatically, militarily and economically. Regardless of intention, the American intervention has contributed to strengthening hardliners and

weakening the Palestinian moderate leadership. The divided intervention has had little positive transformative impact on either of the conflicting groups.

### **External identity strategies and their impact on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict**

The type of group strategies or proposed solutions to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has engaged the international community for decades. Internal Palestinian and Israeli discussions regarding group identity strategies in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have ranged from coexistence and integration, to partitioning and expulsions. Decades of violence, occupation, segregation and political incitement have created a culture of anger, fear and distrust. Creative institutional options discussed have included the two-state solution, one-state solution, confederation and federation. The majority of official international solutions have focused on a two-state solution or partitioning along ethno-religious lines. Many members of the international community have accepted ethno-religious partitioning and segregation as the only possibility for the conflicting groups for the foreseeable future. The policies of division have risen out of general local and international belief in the inability of Palestinians and Israelis to coexist.

From the initial external intervention, international strategies in Israel-Palestine have revolved around ethno-religious partitioning solutions, based on the creation of two separate nation-states. The founding of a Jewish homeland was accepted and promoted by Britain as part of the Balfour declaration. The establishment of a Palestinian homeland was a subsequent add-on following outrage by the Palestinian leadership and violent public protest. The partitioning favored a Jewish nation state, maximizing wide territory for the influx of further Jewish settlement. Coerced or, if necessary, forced exchange of population was recommended by the Peel Commission to deal with the demographic reality (Morris 2001).

From the first resolution regarding the conflict adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1947 – resolution 181 – the UN focus was also on partitioning along ethno-religious lines. Resolution 181 provided for the establishment of an Arab State and a Jewish State with a special international regime for the city of Jerusalem. Although Resolution 181 provided for religious, language and cultural rights for the minorities to be residing in the two future states, the partitioning was clearly along group lines. Section 1 of chapter 3 of the resolution outlined that persons over the age of 18 may opt for citizenship in the other state

providing that no Arab residing in the area of the proposed Arab State shall have the right to opt for citizenship in the proposed Jewish State and no Jew residing in the proposed Jewish State shall opt for citizenship in the proposed Arab State.

(UN Res181 1947)

In other words, Jews and Arabs would only be able to change residence into their "own" nation-state. Section 9 of Part 1B outlined that, during the transitional

period, no Jew shall be permitted to establish residence in the proposed Arab state and no Arab shall be entitled to establish residence in the proposed Jewish state (UN Res181 1947). The resolution was never implemented, but it provided an international road map for solutions to come.

The demographic reality was only one of the several serious problems in implementation. In 1948, the day the British Mandate expired, the Jewish Peoples Council declared the establishment of the State of Israel, which was immediately recognized by the US. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, from the initial partitioning as designed by the United Nations, the new “Jewish” state had almost the same number of Arabs as Jews. For Israel, the “demographic majority problem” was partly resolved with the subsequent Arab–Israeli war when much of the Palestinian population either fled or was ethnically cleansed. Almost a million Palestinian refugees became scattered, most becoming permanent refugees within the surrounding Arab countries. Shortly after, almost a million Jewish refugees fled the Middle East countries, most of whom settled in Israel. Integration of Palestinians and other non-Jewish minority groups within Israel was very problematic. As noted by Joe Migdal, the state had constituted the Palestinian minority as “dangerous population,” subject to state power but at the same time, excluded from the community of belonging (Migdal 2004).

Group strategies for the Palestinians are a complex combination of exclusion, cultural accommodation, and partitioning, with differing group strategies depending on the location. From the birth of Israel, policies of the new state towards the Palestinian minority were for the most part exclusive, since Israel was deemed a state for Jews, while Palestinians became either invisible or unwelcome guests. Judaism became not only a religious identity of Israel but the political, national and cultural identity of the state (Kook 2000). The policies of exclusion were built into the country’s institutions and legal framework. As noted by Rebecca Kook, “ethnonational structures of inequality have been defined into the institution of citizenship, rendering it ineffective as a political and social equalizer” (Kook 2000, 264). The nature of the Jewish state led to institutionalized discrimination against its Arab minority. Until 1966, Palestinians living in Israel had been subject to military rule. As noted by Amal Jamal, ethno-religious affiliation, rather than civic membership, was established as the main principle of citizenship in Israel (Jamal 2009). This supported the policies of segregation, discrimination and intimidation, and served as justification for house demolitions and political arrests, measures which have continued until the present time. As discussed in Chapter 3, international norms regarding the status of minorities in states favor integration policies, which have been ignored by the Israeli government. Based on an exclusive cultural–religious framework, Israel is an ethnocracy. Until recently, the treatment of the Palestinian–Arab minority within Israel has been considered an internal Israeli matter and generally ignored by the international community.

Despite the dim reality of the “Israeli-Arabs”, the quality of lives of Palestinians within Israel in some ways surpassed that of many Palestinians forced to become refugees in surrounding Arab countries. Although Israel discriminated

against its Palestinian minority politically and restricted their integration and land rights, it set up a parallel educational system in Arabic and allowed, and at times fostered, economic advancement. This helped to create a well-educated middle class of Palestinian–Israelis, many of whom have become integrated economically in certain Israeli sectors such as health, business and the service industry. Many Palestinians who fled to surrounding countries faced much harsher circumstances, and were unable to integrate politically, socially or economically, thereby creating a generation of refugees dependent on foreign aid and vulnerable to regional conflicts. UNWRA (The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) currently provides assistance for over five million registered Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the Occupied Palestinian territory. Palestinians who have fled to neighboring countries such as Lebanon and Syria have remained refugees and have suffered an escalation of violence. In the past 60 years, spanning generations, their status has been maintained as refugees and their conditions have not improved significantly.

Palestinians facing the deepest hardship have been those living under Israeli Occupation. Since 1967, Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza have been partitioned from Israel, living under the harsh conditions of military occupation. In the West Bank and Gaza, the occupation has been perpetuated through strong-armed military rule and separation through the construction of a barrier. Illegal settlement policy, confiscation of land, house demolitions, arrests, and check points have been the daily policies in the West Bank, while Gaza has become a large, sophisticated open air prison. Israel’s behavior in the West Bank and Gaza has been subject to much international focus and criticism, particularly by the EU and the UN.

Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad described Israel’s current levels of micromanagement, where:

Israel is involved in the minute details of the lives of Palestinians. It is important to remember that the entirety of the West Bank and Gaza Strip is ruled by military orders – not by politics, logic, or reason – but by military orders with (Israel’s) “security” dictating the rules of the game.

(Fayad 2007)

The barrier, at times a high wall and at times an impenetrable fence, has deepened separation between the groups, prevented movement of Palestinians between the Occupied Territories and Israel and limited movement within the Occupied Territories. The 815 km barrier was planned to annex 20 percent of the land from the West Bank; however, due to successful land suits, this was reduced to around 5 percent annexation (Arieli 2012).

The dire situation in the Occupied Territories, the separation barrier and the build up of the settlements, has only heightened Palestinian disillusionment with the peace talks and the potential of an international proposal of a two-state solution. Israel’s occupation has come hand-in-hand with the buildup of settlements, which have carved up the territories. As noted by Aruri,

Slicing both the West Bank and Gaza into three separate zones was in fact Labor's solution to Likud's earlier dilemma: how to insure that its absorption of the Occupied Territories (which contrasted with Labor's formula of separation) did not lead to a bi-national state, in which Arabs and Jews would coexist in equality.

(Aruri 2003, 116)

The West Bank and East Jerusalem have become a collection of isolated areas and enclaves, separated from one another by roads that connect the settlements. The freezing of the build up of settlements has been one of the many hurdles to renewing peace talks. Despite Washington's continuing support of Israel, there has been some pressure on Israel to give in to international demands, including a settlement freeze. From Washington, the pressure has come with large carrots rather than sticks. In 2009, PM Benjamin Netanyahu announced a ten-month settlement freeze to return to the negotiation table. However, the settlement freeze did not include ongoing construction and settlement build up in Jerusalem and the surrounding area (Ravid 2009). In return for an additional 90-day settlement freeze, the US government offered Israel 20 F35 Fighter Jets worth three billion dollars. Despite its reliance on American support, cooperation from Israel has not been forthcoming. Former US Ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk said that, if Israel sees itself as a superpower that does not need any aid from the United States, then it can make its own decisions.

Given Israel's dependence on the United States to counter the threat from Iran and to prevent its own international isolation, an Israeli prime minister would surely want to bridge the growing divide. Yet the shift in American perceptions seems to have gone unnoticed in Jerusalem.

(Indyk 2010)

In response to the lack of progress towards a diplomatic solution based on a two-state solution, the build up of the settlements and the carving up of much of the West Bank, the Palestinian leadership has begun to move away from a two-state solution. Several key Palestinian leaders and think-tanks have started calling for a one-state solution. Former Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei, one of the architects of the Oslo Accords, called on Palestinians and Israelis to consider a one-state solution, noting that a two-state solution is no longer viable. Qurei "blamed Israel for 'burying' the two-state solution by building settlements and creating new facts on the ground in the West Bank and East Jerusalem" (Abu Toameh 2012). In 2008, the Palestinian Strategic Group, made up of prominent Palestinian intellectuals, outlined their "shift from a two-state outcome to a (bi-national or unitary democratic) single-state outcome as Palestinians preferred strategic goal" (Group 2008). Prominent Palestinian-American academic Rashid Khalidy noted that the one-state solution already exists, since "there is only one state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean, in which there are two or three levels of citizenship or non-citizenship within the

borders of that one state that exerts total control" (Shalev 2011). As noted by Khalidy, a two state solution "would not mean end-of-conflict and would still necessitate agreement on Palestinian refugees and on Israel's 'Palestinian minority' before a comprehensive settlement could be achieved" (Shalev 2011).

A bi-national state or a one state solution is currently unacceptable for most Israelis and is, at best, on the very margin of the international agenda. However, with the two-state solution being an ever-more-distant reality, the voices in favor of other solutions, including the one-state option, have grown louder. Paradoxically, it is Israeli politicians on the right that have pushed for an annexation of the West Bank and giving Palestinians full political rights. Former Israeli Minister of Defense and Likud member Moshe Arens noted in an opinion letter,

What would happen if Israeli sovereignty were to be applied to Judea and Samaria, the Palestinian population there being offered Israeli citizenship? Those who, in Israel and abroad, consider the Israeli "occupation" of Judea and Samaria an unbearable evil should be greatly relieved by such a change that would free Israel of the burden of "occupation."

(Arens 2010)

Although the international community continues to call for a two-state solution, the criticism of Israel for preventing a two-state solution, in particular by the EU, have mounted. In its conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process, the Council of the European Union highlighted that the "viability of a two-state solution must be maintained" (Union 2012). The EU expressed "deep concern" about developments on the ground, which "threaten to make a two-state solution impossible." Among its concerns, it noted: the marked acceleration of settlement construction; the ongoing evictions and house demolitions in East Jerusalem and changes to the residency; the living conditions of the Palestinian population in Area C; and serious limitations in Area C for the PA to promote the economic development of Palestinian communities (Union 2012). EU statements, however, have had little impact in Israel.

The two-state solution, which is the current external prescription of group strategy in the conflict, ignores "Arab Israelis" or Palestinians living inside Israel. Although there have been some calls by extreme right-wing Israeli politicians for their forced removal, the official policy in Israel is one of integration within the state of Israel; however, in practice, the Palestinians living inside Israel have been subject to exclusion. As noted by Yiftachel, Israel has been established and continuous to function as an ethnocratic democracy (Yiftachel 2006). Ethnocratic rule builds on the concept of exclusion and is not conducive to positive transformation of the relations between groups. Although not surprising given the country's beginning and historical European persecution of Jews, the policies are unlikely to be sustainable. Ethnocratic rule has not only been subject to criticism from minorities within Israel, in recent years it has also been subject to deep external criticism.

Although not considered the core issue, the European Union has in particular become increasingly vocal in voicing its concerns. According to a classified

paper drafted by diplomatic representatives working in Israel, “the European Union should consider Israel’s treatment of its Arab population a core issue, not second tier to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict” (Ravid 2011). The document, which was sent to Brussels, noted; “The stalemate in the peace process, and the continuing occupation, inevitably has an impact on the identification of Israeli Arabs with Israel.” The diplomatic representatives noted,

It is in the interests of all Israelis to demonstrate that Israel is not only Jewish and democratic, but tolerant and inclusive, and that these are patriotic values. We believe in common with most Israelis that Israeli nationality is an inclusive concept which can accommodate equally those of other faiths and ethnic origins.

(Fisher 2001)

Palestinians living inside Israel have pushed for equality, greater democratic inclusion and also to be allowed to form some links with Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza. In the 2006 *Future Vision Document*, written and officially submitted to the Israeli Knesset by the National Committee for the Heads of the Arab Local Authorities in Israel, Palestinian leadership living inside Israel noted that

[t]o maintain the ethnocentric system, Israel has implemented several rules concerning the Palestinian Arabs in Israel: Cutting all identity relations between the Palestinian Arabs in Israel and the rest of the Palestinian people and the Arab and Islamic nation. Israel has tried to create a new group of “Israeli Arabs”. Preventing Palestinian Arabs in Israel from keeping relations with their brothers in Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and, the Palestinians refugees.<sup>3</sup>

The document demanded equality for Palestinians living in Israel with the Jewish majority. The document noted that current Israeli policies, based on the “ethnocentric system,” are “forcing the Palestinian Arabs in Israel to accept resource allocation on a basis of ethnicity rather than citizenship. This aims at maintaining the Jewish superiority and the Palestinian Arab inferiority in Israel.”<sup>4</sup>

The inclusion of Palestinians living inside Israel may contribute to a peace process. Within internationally led discussions, the PLO has come to represent all Palestinians. Official talks not only excluded other groups and religious leaders in West Bank and Gaza but also moderate, educated Palestinian elites living within Israel. Through Oslo, Fatah effectively achieved monopoly of power over the majority of Palestinians but, with little achievement on the ground or in the peace talks and blatant corruption, the divisions have continued to widen (Ghanem 2010). The lack of benefits for average Palestinians not connected to the PLO and Arafat’s political party Fatah, the largest and dominant faction of the PLO, formulated deep divides in the West Bank and Gaza beyond the conflict between Fatah and Hamas.

Solutions revolving around partitioning along exclusive ethno-religious lines have not been conducive strategies to resolving the conflict. The two-state solution is operating under an assumption that Israelis and Palestinians cannot live together. But it might be countered that Palestinians and Israelis already partially coexist, though not on equal terms. Although often referred to by Israelis as Israeli Arabs, Palestinians make up a fifth of the population of Israel. In many parts of Israel, on a daily basis Israelis are meeting Palestinians in streets, stores, busses and hospitals. Israelis even meet West Bank Palestinians in settlements. Many Palestinians, work, shop and some even live in settlements that are not closed to them. The recent escalation of violence has increased support for more divisions along ethno-religious lines. The question is whether strategies based on partitioning along ethnic lines offer transformative solutions to the conflict. Transformative solutions may come out of a one-, two-, or three-state solution, but they are unlikely to come out of exclusive identity strategies. As noted in Chapter 3 and witnessed in other conflicts, partitioning along ethnic lines is most likely to lead to ethnic cleansing and more violence. Land can remain important but “this land belongs to us” may need to be molded towards “we belong to the land” with the necessity of sharing and inclusion.

## Conclusion

Despite the launching of the Quartet, the Arab Peace Initiative and a more cooperative US administration, external intervention in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict continues to be divided in practice, with the US supporting Israel and numerous other countries, particularly the EU, taking an increasingly stronger vocal opposition to Israeli practices as the occupier. The divided external intervention has been a hindrance to conflict transformation, hardening rather than softening the divisions between the Palestinians and Israelis. American partisan policy has a similar affect to that of an external guarantor, which provides moral, economic and military support to one of the groups in the conflict, preventing the necessity for the group’s transformation. Similarly, some members of the Arab league have not taken any steps to prevent the support and arming of extremists, most specifically Hamas, empowering the group with not only technical and financial support but with moral ground, and this also prevents incentives for transformation. Thus, although there has been a small shift towards united–neutral intervention, it has been within the realm of principles while in practice the divided intervention continues to add fuel to the conflict.

International conflict resolution strategies in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict have also been far from ideal. From the beginning of the conflict, the one common element of external intervention has been attempts to divide territory between Palestinians and Israelis. International identity strategies have persisted along the lines of ethno-religious partitioning, giving little space for accommodation or inclusive integration. Although the birth of new inclusive democratic states can be a positive step, partitioning along ethnic or religious lines, which is



the only current international solution, has only reaffirmed opposing identities. On the ground, the presumed connection between identity and territory has been translated into building settlements in occupied territories, evictions and separation walls.

As discussed in Chapter 2, a united intervention process, whether partisan or neutral, can have a constructive impact on the conflict. Lack of an international consensus has impacted on the potential of using more active or robust methods to resolve the conflict. Although boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) have gained some international popularity, particularly in Europe, the policy has had little support in the US. Indeed, some states have enacted legislation to divest from companies boycotting Israel, counterattacking the sanctions. Propped up by US support, the hardliners on the Israeli side have had little incentive to transform or end the Occupation. Thus far the United Nations and the European Union have voiced their concerns but lacked strength to have an impact. On the Palestinian side, the widening of the Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the chipping away at the possibility of a viable two-state solution have left the alternatives of a one state solution or another violent uprising. Lack of alternative solutions to the current partitioning strategies has also frozen the conflict in unsustainable conditions, which may get far worse before getting better.

## Notes

- 1 Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, Palestinian Public Opinion Poll, No. 34 December 10–12, 2009.
- 2 Joint Israeli–Palestinian Poll, Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research Unit and Harry S. Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace. August, 2009.
- 3 *Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel*, The National Committee for the Heads of the Arab Local Authorities in Israel, 2006, p. 10 [www.adalah.org/newsletter/eng/dec06/tasawor-mostaqbali.pdf](http://www.adalah.org/newsletter/eng/dec06/tasawor-mostaqbali.pdf).
- 4 Ibid.

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